



December 3, 2020

Aloha Chair Payne and Members of the Board of Education

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit comments today. My name is Dr. Amanda N. Kelly and I represent Together For Our Keiki (T.F.O.K.), which is a non-profit 501(c)(3) Hawai'i organization whose mission is to advocate and create a diverse and inclusive community for our keiki by empowering parents and caregivers, and educating local stakeholders.

- We recognize the need for financially surviving a very difficult year. We respectfully disagree that special education cuts are the way to recoup these lost funds. We believe these cuts will have substantial and long-term detrimental effects for our special education students, their teachers, and our already woefully underfunded special education programs.
- One way the Hawaii DOE could secure funds would be to effectively establish the Medicaid School-Based claiming system, which was mandated in Chapter 465-D in 2018 by the Hawaii Legislature. It is estimated that over \$50 million in federal funds would be available to the state annually for employing and contracting appropriately licensed and credentialed Speech and Language Pathologists (SLPs), Occupational Therapists (OTs), Physical Therapists (PTs), Clinical Psychologists, Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs), and Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs).

We would like to formally offer our expertise and assistance in supporting the Hawaii BOE and DOE in establishing this system and securing these federal funds. We welcome the opportunity to collaborate and appreciate everyone coming *Together For Our Keiki*.

Mahalo,

Amanda N Kelly, PhD, BCBA-D, LBA
President, Together For Our Keiki
(808) 298-2658

forourkeiki@gmail.com

www.forourkeiki.com



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

Funding

1 message

Kyle Herendeen <kherendeen@kkhs.k12.hi.us>
To: testimony.boe@boe.hawaii.gov

Thu, Dec 3, 2020 at 11:30 AM

Aloha,

As a 15 year DOE teacher in the state of Hawaii I am very frustrated with the possible budget cuts and furloughs.

1. For the last 4-5 years I have read about how our state has set record numbers of tourists and money spent by tourists, but as far as I can see none of that revenue has gone into the school system. It was kept by those hotels, car rentals, related state departments, etc. As teachers and school have struggled none of that money was put our way. But now that tourism has been hit by low income levels money is being taken away from education and educators to bail tourism out. You can't have it both ways. If we will be looked to to bail out tourism when things are bad, we deserve a piece of the income when things are good.

2. If the proposed cuts & furloughs go through I am 100% sure my family will be leaving for the mainland. My wife is a medical worker and I am a teacher, so I find it sad that we cannot afford to raise our young children in these beautiful islands that we have given so much to and it's makes me sad that now it's taking from us, again.

--

Kyle Herendeen

Special Education Teacher
King Kekaulike HS



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

Testimony on Action Item: Finance and Infrastructure Committee recommendations concerning Department of Education's operating budget for 2021-2023 fiscal biennium

1 message

Katina Soares <katina.soares@k12.hi.us>
To: Testimony.BOE@boe.hawaii.gov

Thu, Dec 3, 2020 at 11:30 AM

- From: Katina Soares, Principal of Molokai High School
- Meeting: Special Meeting, December 3, 2020
- Agenda Item: [Board Action on Finance and Infrastructure Committee recommendations concerning Department of Education's operating budget for 2021-2023 fiscal biennium](#)
- Position: Oppose Additional Cuts (Consideration of Rural Schools)

Dear Board Chair Payne and Board Members,

Thank you for taking the time to review my testimony. Molokai High School is the second smallest rural high school in the state. We are on one of the least populated and but most economically depressed islands with high unemployment rates and few gainful employment prospects. Yet out of the seemingly negative data, Molokai High School students are offered a myriad of opportunities including Hawaiian Language Immersion, English Language Learners, Advanced Placement, Honors, Alternative Learning Center, College & Career Readiness, Special Education, and Early College High School program. Additionally, co-curricular activities through several clubs and 24 award-winning, competitive, varsity athletic teams are also available.

We are able to offer all of these opportunities due to 1. An amazing staff that goes above and beyond the call, and 2. Adequate funding. With receipt of the Superintendent's Reserve coupled with Weighted Student Formula (WSF) funds, we were just beginning to achieve equity and provide expanded programming, such as career certification courses or internships, comparable to larger schools. When I say expanded for us, it is what other schools have been able to minimally offer for years. On Molokai, we learn to do a lot with very little and the same has been true of our budget. Every year (even with the Superintendent's Reserve), we are literally penny pinching on how to pay for supplies or whether or not to cut positions. Almost half of our staff are from categorical funding, WSF only funds about half of what is available to our students as it is. I completely understand the significant impact COVID-19 has had on our state funding, but further cuts to funding will not only equate to a loss of positions at Molokai High School but a loss of equity in programs, services and opportunities for our students. I oppose additional cuts to funding and support finding another avenue to bridge the gap between our state budget and state revenue.

Mahalo!

--

Katina M. Soares, PhD
Principal
Molokai High School
School: 808-567-7100



Our Vision
Molokai High School graduates honor the past, embrace future innovation
and take personal responsibility for delivering excellence.

Our Mission
The mission of Molokai High School is to expand our horizons while
utilizing Molokai's unique community and resources.

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

Do not cut Hawaiian culture funds

1 message

V S <vaihere13@gmail.com>
To: testimony.boe@boe.hawaii.gov

Thu, Dec 3, 2020 at 10:53 AM

We live in hawaii. Children need to know our history and culture. Do not cut the funds!!!!

