

HCR173

Submitted on: 3/19/2015

Testimony for EDN on Mar 20, 2015 14:00PM in Conference Room 309

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
kelley puuhau	State of Hawaii-Dept. of Education	Comments Only	No

Comments: Department: Education Testifier Kathryn S. Matayoshi, Superintendent of Education Title of Resolution: HCR 173 REQUESTING THE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO DEVELOP A STRATEGIC PLAN TO ADDRESS CHRONIC STUDENT ABSENTEEISM. Purpose of Resolution: Department's Position: This testimony provides comments from the Department of Education on H.C.R 173. The Board of Education and the Department of Education have identified chronic absenteeism as a strong predictor of academic success and have taken steps to improve school attendance. While the intent of the resolution is aligned with ongoing work to curb absenteeism, the Department is concerned that the resolution requires significant short and long term work, without providing funding or other resources. The Board and the Department have undertaken the following efforts, aligned with national best practices, to shine a light on the problem of chronic absenteeism and support schools: · State "increasing the percentage of students who attend school" as an explicit target in the Board and Department Strategic Plan. · Provide regular updates on chronic absenteeism data as part of the Strategic Plan Scorecard report from the Department to the Board. · Include chronic absenteeism as part of the school accountability system - the Strive HI Performance System. · Develop and provide school staff with access to and training on a data system that allows them to track absences over time via a user friendly "early warning" report. · Begin the process of streamlining administrative burden relative to student data entry at the school level by soliciting proposals for a new student information system. · Engage in a comprehensive communications campaign to highlight the importance of attending school. These policy and implementation decisions, put in place over the course of the past two years, are already paying off. According to the school year 2013-2014 Strive HI results, the percentage of chronically absent students dropped 39 percent, from 11 percent from 18 percent. Overall, 5,500 fewer elementary school students were chronically absent and 163 of 169 elementary schools improved their chronic absenteeism rates. As is demonstrated above, chronic absenteeism is a priority for the Department of Education. The intent of H.C.R. 173 is well aligned with the Department's areas of focus. However, the Department is concerned that the proposed resolution would place a unfunded burden on state and school staff to develop a plan as directed. At this time, school principals retain autonomy over the attendance collection and communication procedures in their schools. Satisfying the requirements for developing a strategic plan would require significant staff resources to review the policies and procedures at each individual school. The Department is also concerned that the specificity in the required results would potentially impede on the autonomy and authority of principals to establish internal school policies and procedures that are most appropriate for communicating with their students, families, and communities.

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cheryl	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments: They already have plenty plans to deal with chronic absenteeism. This is an issue that is bigger than schools. This is poverty, houselessness and other related issues like being a babysitter for parents who are working. It is NOT just people not going to school. UNTIL the legislature is willing and puts money into helping our children who live in these conditions, there is really no policy that will work at the school level. Incentives and threats do not work. Kids come to school when they can. It is not even a matter of motivation in some cases. I am speaking from the point of view of a retired teacher who taught for 40 years in more than one state. The symptoms are the same but most schools and states try to put a band aid on an injury that is life threatening. Please give consideration to addressing the exact causes.

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Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Carl Campagna	Individual	Support	No



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March 19, 2015

re: Friday, March 20, 2015 EDN-HED Hearing (2 pm)

Testimony on: **HR109** and **HCR173** - REQUESTING THE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO DEVELOP A STRATEGIC PLAN TO ADDRESS CHRONIC STUDENT ABSENTEEISM.

Aloha EDN and HED Members,

I **support** HR109 and HCR173, and ask that the EDN pass this bill and resolution **with the following amendment underlined and in red** to the resolution that appears in both bills as follows:

“...BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Education and the Board of Education are requested to implement standards requiring direct communication **from a school administrator or administrative support staff member** of any absences or tardiness to a student's guardians within a reasonable timeframe...”

Rationale for Requested Amendment:

Teachers should not be required to perform the tasks associated with getting chronic absenteeism under control, but they are. This is a problem that the DOE and BOE are not going to correct without legislative mandate. I ask the legislature to make it clear that handling chronic absenteeism is an administrative task not to be passed onto our highly-qualified, hard-working teachers.

Teachers should focus on tasks *directly* related to teaching. Performing the administrative tasks associated with chronic absenteeism, e.g. contacting parents, filing forms, conducting parent interviews, etc., should be done school administrators with assistance from administrative support staff. Forcing teachers to perform these tasks is absurd.

In the Big Island school where I taught, teachers were expected to perform these duties. This is an outrageous waste of teacher time and expertise. It's also terribly inefficient to train teachers to do these administrative tasks. Only a few staff members at each school need to be trained and proficient at performing these responsibilities, and year after year, families with chronic absenteeism will be dealing with the same school administrator – not a different teacher starting from scratch each year.

We need this amendment so that our teachers are free to focus on teaching, and the responsibility for chronic absenteeism is clearly defined as being within the domain of school administrators' duties.

Teachers should be teaching. Administrators should be handling the tasks associated with chronic absenteeism. This shouldn't have to be spelled out in the law, but in Hawai'i, it does because the DOE and BOE are not going to fix the problem. Therefore, we need the legislature to do something about it.

Mahalo,

Vanessa Ott