September 15 GBM testimony

Susan Pcola-Davis

WRITTEN COMMENTS

V. Reports of Board Committees, Board Members, and Superintendent

A. Finance and Infrastructure Committee Report on September 1, 2022 meeting:

(1) Presentation on Department of Education's ("Department") 2023-2025 fiscal biennium operating budget process

Before the 2020-2021 school year stared air purifiers, carbon dioxide monitors, box fans and MERV filters were purchased to improve ventilation in classrooms.

From the website:

The Department has taken the following steps to improve overall indoor air quality at schools to reduce the risk of airborne spread of COVID-19.

- To facilitate outside air exchange, 12,000 20-inch box fans were centrally purchased and distributed for every HIDOE classroom prior to the 2021-2022 school year.
- Over 4,000 HEPA air cleaners have been distributed to schools to increase air exchange in air-conditioned spaces, especially in rooms lacking windows or doors that open to outside).
- Schools were also given the opportunity to build their own CorsiRosenthal air cleaners with MERV-13 filters and box fans purchased by the Office of Facilities and Operations.
- The Office of Facilities and Operations also purchased 600 carbon dioxide sensors and distributed them, with instructions for proper use, to schools statewide for schools to assess the carbon dioxide levels in their rooms.

Maybe it is time to revisit the schools. How is it going?

I support the following:

With the discontinuation of the school mask mandate, it has become even more necessary for the DOE to ensure school classrooms are adequately ventilated, and that air purification is employed where adequate ventilation is not possible. Otherwise, if anyone with a contagious Covid-19 infection is present in the room, their virus-laden exhalations will build up in the air, posing a high risk of transmission to other occupants of the room.

"Heat abatement" is entirely distinct from the ventilation/air quality issue, because even in classrooms that have adequate air conditioning or are located at cooler altitudes, supplemental ventilation or air filtering is needed to reduce the level of aerosolized virus in the room. In rooms where air conditioning is relied upon for heat abatement, doors and windows are more likely to be kept closed, creating an even greater need for air purification. Even if the air conditioner is equipped with a high-grade filter capable of trapping virus particles, supplemental air purification may be needed if the air conditioner does not filter a sufficient volume of air per hour.

Air purifiers were delivered to some (but not all) classrooms last year, and air quality testing has been performed at some (but not all) schools. We are also aware that DOE has adopted and distributed ventilation guidelines for this year. These were steps in the right direction, but there is a great deal more to be done. There is no mention of any effort being made to educate administrative and facilities staff about the ventilation guidelines, much less to assess the degree to which schools are successfully implementing them. On the contrary, at the September 1, 2022 meeting of the Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, Assistant Superintendent Tanaka admitted that teachers are expected to decide for themselves whether and how to use fans or air filters.

This is absurd. Teachers and school administrators have not been trained and cannot be expected to deal with the complexities of airflow in the context of an aerosol pathogen. Yet when the air purifiers and box fans were distributed, school staff were given no instructions for their correct placement, and were not shown how to ensure the fans are not just blowing aerosolized virus from one student to another. Even with oscillating fans, strategic placement of the fans in the rooms is necessary.

If fans are just dropped off at schools, leaving teachers to determine how to deploy them based on the vague statements in DOE's ventilation guidelines, the fans may end up being used simply to try to cool the classroom, rather than as a tool to ensure there are adequate air exchanges to minimize the risk of virus transmission. Moreover, box fans do nothing to filter the air, which may be necessary if adequate air exchange is not possible; Corsi-Rosenthal boxes or commercial air purifiers must be used in addition. To do the job right, DOE's

trained facilities personnel must visit all affected classrooms to assess their individual ventilation dynamics and determine what equipment is needed and how it should be used.

Another obstacle to preventing virus transmission in our classrooms is the systemic issue with our public schools' outdated and inadequate electrical systems. For example, the electrical infrastructure in most of our schools is not equipped to handle the load that would be required in order to deploy HEPA filtration in HVAC systems (per 2021 memo from G. Bignami). In 2016, the DOE received public donations of air conditioners and fans to address heat, but those donations sat in boxes because there was no electrical infrastructure to accommodate them in the schools that needed them most. We have heard that some teachers cannot plug in their fans or air purifiers because there is no available power outlet. Classrooms may need multiple Corsi-Rosenthal boxes in order to do an adequate job, but be unable to use them (even if they are made available) because the school's electrical system cannot handle the load. Accordingly, in order to ensure that all of our state's public school classrooms have adequate air circulation and/or purification, we also need to make it a top priority to upgrade school electrical systems as soon as possible.

If we want our schools to stay open and be in a position to deliver high quality education consistently, the health of students, teachers, and staff must be better protected. From our vantage point, we are hearing horror stories of teachers and students coming to class with obvious symptoms of contagious illness, while carbon dioxide monitors and air purifiers sit unused in classrooms, offices, or storage rooms. And it is Assistant Superintendent Tanaka's job, as well as Superintendent Hayashi's moral obligation, to tackle those issues rather than expecting teachers and principals to do the job for them. The DOE must make a commitment to monitor and improve classroom air quality and to also make this issue one of the highest priorities for health and safety!

