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Hawaii Board of Education
General Business Meeting
Donald Horner, Chair
Brian De Lima, Vice Chair

May 19, 2015

Dear Chair Horner, Vice Chair De Lima and Members:

The Hui for Excellence in Education (HE'E) is a diverse coalition of over 40 parent and community organizations dedicated to improving student achievement by increasing family and community engagement and partnerships in our schools. Our member list is attached.

This testimony is submitted in support for proposed policy 101.7 on School Climate and Discipline. The proposed policy gives guidance to schools to help promote a positive versus punitive environment. HE'E strongly supports the concept of keeping students in school as opposed to suspensions. In particular, we like the language "Schools should remove students from the classroom as a disciplinary consequence only as a last resort and only for appropriately serious infractions. Students who are removed from class shall be provided with meaningful academic instruction and behavioral supports." The Coalition has also been concerned about the number of suspensions being skewed towards the Pacific Islander population, and that once a student is suspended they are greater risk of falling behind, dropping out and potentially entering the criminal justice system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Cheri Nakamura
HE'E Coalition Director

HE'E Member List

Academy 21
After-School All-Stars Hawaii
Alliance for Place Based Learning
*Castle Complex Community Council
*Castle-Kahuku Principal and CAS
Coalition for Children with Special Needs
*Faith Action for Community Equity
Fresh Leadership LLC
Girl Scouts Hawaii
*Good Beginnings Alliance
Harold K.L. Castle Foundation
*Hawaii Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Hawai'i Athletic League of Scholars
*Hawai'i Charter School Network
*Hawai'i Nutrition and Physical Activity Coalition
*Hawaii State PTSA
Hawai'i State Student Council
Hawai'i State Teachers Association
Hawai'i P-20
Hawai'i 3Rs
Head Start Collaboration Office
It's All About Kids
*INPEACE
Joint Venture Education Forum
Junior Achievement of Hawaii
*Kaho'omiki
Kamehameha Schools
Kanu Hawai'i
*Kaua'i Ho'okele Council
Keiki to Career Kaua'i
Kupu A'e

*Leaders for the Next Generation
Learning First
McREL's Pacific Center for Changing the Odds
Our Public School
*Pacific Resources for Education and Learning
*Parents and Children Together
*Parents for Public Schools Hawai'i
Punahou School PUEO Program
Teach for America
The Learning Coalition
US PACOM
University of Hawai'i College of Education
YMCA of Honolulu

Voting Members () Voting member organizations vote on action items while individual and non-voting participants may collaborate on all efforts within the coalition. List as of January 2015*

Testimony Submitted by Roberta Mayor
Concerning Board Item VI.E., Proposed New Board Policy 101.7
School Climate and Discipline

Good afternoon. My name is Roberta Mayor. I am a retired teacher, and school and district administrator of both the Hawaii and California Departments of Education. I am currently the President and Board Chair of the Education Institute of Hawaii, an education think tank committed to the empowerment of Hawaii schools.

I am here to express my concerns to the proposed board policy 101.7 on School Climate and Discipline that you are being asked to approve today. I urge you to delay approval of this policy until 1) meaningful input can be solicited from school practitioners who will be asked to implement the new policy, and 2) the policy can be rewritten to clarify some of the language, particularly concerning the “balance of the long-term best interests of the student against overall campus safety concerns” and how this is to be documented in writing.

I would like to thank the community stakeholders who developed the proposed policy and to acknowledge their commitment to promoting safe and positive school campuses. They are clearly concerned about the welfare of students who run afoul of the discipline system. However, although not invited to participate in the development of this proposed policy, the department’s school level staff, principals, teachers and school communities ALSO are committed to promoting safe and positive school campuses. They are stakeholders DIRECTLY impacted by school level discipline practices and can provide important perspectives and input on how discipline is, or should be, carried out at the school level.

The implementation of the proposed policy may also have some unforeseen cost implications for the department. Most schools have no discretionary funds to hire additional staff to provide supervision and instruction to a child who needs to be removed from a classroom, or to establish an in-school suspension option or an alternative school or classroom setting. A few schools with significant supplemental federal resources are able to hire additional staff to work with the misbehaving child. Most schools do not have this ability. Is the department willing to commit resources to the schools to enable options other than suspension?

In closing, I see an empowered school as a school in which the principal includes all school level and community stakeholders in every aspect of school operations and school culture, such as goal setting, strategic planning, implementation and assessment of instructional programs, safety, discipline and civic behavior of students, to name just a few. I encourage the board and department to model this inclusive behavior and empower our school leadership by soliciting the assistance of our principals and honoring their input. Please do not decree another top-down mandate on the schools that forces compliance without soliciting and considering school level input.

You cannot empower schools if principals are not invited to participate in the process of

decision-making, particularly when developing a new policy for adoption. How can anyone expect such an important policy to be successfully implemented by school level professionals who are not meaningfully asked to participate in defining and solving the perceived problem. Please take the time to include principals, teachers and school stakeholders in the development of this policy.

Mahalo for your consideration of my request to delay approval of this policy.