

September 1, 2023

Entity: Hawaii State BOE Finance & Infrastructure Committee  
Subject: Testimony  
Regarding: Recommendation of the Committee on Weights XIII- Small Schools  
Funding  
Position: Support

Aloha,

We strongly support the recommendation from the Committee on Weights (COW XIII)<sup>1</sup> that the Department seek an additional \$3.5 million of general funds to:

- a. Continue to provide \$250,000 to each of the eight remote schools (Kā'ū High and Pāhala Elementary, Hāna High and Elementary, Kaunakakai Elementary, Lana'i High and Elementary, Moloka'i High, Moloka'i Middle, Kilohana Elementary, Maunaloa Elementary); and
- b. In addition, provide \$250,000 to the six identified small schools/non-remote schools (Ka'a'awa Elementary, Waiāhole Elementary, Keolu Elementary, Ha'aheo Elementary, Hōnaunau Elementary, Ho'okena Elementary); and
- c. Factor in this additional \$3.5 million into the school year 24-25 Financial Plan process, which will start in October 2023.

Principal Obra presented to the Committee on Weights on July 12, 2023 to share the challenges of operating a small school while lacking adequate funding. What is clear, is that while the weighted student formula has fulfilled its goal of providing a more equitable, transparent, and decentralized method of funding schools, small and remote rural schools have remained underfunded. As Principal Obra (and others) have stated: the resource requirements to ensure our small schools can equitably provide education opportunities for all of our students have consistently exceeded what we are allocated based simply on our enrollment counts and student demographics.

The Department has also recognized the challenges faced by small schools as evidenced by allocation decision making for both the WSF Reserve Funds and Remote School Funds. As an example, for FY23-24, Kilohana Elementary requested an additional \$131,958 from the WSF Reserve Fund in addition to the \$250,000 from the remote school fund, bringing their final budget to \$1.14M.<sup>2</sup>

Small schools need an operating budget that does not put our students at a relative disadvantage. Without one, administrators are forced to choose between positions or opportunities for students.

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<sup>1</sup> See Committee on Weights XIII Report, 2023

<sup>2</sup> From July 12, 2023 Meeting. ■ IVb. - COW XIII Meeting #2 - Small Rural Combo School Presentation.pdf

Schools cannot maintain a steady course and direction when their budgets are in flux, and this instability directly affects students' ability to equitably benefit from their education.

As educators, we believe our students have the right to be educated in the community they live in. As administrators who work in a small school we also know first-hand that our students *want* to be in a school in their community. The Department's new Strategic Plan's first goal – all students experience rigorous, high-quality learning that results in equitable outcomes for all learners – is a commitment we must make as a system and community, to put our kids first. To make sure they have an educational experience they deserve so they thrive.

We know small schools can and will deliver on this if they have sufficient, stable, sustainable funding.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

*Lea E. Albert*

Name with position/title and organization if applicable

*Lea E. Albert*

*Retired CAS Castle/Kahuku Complex Area*



## Testimony

1 message

**Shama Rain Andrews** <shamarain.andrews@gmail.com>  
To: testimony.boe@boe.hawaii.gov

Mon, Sep 4, 2023 at 7:28 AM

September 1, 2023

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Subject: Testimony  
Regarding: Recommendation of the Committee on Weights XIII- Small Schools  
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Shama Rain Andrews

September 1, 2023

Entity: Hawaii State BOE Finance & Infrastructure Committee  
Subject: Testimony  
Regarding: Recommendation of the Committee on Weights XIII- Small Schools Funding  
Position: Support

Aloha,

My name is Alexandra Obra, Principal of Waiāhole Elementary School. I strongly support the recommendation from the Committee on Weights (COW XIII)<sup>1</sup> that the Department seek an additional \$3.5 million of general funds to:

- a. Continue to provide \$250,000 to each of the eight remote schools (Kā'ū High and Pāhala Elementary, Hāna High and Elementary, Kaunakakai Elementary, Lana'i High and Elementary, Moloka'i High, Moloka'i Middle, Kilohana Elementary, Maunaloa Elementary); and
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- c. Factor in this additional \$3.5 million into the school year 24-25 Financial Plan process, which will start in October 2023.

I presented to the Committee on Weights on July 12, 2023 to share the challenges of operating a small school while lacking adequate funding. What is clear, is that while the weighted student formula has fulfilled its goal of providing a more equitable, transparent, and decentralized method of funding schools, small and remote rural schools have remained underfunded. I (and others) have stated: the resource requirements to ensure our small schools can equitably provide education opportunities for all of our students have consistently exceeded what we are allocated based simply on our enrollment counts and student demographics.

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As educators, we believe our students have the right to be educated in the community they live in. As administrators who work in a small school we also know first-hand that our students *want* to be in a school in their community. The Department's new Strategic Plan's first goal – all students experience rigorous, high-quality learning that results in equitable outcomes for all

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<sup>1</sup> See [Committee on Weights XIII Report, 2023](#)

<sup>2</sup> From July 12, 2023 Meeting. ■ IVb. - COW XIII Meeting #2 - Small Rural Combo School Presentation.pdf

learners – is a commitment we must make as a system and community, to put our kids first. To make sure they have an educational experience they deserve so they thrive.

We know small schools can and will deliver on this if they have sufficient, stable, sustainable funding.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. If you have further questions, I can be reached at 808-210-0504 or by e-mail at [alexandra.obra@k12.hi.us](mailto:alexandra.obra@k12.hi.us).

Sincerely,

*Alexandra Obra*

Alexandra Obra

Waiāhole Elementary School

Principal



September 7, 2023

Finance and Infrastructure Committee Meeting

Dear Chair Kuraya and Members of the Committee,

**Committee Action on recommendation concerning recommendations of the Committee on Weights XIII regarding the Weighted Student Formula fund allocation for the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 school years.**

We strongly support the COW's recommendation on additional support for small and rural schools.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,  
Cheri Nakamura  
HE'E Coalition Director

## HE'E Coalition Members and Participants

Academy 21

Alliance for Place Based Learning

American Civil Liberties Union

Atherton YMCA

Education Institute of Hawai'i

\*Faith Action for Community Equity

Fresh Leadership LLC

Girl Scouts Hawai'i

\*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

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.*