V. Reports of Board Committees, Board Members, and Superintendent

A. Finance and Infrastructure Committee Report on September 1, 2022 meeting:

(2) Update on status of Department's capital improvement projects and repair and maintenance and anticipated challenges for 2022-2023 school year

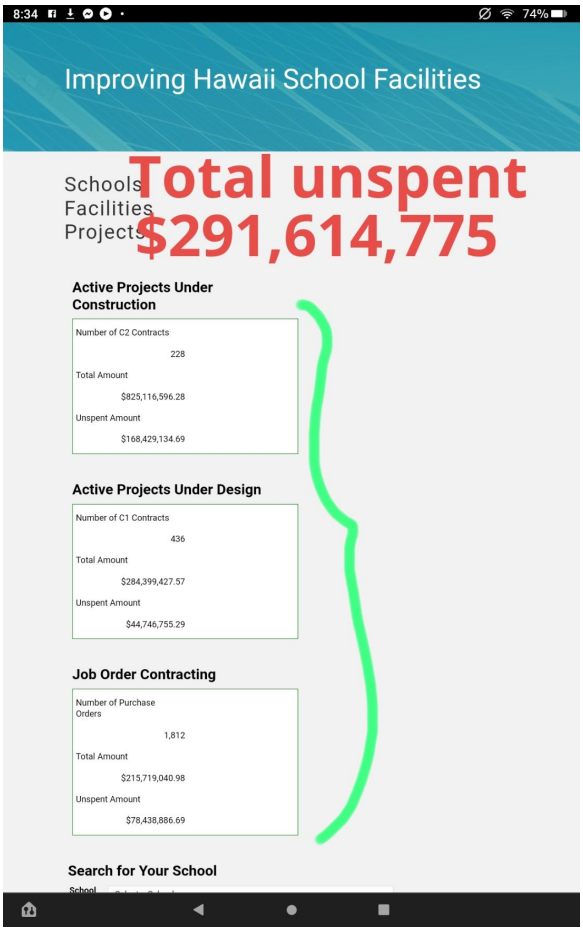
Access to this icon is no longer available. This is my screen shot from September 1.

Let's start here:
CIP FUNDS:

Total Unspent Funds: $2,213,551,013.60

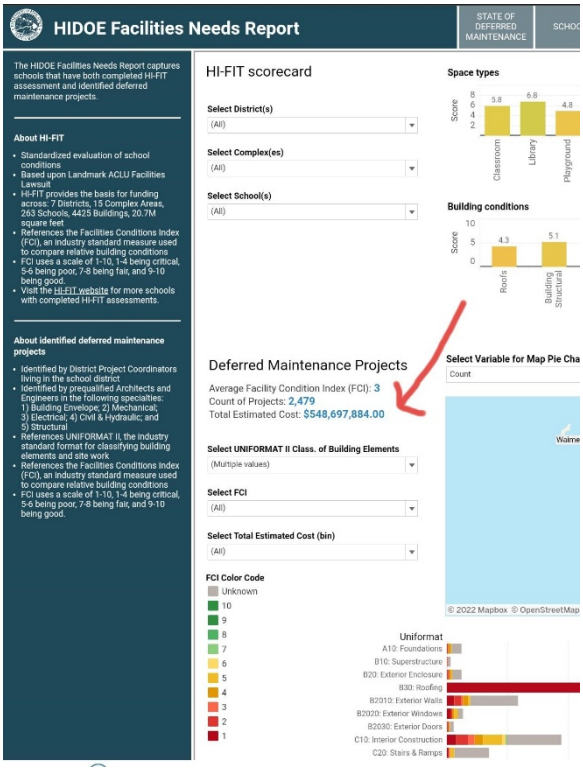
I believe pictures are with a thousand words. See the following.

School Facilities Projects



Deferred Maintenance Projects

Total Estimated Costs: $548,697,844



From FIC MEETING September 1

Re: Ventilation.

I did replay part 2 of the FIC meeting regarding ventilation.

It starts at 1:15:10 almost at the end of the meeting. Mr. Tanaka starts with a quick update on security and Red Hill.

Then he says, “We started with 12,000 classrooms (not other islands ??).

They put the classrooms in 5 tiers. Tier 1 is there ability to open windows, louvers. He mentioned that outer island schools are older so they can open windows.

Tier 4 and 5 there were 73 rooms. Tier 3 there are a few rooms left. He says "there are 2 ways to ventilate: circulate or filter the air"

That air purifiers (900 sq.ft. classroom) They had bought were Austin, black box at $500-700.

The box fans filter particles but some rooms its hard to put them in (no questions as to why?). He added that the fans are noisy. Because the supply of Merv 13 filters is hard to get right now, they are continuing with the box fans but waiting for the filters.

Lynn Falling asks, "Do you have to use the filters?". Tanaka's answer was, " It's a choice.". She then asked, " Who's choice?"

His response, " It's the teacher's choice to use a filter."

