

**NEIL ABERCROMBIE**  
GOVERNOR



**TERRI FUJII**  
CHAIRPERSON

STATE OF HAWAII  
**STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION**  
**(‘AHA KULA HO‘ĀMANA)**

<http://CharterCommission.Hawaii.Gov>  
1111 Bishop Street, Suite 516, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813  
Tel: 586-3775 Fax: 586-3776

---

FOR: SB 2236 Relating to Early Learning  
DATE: Wednesday, January 29, 2014  
TIME: 1:30 a.m.  
COMMITTEE(S): Senate Committee on Education  
ROOM: Conference Room 211  
FROM: Alison Kunishige, Chief Operations Officer  
State Public Charter School Commission

---

**Testimony in support of SB 2925**

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

The State Public Charter School Commission in support of this measure, which would include public charter schools along with Department of Education (DOE) schools among those with which the Executive Office on Early Learning is authorized to enter into agreements to use vacant or underutilized classrooms for public preschool classrooms statewide.

The Commission applauds the recognition of charter schools embodied in this measure and notes that several charter schools themselves are experienced providers of pre-K programs, while other pre-K services are provided on or next to charter school campuses by the non-profit organization affiliated with that charter school or by other providers.

We do note that the language concerning “vacant or underutilized classrooms,” depending on its meaning, might unintentionally limit the ability of charter schools to contribute to the state effort. As a practical matter, because of the challenges charter schools confront in addressing their facilities needs, the Commission is not certain that charter schools currently have unused or underutilized classrooms. However, if the intent is merely to ensure that any school that is to

be considered for participation be able to make suitable space available to house a preschool program, we would respectfully request that the Committee ensure that this intent is clear.

For the Committee's consideration the Commission also would like to highlight a related issue that has come to our attention. Currently two of the charter schools that already offer pre-K programs serve special needs children with Individualized Education Programs (IEP). The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that pre-schoolers with special needs from the age of three be able to receive special education services from the public school system, and in addition our understanding is that the conversion charter schools are required to serve these pre-K students under the memorandum of understanding each executes with the DOE upon conversion.

However, it is our understanding that pre-K students with IEPs currently are not included by the Legislature in the projected enrollment count that is used to calculate the DOE budget, on which per pupil funding for charter schools is based under the statutory formula. Nor are such students included in the official October 25, 2013 enrollment count, which among other things is used for an annual funding "true-up" that reconciles the per pupil funding provided to charter schools based on total DOE and charter school enrollments.

The end result is that currently no per pupil funding is provided for those charter schools that serve pre-K student with IEPs, although they are legally required to do serve these children. Our current understanding is that the DOE schools do receive weighted student formula funding for such students, but that additional funds are not appropriated to the DOE for this purpose.

The Commission has inquired about this issue with the Governor's Office and the DOE as well, but we would like to call the Legislature's attention to the situation in case the deliberations over this bill and over other measures related to early childhood education provide a timely opportunity for its consideration.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide this testimony.

**Senate Education Committee**  
**Early Childhood Education (SB2236)**  
**RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING.**

**SB 2236 – STRONG SUPPORT**

January 29, 2014

Testimony

Aloha, my name is Uvonne Lindsey on behalf of the Department of Education – West Hawaii District; Big Island I would like to add my support for SB2236 as a member of Ka HULI Mua, LLC.

**The Ka HULI Mua, LLC consortium wishes to be considered for this program.**

West Hawaii Department of Education has serviced families for the past 13 years at Naalehu Elementary, Hookena Elementary, Honaunau Elementary, Waikoloa Elementary and Waimea Elementary. We are a National Family Literacy program providing families four program outcomes: 1) Children's education; 2) Parent Education; 3) Parent / Child interaction; and 4) Adult Education for families to retrieve a GED. The funding to support this program has been granted through Federal RFP's with exception to this year as the Department has chosen to partner with Ka Huli Mua, LLC. We are currently servicing 117 students through Home Base and Preschool programs and 215 students between kindergarten and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade are receiving academic monitored support as participants within the past three years. Last year we interviewed 125 seniors who graduated from High Schools on the Big Island, participants of the DOE's preschool 13 years ago. All with ambition to attend higher education, enrolled in arm forces or are working in our communities.

