



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Education

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By

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SB 603: Relating to Education

Chair Sakamoto, Vice Chair Tokuda, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of SB 603, which expands the duties of the charter school review panel; clarifies the manner in which the executive director of the charter school administrative office is appointed and evaluated; updates the charter school funding formula; creates a category for agency-sponsored charter schools; requires the charter school administrative office to provide staff and resources for the charter school review panel; and increases the membership of the charter school review panel.

The University already has established collaborations with several charter schools. This bill enables the University, should it decide to do so, to expand on those collaborations with existing partnerships and/or enter into new collaborations to establish new charter schools.

In particular, we are in favor of shifting authority for authorizing charter schools, approving charter school amendments to detailed implementation plans, providing oversight of charter schools, and appointing the Executive Director of the Charter School Administrative Office to the charter school review panel. It also seems prudent to add a few other perspectives to the review panel, specifically, persons with business and real estate expertise. Charter schools are constantly faced with these challenges and it will be helpful to have such expertise on the review panel.

The funding formula for charter schools remains controversial, especially the base on which the formula applies. SB603 ensures that charter school allocations are based on the most recently approved Department of Education budget.

Charter schools from their inception have been intended as sites for innovation and workforce links. Charter schools are an ideal vehicle for agency-sponsored activities and by encouraging agency-sponsored charter schools, SB603 provides an ideal opportunity to experiment with and develop science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and other initiatives.

Charter schools provide great flexibility and little bureaucracy, which is exactly what industries/agencies need. The charter schools have an autonomous Local School Board that can, through the charter, identify important industry/agency stakeholders who might sit on the Board.

If industries/agencies are going to invest in a school, they need to know that the theme and purpose of the school will not change if the leadership changes. The charter ensures stability. The agency-sponsored idea invites existing agencies, including UH campuses and other government programs/stakeholders to actively participate in the public school system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.