<u>What is being reported? Here are a few.</u>

1 We have a school wide chill water a/c system. The entire school is air conditioned by the chiller except the library which has its own A/C system. The system is old and inadequate so it is hot in our closed up classrooms. We are told to keep the windows and doors closed as to not overtax the system. We were recently given 2 stand fans because of everyone complaining about the heat. Everyone is using them to blow air at the kids. Mine are still in the boxes because I seem to be the only person who cares about not blowing Covid all around the room.

We are currently all in the library for a staff meeting and the a/c is broken. They have 2 doors open on adjoining walls. There is a portable air filter that is running but it's right by the door so idk if it's even doing anything except wasting electricity.

2. Three part post

2.a. It is true that schools have one or more co2 monitors. Whether they are actually being used to assess ventilation and adjust occupancy… ♀

These are my readings because I asked my admin about it (from left to right: time, co2 in ppm, temperature in C, humidity %, and pressure hpa). Concerned parents should ask their child's teachers/admin for the readings for their classroom(s).

2.b. How does that work if there's only 1-2 CO2 monitors on a campus? And everything seems to be chalked up to "it's the teacher's choice" as far as implementations. Do teachers have enough info as to how to strategically place fans in the room?

I also thought I read that Tanaka distributed materials to classrooms to build Corsi-Rosenthal boxes.

Did the C-R boxes actually get assembled and optimally placed?

2.c. I think I recall my admin saying our school has four…? One was left in my room for around a week, then admin picked it up and sent me the csv file. Last I heard fans were supposed to be placed facing out the door, so as not to blow one student's potentially infected air over another student? I don't think we got official training on that, other than the DOE health and safety guidance being shared with us via email. One of our CTE classes made CR boxes and was offering them to teachers on a FCFS basis. My room has a DOE HEPA, and knowing my CO2 readings, I did not request one.

3. No ventilation when there's no Tradewinds and limited windows that can open.

4. That is the type of room I was in, dependent on a/c, only 50% of the windows opened at a 45°angle to the ceiling and no special a/c filters. I took a transfer. No C02 monitoring.

5.

5.a. I have 7 fans and some days it's like an oven.

5.b Box fans to ventilate or fans that oscillate?

5.c. One box. Two oscillating. 2 Tower. 2 little desk.

5.c. My largest is 28.

5.d. Consult request with UH Scientist:

His response:

The basic question is, why is the room an oven? That indicates poor construction design. Somewhere, the sun's heat is not being insulated from the room. If it is the roof, then there needs to be insulation between the roof and the room. If there is an attic, an attic fan should be installed to remove the heated air, in addition to insulation to the ceiling. If it's uninsulated thin walls getting heated, a layer of insulation needs to be added.

Now, all of that requires a financial commitment of the State to the public schools.

The cheap solution is to get the heated air out of the classroom with box fans. If there are windows far enough apart, that's ideal because you make one the intake and the other the outflow and recreate the constant air flow of outdoors. You can still do this if the windows are close together, but then you need to mix in the air from the rest of the room. Fans in the far corners of the room will keep it mixed.

Just be careful not to have fans blow air from one kid to the next, because if the first is contagious, it fast-tracks their aerosol to the next.

I had oscillating fans because I get totally distracted when it blows in my direction.

6. After lunch we're melting! What burns is some teachers have ice cold A/C! No equity.

7.

7.a. Now if you know of any teachers around you that have them without filters let me know. Just need a number. Randy Tanaka is saying the teachers are choosing whether to use the filters or not.

7.b. Hahaha? Choosing? Wasn't asked.

8.

8a. fans only blow hot air! DOE should surrender their office AC and install box fans. Same for same!

8.b. Our primary concern here is not heat, but virus transmission. Yes, classrooms should have adequate heat abatement, but they ALSO need their air either replaced or filtered so as to reduce the level of aerosolized virus floating around.

Adding air conditioning makes that problem WORSE, because it usually means closing windows and doors. So if AC is added, the air MUST be adequately filtered and/or exchanged, as well as cooled.

9. There is 1 small box fan for my overcrowded, sweltering classroom. With all the windows and door open the room is stifling and we're all drenched in sweat by 9 am.

10. If filters are limiting, then to maximize the total virus removed from Hawai`i public schools, put one filter on each box fan and get them into the rooms immediately. I timed myself and it took me 30 seconds to tape the filter on the fan. There is NO EXCUSE for having any filter go idle when it could be removing viral aerosol every day.

If MERV 13s are hard to acquire, get MERV 14 or 16s for even more effective protection.

NO EXCUSES for the safety of the keiki.

Below is the guidance on ventilation that DOH developed for DOE, from https://health.hawaii.gov/coronavirusdisease2019/files/2022/08/Comprehensive-COVID-19-K-12-School-Guidance.pdf (p.5). How much of this is DOE actually implementing?

Improving ventilation is an important COVID-19 prevention strategy that can reduce SARS-CoV-2 virus in the air. Bringing fresh outdoor air into a building reduces virus concentration inside.

• Move activities, classes, and meals outdoors when circumstances allow.

• Increase outdoor air ventilation.

o Increase fresh outdoor air by opening windows and doors.

o Use fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows.

▪ Safely secure window fans facing outward or in exhaust mode to draw potentially contaminated air out of the room and blow it outside.

