

Testimony BOE

From: Susan Pcola-Davis <susanp60@yahoo.com> on behalf of Susan Pcola-Davis
Sent: Sunday, February 14, 2021 1:56 PM
To: testimony.boe@boe.hawaii.gov
Subject: Testimony

III.A. Presentation on Department of Education requirements and guidance regarding calculating student hours for the 2020-2021 School Year in accordance with Hawaii Revised Statutes Section 302A-251

Support with comments

What a terrific presentation. I'd like to address the last slide regarding online learning "Parental Choice."

There are schools who have elected to provide continued distance learning regardless of parent choice.

Please provide a separate pie chart to accurately reflect that subset of students.



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David Miyashiro
Executive Director

February 18, 2021

Hawaii State Board of Education
Student Achievement Committee
Margaret Cox, Committee Chairperson
Kili Namau‘u, Committee Vice Chairperson

Aloha Chair Cox, Vice Chair Namau‘u, and Members of the Committee,

Per Discussion Item A, **HawaiiKidsCAN strongly opposes** the Hawaii DOE’s request for a general waiver to waive the requirements of HRS 302A-251 for the current school year.

Founded in 2017, HawaiiKidsCAN is a local nonprofit organization committed to ensuring that Hawaii has an excellent and equitable education system that reflects the true voices of our communities and, in turn, has a transformational impact on our children and our state. We strongly believe that all students should have access to excellent educational opportunities, regardless of family income levels and circumstances.

It is deeply disappointing that the Hawaii DOE is seriously considering abandoning 9 days of vital instruction time, as it is irrefutable that students have been suffering unprecedented learning loss and social emotional challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, HawaiiKidsCAN has testified going back to July 2020 that the Hawaii DOE should take a proactive approach in planning and negotiations, including but not limited to making up for lost instructional days by eliminating the spring break and institute days, or extending the school year by three weeks. There may be other creative approaches to deploy, including partnerships with community organizations to help make up lost learning by using weekends. It is unclear from the Hawaii DOE’s memo to the BOE if all options have been exhausted in the last 7 months, so we would urge the question of this waiver to be deferred until such conditions are met, including the upcoming spring break.

We were also disappointed that the Hawaii DOE request for a general waiver did not include specific references to bold interventions to make up more school time for kids.

School districts in [Atlanta](#), [Hartford](#), and [Nebraska](#) are among those looking at bold strategies to combat learning loss, including night school, spring break bootcamps, mandatory summer school, and longer school days. It is unclear if the Hawaii DOE is willing to put all ideas and options on the table for discussion before requesting the waiver, but we would urge the continuation of this discussion. While we recognize the financial challenges facing the public school system, accepting the waiver at this time is conceding defeat to a lost school year to many of our kids.

Mahalo for your consideration,

David Miyashiro
Founding Executive Director
HawaiiKidsCAN



February 18, 2021
Student Achievement Committee

Dear Chair Cox and Members of the Committee,

III. A. Presentation on Department of Education requirements and guidance regarding calculating student hours for the 2020-2021 School Year in accordance with Hawaii Revised Statutes Section 302A-251

We would like to comment on this discussion item.

On December 3, 2020, HE'E submitted a letter to the BOE asking that the BOE request that the DOE clarify the specific definition of student hours, substantiate that we are meeting the requirements of HRS 302A-251 on student hours, provide assurance that there has been clear communication and guidance to families regarding the definition of student hours and also attendance, and that the BOE address this matter in a public meeting. Our letter to the BOE is attached.

We thank the BOE for putting this discussion item on the Student Achievement Committee agenda.

The DOE in its presentation claims that they are fulfilling the average of 5 hours a day student hour requirements of HRS 302A-251. In addition, they acknowledge that they are falling short in meeting the 180 instructional day requirement due to the conversion of 9 instructional days to non-instructional days for training and professional development and ask the BOE to waive the requirements of the Act.

We have trouble with both the student hours presentation and the request for an exemption to the Act.

