WHEREAS, public charter schools are an essential part of Hawaii's public education system and provide a quality education to over 11,000 students; and

WHEREAS, public charter schools improve education standards by giving families a choice, implementing innovative education strategies, and often by integrating Hawaiian language, culture, and history into the curriculum; and

WHEREAS, although the public charter school system benefits Hawaii's students, the existing legal and financial frameworks under which public charter schools must operate continue to shortchange students; and

WHEREAS, the existing legal framework gives an unclear scope of authority to the charter school commission, leading to inconsistent enforcement of regulatory standards ranging from inadequate to overbearing, and leaving students without clear due process rights; and

WHEREAS, the broken financial system too often leaves charter schools with inadequate facilities, underfunded special education programs, and understaffed faculties; and

WHEREAS, according to section 302D-28, Hawaii Revised Statutes, charter schools should receive the same per-pupil allocation from general fund appropriations as Department of Education schools, but public charter schools must use per-pupil dollars to pay for rent, salaries, and other expenses while Department of Education schools use rent-free state-owned...
facilities and receive funds for other costs in addition to per-pupil allotments; and

WHEREAS, the practical effect of this financial system is that public charter schools must operate with thousands of dollars less per student than Department of Education schools; and

WHEREAS, because the pervasive financial and legal inequalities in Hawaii's education system are so great and the flaws too complex to fix piecemeal, the system needs to be fundamentally rethought and reworked to protect children's educational futures; and

WHEREAS, the State Auditor's independence and autonomy makes the office ideally suited to produce objective and trustworthy recommendations for structural reform, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the Twenty-ninth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2018, that the Auditor is requested to perform a study of:

(1) The current legal frameworks pertaining to public charter schools; and

(2) The current financial systems pertaining to public charter schools; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Auditor is requested to create:

(1) Actionable proposals for structural reform of the legal frameworks and financial systems pertaining to public charter schools, incorporating multiple philosophical perspectives; and

(2) Actionable proposals for financial reform aimed at providing equal per-pupil funding for charter school students; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Auditor is requested to submit a report of the study to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2019; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Auditor, the Chairperson of the Board of Education, and the Chairperson of the Charter School Commission.

OFFERED BY:  

Geraldine Honda
R.L. McDonald

JAN 17 2018