▪ Strategic fan settings and placement can help draw fresh air into a room via other open windows and/or doors without generating strong room air currents.

▪ Use of fans without open doors or windows does not improve ventilation.

• Ensure ventilation and air conditioning settings are maximizing ventilation.

• Ensure ventilation systems are serviced and operate properly.

• Set HVAC systems to bring in as much outdoor air as the system will safely allow to reduce or eliminate air recirculation.

• Increase the ventilation system's total airflow supply to occupied spaces; more air flow encourages air mixing and ensures recirculated air passes through filters more frequently.

• Use portable air cleaners with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters, particularly in high-risk areas (e.g., interior rooms with poor ventilation).

• Use exhaust fans in restrooms and kitchens.

• Inspect and maintain exhaust ventilation systems in restrooms and kitchens.

• Ensure restroom and kitchen exhaust fans are on and operating at full capacity when the school is occupied and for 2 hours afterwards.

September 15, 2022
General Business Meeting

Dear Chair Voss and Members of the Board,

We would like to comment on Agenda Item V. A. 2., Finance and Infrastructure Committee (FIC) Report on September 1, 2022, meeting, update on status of DOE's capital improvement projects (CIP) and repair and maintenance and anticipated challenges for the 2022-2023 school year.

We attended the September 1, 2022, FIC meeting and reviewed the public written testimony. We are extremely concerned about two items that either came up during the meeting or were mentioned in written testimony. These are:

1. Status of CIP Funds
2. Safe Access to Kūlanihāko'i High School

Status of CIP Funds

As we stated in our March 3, 2022 FIC testimony,[1] we have been concerned about the health of the DOE's Office of Facilities and Operations (OFO) branch since its failure to report accurately the DOE's deferred maintenance status to the public. At that meeting, while we praised the DOE for developing a web portal for transparency on OFO projects and encouraged expansion of effective processes, we also noticed that there was a "CIP Funds" page that stated at that time that DOE had $1.4 billion funds that were unspent, which was a huge concern. Fast forward to September 1, 2022, as cited in public testimony, that amount ballooned to $2. 2 billion, in both encumbered or restrictive funds and unencumbered or unrestrictive funds[2]. At the September 1, 2022, FIC meeting, even BOE members were concerned about whether the DOE would be able to spend this staggering amount in a short amount of time. When asked about this matter, the DOE suggested that it would be able to spend the funds before the respective deadlines.

Like the BOE, we are also concerned about whether the DOE will be able to spend the funds by the deadlines, and more importantly, whether the DOE will spend the funds efficiently. We recently went to the website to look for the CIP Funds page and found that it was no longer on the OFO web portal.

[1] https://boe.hawaii.gov/Meetings/Notices/Meeting%20Material%20Library/2022-03-03%20FIC%20Testimony.pdf

[2] https://boe.hawaii.gov/Meetings/Notices/Meeting%20Material%20Library/2022-09-01%20FIC%20Testimony%2048-Hour%20Before.pdf

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We ask the DOE to re-post the CIP Funds page in the OFO web portal so that the public can track whether funds are being spent efficiently and expeditiously. We go further to ask that more detail be provided, such as the breakdown of design and construction contracts, cost status, and schedule status for the encumbered funds so that we know how progress is being made. This seems to be standard in other education districts on the mainland.

Safe Access to Kūlanihāko'i High School

HE'E Coalition believes that the safety of students is paramount. But the situation in Maui gives the impression that the DOE is prioritizing a 20% cost savings over the safety of students. We noticed in the September 1. 2022 written testimony that a Maui resident highlighted the issue of safe access to Kūlanihāko'i High, urging the DOE to complete a "graded separated crossing (GSPC)," which means that the DOE must build either an overpass or an underpass across Pi'ilani Highway.[3] A day later, on September 2, 2022, Civil Beat posted an article, "County Officials Fear Kids Won't Have A Safe Way To Get To New Kihei High School," which describes how DOE officials failed to appear at a Maui Council meeting to discuss the GSPC matter.[4] This prompted us to review several news articles on this topic and found the following:

1. The requirement of building a GSPC had been in place since 2013, when the Land Use Commission (LUC) granted a boundary amendment to allow the development and construction of the Kūlanihāko'i High.[5]

2. DOE had not put in a budget request for GSPC since the condition was ordered by the LUC, which led some to believe that it has no plans to build one. [6]

3. In 2020, DOE along with the State Department of Transportation (DOT) cherry-picked information from a Texas Transportation Institute study to give misleading usage projections for a GSCP to persuade the LUC to change their stance on GSPCs. However, the LUC rejected this proposal, reiterating that a GSPC was required.[7]

4. DOE started the planning and construction of a roundabout, a 20% cheaper, non-graded separated crossing solution, without communicating fully to community members. [8]

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[3] https://boe.hawaii.gov/Meetings/Notices/Meeting%20Material%20Library/2022-09-01%20FIC%20Testimony%2048-Hour%20Before.pdf

[4] https://boe.hawaii.gov/Meetings/Notices/Meeting%20Material%20Library/2022-09-01%20FIC%20Testimony%2048-Hour%20Before.pdf