With support from SB2236 Ka Huli Mua, LLC will service children / families.

**I respectfully request your support for SB 2236 and thank you for this opportunity!**

Preschool Director  
Uvonne Lindsey  
Hawaii Department of Education  
West Hawaii District- Big Island

**Senate Education Committee**  
**Early Childhood Education (SB2236)**  
**RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING.**

**SB 2236 – STRONG SUPPORT**

January 29, 2014

Testimony

Aloha, my name is Patricia Bergin and I am testifying on behalf of the group of five preschools that make up **Ka HULI Mua, LLC**.

**We would like to be considered for this program.**

The **Hawaii United Learning Initiative** (Ka HULI Mua) consists of a diverse group of five preschool collaborators from across the state committed to improving early learning outcomes in underserved communities across Hawai'i. Our membership consists of two full immersion Native Hawaiian language programs (one of which is Ni'ihau), one bi-lingual program, and two public school preschool programs.

Ka HULI Mua preschools convene regularly to strengthen programming, share best practices and coordinate testing, accreditation and professional development across the system. Aligned with state preschool HELDS and kindergarten standards, Ka HULI Mua preschools are grounded in research-based programs.

Ka HULI Mua preschools are committed to:

- Common assessment and longitudinal data collection;
- Accreditation, compliant facilities and professional staff development;
- Enriching classrooms that integrate Hawaiian language and culture;
- Sharing best practices in early education; and
- Honoring the diversity of members.

As administrator for Mālamapōki'i Early Childhood Education Program at Kanu o ka 'Āina New Century Public Charter School in Kamuela on the Big Island and in my experience as a DOE administrator for more than 35 years, I can attest to the strength pre-school programs such as ours brings to children in rural communities. Establishing our multi-age early childhood education program was the smartest decision we made. Clearly, our school readiness data reflects that 100% our children exceed readiness indicators surpassing other area preschools with above average degree of readiness. This upward trend has continued in elementary student performance results over time particularly in reading.

**On behalf of our students and families at KANU, I whole-heartedly endorse SB2236 and respectfully request your support for SB2236.**

Mahalo for allowing me this opportunity to provide input regarding this bill.

**Patricia Bergin, Co-Administrator**  
**Kanu o ka 'Āina NCPCS**

**Senate Education Committee**  
**Early Childhood Education (SB2236)**  
**RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING.**

**SB 2236 – STRONG SUPPORT**

January 29, 2014

Testimony

Aloha, my name is Ivy (Meahilahila) Kelling and I am testifying on behalf of our public preschool, **Nā Pualei ‘o Sarah Hainakolo Kupanihi Kamakau (NA PUALEI)**, at Ke Kula ‘o Samuel M. Kamakau. We are also one of five statewide preschools who comprise the early learning group, **Ka HULI Mua, LLC**.

**We would like to be considered for this program.**

NA PUALEI was developed as a Hawaiian Immersion pilot model of preschool under the program’s charter with its first class of 16 students in the 2012-2013SY and was funded by the Native Hawaiian Education Programs. We currently serve 18 four-year olds at no cost to families. Our goals for the program are to eliminate the barriers of affordability, access and quality to early childhood education. NA PUALEI hopes to continue this pilot project providing critical data on how this model can benefit at-risk students, and be scaled up to other charter and DOE schools, while meeting the need of the community.

NA PUALEI has spent the first year of its program recruiting and training the instructional and administrative staff. The next two year of serving pre-school aged children have been spent developing quality cultural- based curriculum and aligning our pre-school standards to Kamakau’s existing K-12 program to staircase the areas of reading and math.

Our collaboration with Ka HULI Mua preschools have also benefitted our school as we are able to share best practice in early education amongst a diverse group of preschools located across the state. We continue to work on identifying common assessments to collect and report longitudinal data across the group.

