



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

TESTIMONY

HB 2667 HD1 RELATING TO HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE MEDIUM EDUCATION

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance

March 4, 2004

by

Dr. William Wilson
Chair & Professor, Hawaiian Studies
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

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My name is Dr. William H. Wilson. I am chair of the academic programs division of Ka Haka `Ula O Ke`elikōlani the Hawaiian Language College established by the Hawai`i State Legislature in 1997 to provide special support to the Hawaiian language. I am also a founding board member of the 'Aha Punana Leo.

I strongly support HB 2667 HD1. It sets the groundwork for the vision expressed by Superintendent Hamamoto for partnering with the 'Aha Punana Leo and Kamehameha to serve Hawaiian language medium schools. It also provides recognition of the unique status of Hawaiian medium schools within our public school system and provides a means to further strengthen Hawai`i's position as national leader in indigenous language medium education.

Contemporary Hawaiian medium education in Hawai`i began 20 years ago with a grassroots initiative at the Pūnana Leo preschool level. The system currently serves K-12 students statewide. The program is well known nationally and internationally as the outstanding example indigenous education under the 1990 Federal Native American Languages Act.

HB 2667 HD1 will not only provide official and permanent status to this long-standing program, but also provide the means to address many of its unique challenges in the areas of transportation, administration, student assessment, and teacher recruitment. And, it will also provide a structure through which other entities can better work with the Department of Education to serve Hawaiian speaking students of our state schools system.

I strongly urge passage of HB 2667 HD1.