[5] https://www.mauinews.com/news/local-news/2021/10/doe-request-to-open-school-without-a-crossing-denied/

[6] https://www.mauinews.com/news/local-news/2021/10/doe-request-to-open-school-without-a-crossing-denied/

[7] https://www.environment-hawaii.org/?p=13876

[8] https://www.civilbeat.org/2022/09/county-officials-fear-kids-wont-have-a-safe-way-to-get-to-new-kihei-high-school/

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5. While the DOE is targeting a January 2023 opening for Kūlanihāko'i High, Maui County may not open the school as the DOE has not provided safe access. [9]

We agree with Maui County and the LUC that unless a GSCP for Kūlanihāko'i High is built, we feel that students will not be safe. We are disappointed in the DOE's lack of communication, transparency, and focus on student safety.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Cheri Nakamura
HE'E Coalition Director

[9] https://www.civilbeat.org/2022/09/county-officials-fear-kids-wont-have-a-safe-way-to-get-to-new-kihei-high-school/

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HE‘E Coalition Members and Participants

Academy 21

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

* Youth Service Hawai‘i

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

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Gmail Testimony BOE <testimony.boe@boe.hawaii.gov>

Testimony regarding September 15, 2022 BOE General Business Meeting at 1:30 p.m., Item V.A.

1 message

Lynn Otaguro <lmotaguro@yahoo.com> Tue, Sep 13, 2022 at 8:39 AM
To: Testimony BOE <testimony.boe@boe.hawaii.gov>

September 13, 2022

Regarding Item V.A. Report on FIC September 1, 2022 Meeting: **(1)** Presentation on Department of Education's ("Department") 2023-2025 fiscal biennium operating budget process; **(2)** Update on status of Department's capital improvement projects and repair and maintenance and anticipated challenges for 2022-2023 school year

Honorable Chair Voss and members of the Board of Education,

I am writing to request your continued oversight and follow-up on the DOE's work on ventilation in our schools. While the DOE has taken steps to improve ventilation with its prior purchase of air purifiers and CO2 monitors, they also previously indicated that there were not enough purifiers for all classrooms and that not all schools were using the CO2 monitors as intended.

Some schools appear to have taken additional steps to work on ventilation, but this is not true for all schools. It is important that each classroom and other school spaces be properly inspected to ensure that every student has access to improved ventilation. As a public health measure, this should be something implemented across the state. Support should be given to schools to improve ventilation and any addition of air conditioning should include plans and the inclusion of air filtration and purification to address ventilation concerns.

For your information, I am forwarding my testimony for the FIC September 1 meeting.

Thank you,
Lynn Otaguro

----- Forwarded Message -----
From: Lynn Otaguro <lmotaguro@yahoo.com>
To: testimony.boe@boe.hawaii.gov <testimony.boe@boe.hawaii.gov>
Sent: Monday, August 29, 2022 at 05:29:43 PM HST
Subject: Testimony regarding the September 1, 2022 BOE Finance and Infrastructure Meeting at 9:30 a.m., Item IV B

August 29, 2022

Board of Education
Finance and Infrastructure Committee
State of Hawaii

Regarding the September 1, 2022 BOE Finance and Infrastructure Meeting at 9:30 a.m., Item IV. B.

Honorable Chair Fallin and members of the Finance and Infrastructure Committee:

In its report on capital improvement projects and repair and maintenance, the DOE does not mention ventilation and air filtration. I am writing to ask that this Committee require the Department of Education to continue to monitor and improve the air quality in our school buildings.

With the lifting of masking requirements, ventilation has become an even more important issue for the health of our students and staff and to provide stability in terms of staffing and attendance so that our schools can function effectively. Work on ventilation and air filtration is something that needs to be continued to ensure that all classrooms and buildings in our schools are safe.

For the information of newer board members, I attach a letter previously submitted to this board by the Hale Hawaii Team on steps that can continue to be taken to improve ventilation and air quality.

Thank you,
Lynn Otaguro

Hale Hawaii BOE_Letter.pdf
103K

June 27, 2022

Open Letter to the Hawai'i Board of Education

Aloha, Board of Education Members.

We are writing to urge you to take steps ***now*** to protect the health of our state's public school students, teachers, and staff when school reopens after the summer break. We want to make sure you are aware that there are policies you can enact, and actions you can take, that will help reduce the amount of COVID transmission in our schools and help keep them open for in-person learning, ***without*** causing controversy, alienating parents, or requiring extensive involvement on the part of teachers and administrators.

We fully support the school mask mandate. Your steadfastness in continuing to follow the advice of the Department of Health has helped to keep our school communities safe. For the coming school year, we urge you to purchase and facilitate the distribution to every school of an ample supply of high-quality masks (i.e., N95, KN95, and KF94), in both adult and child sizes. These should be made available at no charge to students, teachers, and staff. But our main point here is that ***masking is not the only tool you have at your disposal*** to reduce the level of covid transmission in schools.

