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FOR: SB 2586 Relating to Charter Schools and
SB 2704 Relating to Public Charter Schools
DATE: Monday, February 8, 2010
TIME: 1:45 p.m.
COMMITTEE(S): Education and Housing
ROOM: Conference Room 225
FROM: Maunalei Love, Executive Director

Testimony in **support** of S.B. No. 2586 and S.B. No. 2704.

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

Aloha, I am Maunalei Love, executive director of the Charter School Administrative Office (“CSAO”). I want to thank the chair and the entire committee for the time and effort being spent to remedy the issue of adequately providing needed resources to all public schools and making Hawaii more competitive for the Race to the Top grant.

We support the intent of both SB 2586 and SB 2704 requiring the Charter School Review Panel (CSRP) to determine a clear process with rigorous criteria for charter schools to be reauthorized on a regular basis. We support allowing the Charter School Administrative Office (CSAO) to directly withhold funds from the EDN 600 allocation for its operational expenses, including salaries for staff and the executive director. The CSAO also supports providing transparent accountability for charter schools and repealing the cap on the number of charter schools. The CSAO particularly supports ensuring that charter school students receive equitable funding along with facilities funding and access. Also supported at the national level both by the US DOE and the National Charter School Alliance is having multiple public charter school authorizers as reflected in the National Alliance’s Model Law.

While we support the intent of SB2704 to improve the charter schools within the public education system by restructuring its governance, we cannot support converting the executive director into a deputy superintendent and placing the CSAO within the department under the current structure. Such a move would seriously compromise the autonomy of the charter schools and hinder many of the reformative measures taking place at Hawaii’s charter schools.

We do support these bills for the changes they make towards providing equitable funding and a supportive environment for all DOE and public charter schools to better position Hawaii in competition for U.S. Department of Education’s Race to the Top (RTT) initiative. States with policies in place supporting equitable funding and facilities for all

public school students are at greater competitive advantage to qualify for RTT and other federal grant programs.

The CSAO is ready, willing, and able to help with any revisions to clarify the details in these drafts. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.