With respect to the presentation, while the DOE has listed its guidelines for reporting attendance and the relationship to student hours, we find it hard to believe that the state office can accurately calculate student hours for every school, especially since the definition of attendance is not standard across schools. Our understanding is that each school has established their own unique definition of attendance, i.e., for distance learning, some schools use only login time, while other schools use login time and specific assignment/task completion as a gauge for attendance. There is no consistency across schools on tracking attendance, so we are not sure if the calculations for student hours are accurate. In addition, we did not see specific information on communication to families regarding attendance or student hours.

Regarding the DOE's request for a waiver to HRS 302A-251, while we understand that COVID-19 presented an extreme circumstance which led to the conversion of the instructional days to non-instructional days, we feel that the students have had to unfairly bear the burden. At a minimum, we strongly urge that the DOE work with the respective unions through collective bargaining to restore some of those instructional days.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.
Sincerely,

Cheri Nakamura
HE'E Coalition Director



December 3, 2020
Board of Education
Alison Kunishige, Executive Director

Dear Ms. Kunishige,

Under Board Policy 400-5¹, members of the public may request by writing that an item be placed on a Board of Education meeting agenda. **We request that the matter of annual school hours and days pursuant to 302A-251, HRS, be placed on a future Board of Education General Business Meeting or Committee Meeting agenda.**

HE'E Coalition has heard from a number parents and families about the seeming lack of school hour time being provided by schools in distance learning and hybrid learning. Here are some examples:

1. Elementary school student having only 45 minutes distance learning synchronous instruction for PE in one school day
2. High school having distance learning synchronous instruction every day from 8:00am-11:55am
3. High school on hybrid learning instruction 2 days in-person from 8:00am-2:00pm and 3 days without any instruction

According to 302A-251, HRS, with respect to school year student hours, schools shall implement a school year that includes 915 student hours, which calculates to 5.5 hours per school day. These examples indicate that if we only count the synchronous or in-person instruction, the annual requirement for school student hours will not be met.

Additionally, because of the 2-week delay in the start of school due to distance learning training, the Department will not meet the requirement for 180 school days. According to the statute, all public schools, except for charter schools and multi-track public schools, shall implement a school year of 180 days, excluding professional development days and other non-instructional days negotiated pursuant to chapter 89. We believe that this item has not yet been resolved by the DOE and the BOE.

In the Reopening of Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year Resolution of the Board of Education, on lines 184-190, it states, "**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Board decrees that the Department may consider distance learning and hybrid learning equivalent to in-person learning for purposes of calculating instructional days and student hours and meeting the requirements of Section 302A-251, HRS, provided that the Department issues clear directives to schools and guidance to families and the public regarding how Department must calculate instructional days and student hours in distance learning and hybrid learning settings.

We do not believe that the DOE has given clear directives to schools and guidance to families and the public regarding how the DOE must calculate student hours, in particular, and ask that the BOE request that the DOE

¹ <http://boe.hawaii.gov/policies/Board%20Policies/Public%20Board%20of%20Education.pdf>

clarify the specific definition of school hours. Do school hours mean synchronous, asynchronous, and in-person instruction combined? What are the total school hours per day? Are we meeting the requirements of 302A-251, HRS? Has there been clear communication and guidance to families regarding the definition of student hours?

Thank you for this opportunity to submit our request.

Sincerely,

Cheri Nakamura
HE'E Coalition Director

HE'E Coalition Members and Participants

Academy 21
After-School All-Stars Hawai'i
Alliance for Place Based Learning
American Civil Liberties Union
Atherton YMCA
*Castle Complex Community Council
*Castle-Kahuku Principal and CAS
*Education Institute of Hawai'i
*Faith Action for Community Equity
Fresh Leadership LLC
Girl Scouts Hawai'i
Harold K.L. Castle Foundation
*HawaiiKidsCAN
*Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance
*Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
*Hawai'i Association of School Psychologists
Hawai'i Athletic League of Scholars
*Hawai'i Children's Action Network
Hawai'i Education Association
Hawai'i Nutrition and Physical Activity Coalition
* Hawai'i 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
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
Native Hawaiian Education Council
Our Public School
*Pacific Resources for Education and Learning
*Parents and Children Together
*Parents for Public Schools Hawai'i
Special Education Provider Alliance
*Teach for America
The Learning Coalition
US PACOM
University of Hawai'i College of Education

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