UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM
Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
February 22, 2008, 11:00 am, Room 211

Virginia S. Hinshaw, Chancellor
Written Testimony by
Christine K. Sorensen
Dean, College of Education
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 3252 SD1: Relating to Teachers

Chair Baker, Vice Chair Tsutsui, and Members of the Committee:

The College of Education supports as its priorities in SB 3252 S.D. 1 the following: Part II (Praxis preparation), Part V (Professional Development Schools), Part VI (allocation of complex resources to professional development and retention initiatives), Part VIII (teacher cadet program), and Part IX (beginning teacher induction program), with **highest** priority for funding to Parts V (Professional Development Schools) and IX (induction). These priority recommendations focus on retaining exiting teachers, helping them to teach more effectively, and promoting a "grow our own" teacher pipeline among Hawai'i high school students who are more likely to remain in the state for their future professional lives.

This past fall, College of Education leaders have participated in discussions with a variety of education stakeholders, including the Teacher Education Coordinating Council (TECC), and we have reviewed the information provided by the Hawai'i Educational Policy Center (HEPC) in its report on the teacher workforce in the state. We believe that one of the most pressing problems in our state is a need to attract and retain a quality teaching workforce. Many of the policies identified in SB3252 S.D.1 have the potential, collectively, to positively impact the teacher workforce and help to address the state's needs for highly qualified teachers. While a holistic plan has the most potential to make a long term difference, we have identified the specific strategies above as those worthy of the highest priority given the limited resources of the state. The data we have seen suggest that the priority should go to programs designed to retain teachers and more fully develop their skills rather than simply aim to produce more teachers, particularly at a time when there is unused production capacity within existing teacher education programs.

The HEPC report found that the Institutions of Higher Education in Hawai'i are producing approximately 700–800 teachers each year, a number about equal to the number of teachers who leave the DOE system each year for retirement, illness, and death. The workforce development issue is one of retention more than capacity to produce new teachers. We believe, given the data, that the focus should be on retaining teachers in the profession once they have completed their training.

In addition to targeting funds to programs designed to recruit our brightest students into teacher education and to retain those teachers we have trained, we believe a high priority should be given to the establishment of a teacher data warehouse that will provide the necessary information to track and study our teacher workforce capacity. Such a data warehouse could better serve State policy makers, all teacher preparation institutions in Hawai‘i, the DOE and the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board. Models of such data systems exist in other states and have demonstrated their power in effectively providing data for policy development and decision making.

The College of Education recommends targeting priority strategies that impact retention as having the greatest immediate impact on the continuing teacher workforce development problem.

Thank your for the opportunity to testify.