As you know, ***proper ventilation and air filtering*** can significantly reduce the indoor transmission of all airborne diseases, including covid. (See, for example: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/ventilation.html; https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/ventilation-and-coronavirus-covid-19; https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-ventilation-and-air-conditioning.) In recognition of this fact, during the 2021-2022 school year, the Department of Education's Facility Management staff began purchasing carbon dioxide monitors, air filters and other equipment designed to monitor and improve ventilation in our classrooms. Based on numerous first-hand reports from teachers, parents, and students, however, it appears that these tools are not being used to their full potential. In addition, some schools have local policies in place that actively discourage the use of existing means of increasing classroom ventilation, such as opening windows and doors.

At the Finance and Infrastructure Committee meeting on June 2, and later at the General Board Meeting, Randy Tanaka updated the Committee on the "Improving Hawaii School Facilities" site. This site includes the "Facilities Needs Report." Disturbingly, classroom ventilation needs are not addressed on this site. At a minimum, the site should be modified to permit school principals and Complex Superintendents to submit ventilation as a "facilities need"! But families should not have to depend on their school administrators to call attention to ventilation issues. Rather, this Board should require ventilation reviews of all school facilities, and direct Facility Management to make it a priority to remedy ventilation issues as soon as possible.

We believe you have it within your power to enact and enforce statewide policies requiring all schools to make maximum use of all available means to keep our classrooms as well ventilated as possible, and filter their air to the greatest possible extent. These measures include the following:

- You can require that all teachers, school administrators, and custodial staff undergo training, prior to or within a month after the start of school, so that they fully understand

the importance of classroom ventilation, and are well versed in how to implement proper ventilation practices.

- You can issue statewide policies requiring that classroom doors and windows be kept open to the maximum extent possible without interfering with instruction or compromising school security, and overriding all local school rules that might discourage those measures.
- You can use available federal funding to purchase and deploy additional carbon dioxide monitors, air filters (providing MERV-13 or greater filtration), and ventilation equipment, as well as to pay for staff training.
- You can require administrators to survey their facilities as soon as possible to determine what repairs and maintenance are needed in order to ensure that all ventilation mechanisms, including classroom windows, are in fully operable condition, and you can require that school facilities personnel prioritize those items.
- You can require that within the first month of the coming school year, each classroom in every school be properly tested while in use with a carbon dioxide monitor, so that needs for additional ventilation or air filtering can be assessed and prioritized.
- You can adopt policies encouraging schools to require or allow students to eat outdoors on school grounds, rather than in classrooms or cafeterias, wherever that is feasible.

Thank you for your careful consideration of these suggestions. **We hereby request that they be placed on the agenda for consideration at your July 14 meeting.** In the meantime, we will be collecting additional signatures on this letter to demonstrate community support, which we will submit for consideration at the July 14 meeting..

Respectfully yours,

The HALE Hawai‘i Steering Team: Sarah Hofstadter, Joy Kaaz, Kai Duponte

Additional signatories (in their personal capacities only):
Burke Burnett
Susan Pcola-Davis

HALE Hawai‘i is a statewide, grassroots progressive community activist group. Our website is https://halehawaii.cc/; our Facebook page is https://www.facebook.com/HALEHawaii808.

Testimony for 9/15/22 General Business Meeting, Agenda Item V.A(2)

1 message

Hale Hawaii <hale808hawaii@gmail.com> Tue, Sep 13, 2022 at 11:42 AM
To: testimony.boe@boe.hawaii.gov

Aloha, Chair Voss and Board Members.

I am writing on behalf of the grassroots community organization HALE Hawai'i to testify with regard to item V.A(2) on your agenda, the report from the Finance and Infrastructure Committee (FIC) meeting on September 1, 2022. I submitted written testimony to the FIC for that meeting (copy attached), and watched the proceedings on video.

Perhaps because of my testimony and that of others, Assistant Superintendent Tanaka was asked at the FIC hearing about what the Department of Education has done with respect to classroom ventilation. I was profoundly disappointed with his answer, and you should be also. He told the FIC that DOE has tested the air in some classrooms, and distributed fans, air purifiers, and CO2 monitors to schools, but gave no indication whatsoever that DOE is taking this issue as seriously as it should. Indeed, he expressly admitted that use of fans in classrooms is at the discretion of the teacher. He also averred that neighbor island schools are generally older and thus have openable windows, obviating the need to supply them with any ventilation equipment.

This is utterly unacceptable. The DOE's own guidelines, as well as the guidance for K-12 schools developed by DOH, call on schools to make a serious effort to ensure that there is sufficient air circulation and/or filtration in classrooms to significantly reduce the level of aerosolized virus particles to which students, teachers, and staff are exposed. Yet the DOE has not yet provided all schools with the equipment needed to achieve this goal; has not trained administrators, teachers, or facilities personnel on how best to use what equipment that has been provided; and has not followed up with individual schools to test classroom air quality, to determine whether DOE's own guidelines are being followed, or even to assess whether the equipment provided is being used at all, much less whether more is needed. Meanwhile, in the brief period since schools reopened for the 2022-2023 school year, the DOE reports there have already been almost 350 known cases of covid in schools statewide.