**I respectfully request your support for SB 2236 and thank you for this opportunity!**

**Respectfully submitted,**



**I.Meahilahila Kelling, Ed.D.**  
**Director**

**Senate Education Committee**  
**Early Childhood Education (SB2236)**  
**RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING.**

**SB 2236 – STRONG SUPPORT**

January 29, 2014

Testimony

Aloha, on behalf of Ke Kula Niihau O Kekaha Preschool I, Haunani Seward would like to add my support for SB2236 as a member of Ka HULI Mua, LLC.

**The Ka HULI Mua, LLC consortium wishes to be considered for this program.**

Specifically, Ke Kula Niihau O Kekaha has been in operation since 2004 after receiving an NHEA grant to fund the establishment of the preschool. This year we are at capacity serving twelve students. Our mission is to support the native fluency of our students in the Niihau language beginning in the earliest years of language acquisition.

The number of native speaking Niihau students attending our charter school has declined by 50% since 2004. With support from SB2236 we are working to stem the tide of that decline to ensure the continuance of native voices in our state.

**I respectfully request your support for SB 2236 and thank you for this opportunity!**



Preschool Director  
Haunani Seward

# LATE TESTIMONY

**From:** [Shaley DeGiorgio](#)  
**To:** [EDU Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** Testimony in support of SB2826 and SB2236  
**Date:** Wednesday, January 29, 2014 12:31:00 PM

---

Shaley DeGiorgio from Kaneohe, HI writes:

Dear Chair Tokuda and Vice-Chair Kidani, I am writing in support of SB2826, which establishes the Early Childhood Education Program within the Early Learning System established by section 302L-2, HRS; and SB2236, which authorizes the executive office on early learning to enter into agreements with the department of education and charter schools for use of vacant or underutilized classrooms as public preschool classrooms. Last year, you made the courageous decision to begin building the foundation of a high-quality early learning system for Hawaii; you passed and funded a school readiness system and you looked ahead and passed a measure to place a constitutional amendment on the 2014 ballot to ask Hawaii's residents if we are ready to invest in a statewide community preschool system – a system contracts w/ our local non-profit preschools and our public school system. Now, we need your help once again and pass SB2826. This measure will ensure that Hawaii's preschool program will have the capacity, quality, and oversight to succeed. Please support SB2826 and SB2236, and thank-you for allowing me to submit this testimony in support of Hawaii's future.

By age 3, there is already a difference in how many words children have heard, depending on family income level:

Children of professional parents - 45 million words

Children with working class parents - 26 million words

Children on welfare - 13 million words

I grew up on welfare. My mother, who is very open about her own struggles with reading comprehension, didn't read to me as a child. I don't have a single memory of her reading anything aloud. I can remember four books in my house—and additionally, my parents didn't talk about current events, politics, or anything outside the realm of typical things, like "what's for dinner, and what are you watching on TV?"

I grew up on welfare and I was starved for words.

In the 5th grade, my teachers realized I was reading at a 2nd grade level, and I barely graduated high school. But that's not where my story ends.

I've spent, literally, the last twenty years trying to compensate for a lack of rich, juicy, nutritious words when I was growing up. And, I'll tell you where I am now... but as I describe my achievements, think not about what I've done, think about where I could have been if, as a child, I'd had a better foothold on the future that would inevitably come.

I currently work as the lead communications person for Cornell University's IT department (more than 300 people). Cornell University is located in New York. Telecommuters from this distance are almost unheard of at the university. In fact, about two years ago, I was told that I couldn't keep my job any longer, because if I wasn't sitting in NY, then someone else deserved the job. And do you know what helped me to overcome the obstacle, keep my job, and help to launch a pilot to encourage all Cornell employees to telecommute? My very carefully, very strategically chosen words.

I am also about to publish my second book, a sci-fi novel. I am a writer now and I spend every day pouring over the power of words. I work alongside other writers with Ivy League educations, who I thankfully, constantly learn and grow from.

But, I am a very rare individual.

Understanding a word, a sentence, a paragraph, a constitution, is the difference between empowerment and helplessness.

We cannot control what happens at home, if parents are broke, if they use TV to babysit their kids, but we CAN provide opportunities for children to learn, to get out of the house, to expand their horizons. We can give them a chance to start using more words sooner, read to them, talk to them, and interact with them.