Over the course of the pandemic, the federal government has disbursed millions of dollars to schools specifically to upgrade their ventilation systems and improve classroom air quality. DOE has not given FIC or this Board, much less the public, a comprehensive accounting of how those funds have actually been used for that purpose, and how much remains unspent. Meanwhile, social media and the coconut wireless are replete with accounts of classrooms where windows are kept closed; fans that are improperly placed so as to blow potentially virus-laden air towards students instead of away from them; ventilation equipment going unused because the school's electrical system is inadequate to power it; and CO2 monitors sitting unused in closets.

My organization is working with other community groups to attempt to do what we can about this problem on our own, since the DOE is apparently unwilling even to attempt to fulfill its kuleana in this regard. We have developed and are working on distributing a flyer with user-friendly guidance on classroom ventilation (copy attached); we are in the process of surveying teachers, schools staff, and parents regarding the actual conditions in their classrooms; and we are mounting an effort to supply every classroom in the state with at least one Corsi-Rosenthal box (a type of air purifier that can be easily constructed from readily available, inexpensive materials: box fans, filters, and duct tape), using donated funds and labor. We are determined to do what we can to try to keep our state's largely unmasked public school students safe in their classrooms.

We understand that your primary concern is with delivering high quality education, not with managing the physical spaces in which this is supposed to occur. But high quality education cannot be delivered if students (and teachers) face a constant risk, and frequent reality, of missing school - not due to covid alone, but also due to flu and other airborne contagious diseases. Moreover, increasing classroom air quality benefits the quality of education even in the absence of concerns about disease, because high CO2 concentrations in stuffy classrooms impair concentration and cognitive processes. We understand there was relentless political pressure from certain quarters to abandon the mask mandate, but surely increasing classroom air quality is a goal everyone can agree on, no matter what their views about covid and masks.

We will continue to mount our community-based efforts with or without your assistance. But we really should not have to do DOE's job for it. I implore you to actively monitor DOE's performance in this area, and to determine for yourselves

what is going on in the field, rather than relying on DOE's vague generalities and empty promises. This will take effort, but the health and safety of our keiki should be among everyone's highest priorities.

Mahalo,
Sarah Hofstadter for HALE Hawai'i
www.HALEHawaii.cc
Facebook.com/HALEHawaii808/

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2 attachments

Protect Keiki at School final.pdf
1862K

Testimony for Sept. 1, 2022 Finance and Infrastructure Meeting.pdf
118K

Ventilation helps prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Protect Keiki at School!

If a person infected with Covid-19 is in a room, the virus particles they exhale build up over time. If the room is not well ventilated, there is more chance that others in the room will become infected.

Improve Ventilation:

- Open Windows
- Open Doors
- Position Fans Correctly
- Add Air Filters
- Monitor CO2

Move Activities Outdoors Whenever Possible:

- Recess
- Lunch and Snacks
- Reading Circles
- After School Programs

Since masks are no longer required, better ventilation is essential to protect students.

"Hundreds of Hawaii classrooms are found with poor ventilation, posing a COVID-19 risk." (Honolulu Star-Advertiser, Aug. 2, 2022) For links to more resources on why classroom ventilation is important and how to improve it, visit this site: **https://tinyurl.com/ClassroomAir**.

The guidance on this flyer is endorsed by:

PREMIER MEDICAL GROUP HAWAII

KOHALA COAST URGENT CARE

PAAC Pacific Alliance Against COVID19

HAWAI'I NURSES' ASSOCIATION OPEIU LOCAL 50

SLAND FAMILY SURGICAL CARE CENTER LLC
DR. STEPHANIE YAN
SURGEON | PHYSICIAN | HEALER

HAWAI'I COVID A.C.E. Ambassadors of Community Education INITIATIVE

HALE Hawai'i

Hawaii for a Safe Return to Schools

Denise Cohen PhD, APRN, FNP-BC
Retired Professor-Nursing
University of Hawaii Maui College

RISKY	VS	SAFER
Classroom doors and windows **closed**	**Doors and Windows**	Classroom windows and doors **open**
Fans blowing air **towards** students Air conditioners recirculating **unfiltered** air within classrooms	**Fans and A/C units**	Fans blowing air **away from** students Air conditioners bring in **outside** air or are equipped with **high quality filters**
No air circulation Circulating the same air without either filtering or replacing it	**Air Circulation**	Air in occupied rooms completely replaced with fresh air at least every 10 minutes (6 times per hour)
No CO2 monitor in classroom CO2 monitor not checked regularly while classroom is in use CO2 allowed to exceed 1,000ppm	**Air Quality Monitoring**	**All** classrooms tested with CO2 monitors **while in use** Air circulation/filtering adjusted to maintain CO2 levels at or below 800ppm at all times
No one in the classroom wears a mask Students are allowed to bully other students for wearing masks Students wear masks that are poor quality or do not fit Students wear their masks improperly	**Masks**	All students who want to wear masks encouraged to do so; at least 50% of students are masked Zero tolerance policy for any bullying of mask-wearing students Students who want to wear masks have access to well fitting, high quality masks (N95, KN95, KF94) and are taught how to fit and wear them properly
Teachers, school administrators, and/or custodial staff without training are responsible for assessing classroom ventilation needs School administrators develop and implement ventilation related policies without any input from trained professionals Schools retain pre-pandemic policies affecting ventilation without reexamining them in light of the need to maximize proper air circulation	**Expert Guidance**	School administrators designate specific staff people to monitor and improve ventilation, and provide them with time, training, and resources to develop expertise Where possible, HVAC professionals with infectious disease prevention training are brought in to assess classroom ventilation needs and recommend ways to improve it