As an adult, I often think back on my childhood and I think, if only... I'd be lying if I said that I don't hold resentments that my parents didn't take more responsibility, make better decisions, and prioritize my education. But, we're not talking about my parents, are we?

We're talking about what the state can do for children who are living the same circumstances I did then. We're talking about future citizens who will some day look back and they will either feel like, "hey, Hawaii stood up for me," or they'll look back and feel like, "the state doesn't care, they never did, and I'm all alone."

By intervening, you are sending these future citizens a message. You're telling them they are worth it, they are a priority, they are valued. It's your duty to the public to make decisions that demonstrate you believe—it's your responsibility to do everything in your power to ensure these children believe in themselves.

It's imperative, because you have no idea the potential each of these children have. You have the unique privilege of a profession that, despite a lack of familial or friendship relationships, can directly affect the confidence and potential of generations of children to come.

Please, always vote in favor of early childhood education.

Much Aloha,

Shaley DeGiorgio

808 636-1817

-----  
Form Data:

Email 1 (Primary): [degiorgio@cornell.edu](mailto:degiorgio@cornell.edu)

First Name: Shaley

Last Name: DeGiorgio

City: Kaneohe

State: HI

ZIP Code: 96744

# LATE TESTIMONY

**From:** [Vernon Azuma](#)  
**To:** [EDU Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** Testimony in support of SB2826 and SB2236  
**Date:** Wednesday, January 29, 2014 10:33:17 AM

---

Vernon Azuma from Honolulu, HI writes:

Dear Chair Tokuda and Vice-Chair Kidani, I am writing in support of SB2826, which establishes the Early Childhood Education Program within the Early Learning System established by section 302L-2, HRS; and SB2236, which authorizes the executive office on early learning to enter into agreements with the department of education and charter schools for use of vacant or underutilized classrooms as public preschool classrooms. Last year, you made the courageous decision to begin building the foundation of a high-quality early learning system for Hawaii; you passed and funded a school readiness system and you looked ahead and passed a measure to place a constitutional amendment on the 2014 ballot to ask Hawaii's residents if we are ready to invest in a statewide community preschool system – a system contracts w/ our local non-profit preschools and our public school system. Now, we need your help once again and pass SB2826. This measure will ensure that Hawaii's preschool program will have the capacity, quality, and oversight to succeed. As a pediatrician, I am very aware of the importance of Early Education for our preschool kids who have no voice of their own, yet represent the future of Hawaii. Please support SB2826 and SB2236, and thank-you for allowing me to submit this testimony in support of Hawaii's future. Mahalo!

-----  
Form Data:

Email 1 (Primary): vazuma@yahoo.com

First Name: Vernon

Last Name: Azuma

City: Honolulu

State: HI

ZIP Code: 96822

**From:** [Brian Wu](#)  
**To:** [EDU Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** Testimony in support of SB2826 and SB2236  
**Date:** Wednesday, January 29, 2014 2:53:23 PM

---

Brian Wu from Honolulu, HI writes:

Dear Chair Tokuda and Vice-Chair Kidani, I am writing in support of SB2826, which establishes the Early Childhood Education Program within the Early Learning System established by section 302L-2, HRS; and SB2236, which authorizes the executive office on early learning to enter into agreements with the department of education and charter schools for use of vacant or underutilized classrooms as public preschool classrooms. Last year, you made the courageous decision to begin building the foundation of a high-quality early learning system for Hawaii; you passed and funded a school readiness system and you looked ahead and passed a measure to place a constitutional amendment on the 2014 ballot to ask Hawaii's residents if we are ready to invest in a statewide community preschool system – a system contracts w/ our local non-profit preschools and our public school system. Now, we need your help once again and pass SB2826. This measure will ensure that Hawaii's preschool program will have the capacity, quality, and oversight to succeed. Please support SB2826 and SB2236, and thank-you for allowing me to submit this testimony in support of Hawaii's future. Mahalo!

-----  
Form Data:

Email 1 (Primary): wupedspulm@gmail.com

First Name: Brian

Last Name: Wu

City: Honolulu

State: HI

ZIP Code: 96814