Created by HI Covid ACES and HALE Hawai'i
based on best practices and official guidance

Gmail

Hale Hawaii <hale808hawaii@gmail.com>

Testimony for Sept. 1, 2022 Finance and Infrastructure Meeting

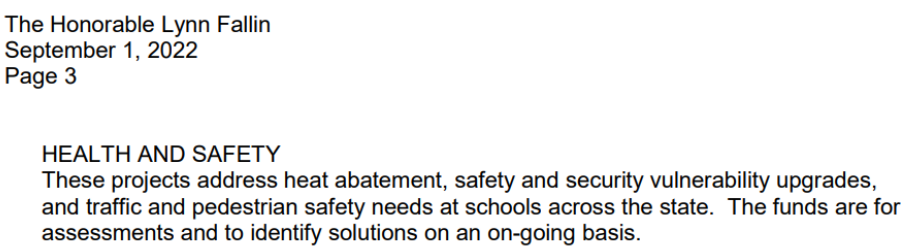
Hale Hawaii <hale808hawaii@gmail.com> Sun, Aug 28, 2022 at 11:12 AM
To: Testimony.BOE@boe.hawaii.gov
Cc: "Bruce D. Voss" <BVoss@legalhawaii.com>, lynn.fallin@boe.hawaii.gov

Aloha, Finance and Infrastructure Committee Chair Fallin and Committee Members.

I am writing on behalf of HALE Hawai'i with regard to **Agenda Item IV.B** on your Sept. 1 agenda, which is the report on improvements, repair, and maintenance. I want to call the Committee's attention to a ***critically important*** infrastructure issue that is ***not even mentioned*** in Superintendent Hayashi's report.

As you are aware, with the discontinuation of the school mask mandate, it has become even more necessary for the DOE to ensure that school classrooms are adequately ventilated, and that air purification is employed where adequate ventilation is not possible. Otherwise, if anyone with a contagious Covid-19 infection is present in the room, their virus-laden exhalations will build up in the air, posing a high risk of transmission to other occupants of the room.

Nonetheless, on page 3 of the Superintendent's report, where it addresses "health and safety," there is absolutely no indication that classroom air quality is a subject of concern in any respect. (See image below.) Classroom air quality is not mentioned anywhere else in the report either.



The Honorable Lynn Fallin
September 1, 2022
Page 3

HEALTH AND SAFETY
These projects address heat abatement, safety and security vulnerability upgrades, and traffic and pedestrian safety needs at schools across the state. The funds are for assessments and to identify solutions on an on-going basis.

Just to clarify, "heat abatement" is entirely distinct from the ventilation/air quality issue, because even in classrooms that have adequate air conditioning or are located at cooler altitudes, supplemental ventilation or air filtering may be needed to reduce the level of aerosolized virus in the room. Indeed, in rooms where air conditioning is relied upon for heat abatement, doors and windows are more likely to be kept closed, creating an even greater need for air purification. Even if the air conditioner is equipped with a high-grade filter capable of trapping virus particles, supplemental air purification may be needed if the air conditioner does not filter a sufficient volume of air per hour. (Please see the resources cited in this compilation for support for these assertions, as well as other relevant information.)

We are aware that air purifiers were delivered to some (but not all) classrooms last year, and that air quality testing has been performed at some (but not all) schools. We are also aware that DOE has adopted and distributed ventilation guidelines for this year. (See https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/DOE%20Forms/COVID-19%20Health%20and%20Safety%20Guidance.pdf, pp. 7-9.) These were steps in the right direction, but there is a great deal more to be done, and Superintendent Hayashi's report does not reflect any recognition of this fact, much less any intention to address it. In particular, there is no mention of any effort being made to educate administrative and facilities staff about the ventilation guidelines, much less to assess the degree to which schools are successfully implementing them.

If we want our schools to stay open and be in a position to deliver high quality education consistently, the health of students, teachers, and staff must be better protected. Already, only a month into the school year, DOE's own dashboard shows that 735 infections have been reported in DOE schools. (https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/ConnectWithUs/MediaRoom/PressReleases/Pages/COVID-19-Information-Updates.aspx) From our vantage point, we are hearing horror stories of teachers and students coming to class with obvious symptoms of contagious illness, while carbon dioxide monitors and air purifiers sit unused in classrooms, offices, or storage rooms.

In short, we urge the Committee to press Superintendent Hayashi and other DOE staff for more information about what they are ***actively doing*** to monitor and improve classroom air quality, and to require a commitment from them to make this issue one of the ***highest priorities*** for the relevant DOE personnel. Our keiki deserve nothing less.

Mahalo,

Sarah Hofstadter for the
HALE Hawai'i Steering Team
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