Vaihere Sunaoka
466a kahinu st
Hon, HI 96821
808-397-3330



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

Music Teach of 21 years

1 message

Dian Hermes <dhermes@waialae.edu>
To: testimony.boe@boe.hawaii.gov

Thu, Dec 3, 2020 at 7:56 AM

Aloha BOE,

I am a music teacher at Waialae Elementary School. I have been at this school for 14 years and also taught at Kealakehe Elementary on Hawaii Island. I cannot express enough how important it is to help keep as many jobs and programs as possible, especially in the arts, Hawaiiana, PE and Special Education. This is where our children flourish and discover who they really are. I understand budget issues. I have been a teacher through the Strike in 2001 when I had to go to the food bank in order to survive. I have been a teacher through Lingies furloughs. Please don't put an end to all of that due to Covid. We can survive this if we think creatively and budget mindfully. I can think of ten programs at my school alone that funds could be more wisely allocated.

Please do what is right for the children and for us veteran teachers as well.

Mahalo nui,
Dian Hermes

--

Dian Athena Hermes | Music Teacher
Wai'alae Elementary Public Charter School
1045 19th Avenue, Honolulu, Hawai'i, 96816
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Testimony BOE <testimony.boe@boe.hawaii.gov>

Budget cuts

1 message

Sarah Ferguson <sferguson@waialae.edu>
To: testimony.boe@boe.hawaii.gov

Thu, Dec 3, 2020 at 7:52 AM

Aloha,

Our schools are already understaffed and underfunded. It's so hard to get and retain good teachers, and cutting school budgets will make this even more difficult. Please do NOT cut school or SPED program budgets.

Sarah Ferguson | Teacher
Wai'alaē Elementary Public Charter School
[1045 19th Avenue, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96816](#)
<http://www.waialae.edu>



"A ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for."
-John A. Shedd



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

Testimony

1 message

Raechelle Villanueva <rvillanueva@waialae.edu>
To: testimony.boe@boe.hawaii.gov

Thu, Dec 3, 2020 at 7:26 AM

Aloha e BOE Members,

My name is Raechelle Villanueva and I am a 3rd grade teacher at Wai'ālae Elementary Public Charter School. I am also a proud public school parent of two children. I am submitting additional testimony for the December 3, 2020 meeting on Finance and Infrastructure agenda item C. Committee Action on recommendation concerning the Department of Education's operating budget for 2021-2023 fiscal biennium. I strongly oppose the proposed budget recommendations due to the severe budget cuts to the Student Weighted Formula and SPED funding. These major cuts will not be for just one year, but will be for 3 consecutive years. I am simply terrified of what the effects of these cuts will be on our public schools.

I am deeply troubled to hear that Hawaiian classes and Hawaiian Immersion would be deeply affected with possible cuts to positions for these programs. PE, Art, Music as well. Currently, my students and I are in a deep investigation on the historical narrative of Hawai'i and history. It saddened us to hear that so much has been lost and taken away from the Hawaiian people. We live in Hawaii and why is that Hawaiian classes and Hawaiian Immersion programs are always the first on the list to get cut? It should in fact be the exact opposite. Important historical events like Lā Kū'oko'a have been left out for far too long from our public school educational programming. I keep thinking about how earlier in the year, we recognized that there already was a teacher shortage in Hawaiian Immersion and a differential was created to hire and retain highly qualified Hawaiian Immersion teachers. If we follow through with these proposed budget cuts, our Hawaiian programs in our public schools will not recover. Enough damage has been done.

I urge the BOE to not approve the proposed budget cuts. I strongly urge the BOE to look for other areas in the DOE budget to trim. However, cutting 10% from the Student Weighted Formula and 9% from SPED over the course of 3 years will severely negatively impact the keiki our public schools are supposed to serve. Thank you so much for taking the time to consider my testimonies.

Mahalo,
Raechelle Villanueva | 3rd Grade Teacher

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

Testimony

1 message

Raechelle Villanueva <rvillanueva@waialae.edu>
To: testimony.boe@boe.hawaii.gov

Wed, Dec 2, 2020 at 4:17 PM

Aloha e BOE Members,

My name is Raechelle Villanueva and I am a 3rd grade teacher at Wai'ālae Elementary Public Charter School. I am also a proud public school parent of two children. I am submitting testimony for the December 3, 2020 meeting on Finance and Infrastructure agenda item C. Committee Action on recommendation concerning the Department of Education's operating budget for 2021-2023 fiscal biennium. I strongly oppose the proposed budget recommendations due to the severe budget cuts to the Student Weighted Formula and SPED funding. These major cuts will not be for just one year, but will be for 3 consecutive years. I am simply terrified of what the effects of these cuts will be on our public schools.

COVID-19 has hit every community hard. Our public school teachers, staff, and admin have never been more stressed out. Coupled with the fear of COVID-19, we have had to deal with the lack of needed guidance from the Department of Health. All of our public schools were each tasked to come up with their own reopening plan. Additional funds were needed to supply the proper PPE and cleaning materials to reopen safely. We are still not in the clear. Some of our public schools have already had to shut down after reopening due to COVID-19. I cannot imagine cutting funding even more to our public schools. We are simply burned out and I honestly do not know how much we can handle.

In addition, SPED has always been hard to staff. These are our most vulnerable student populations and they deserve the best. The thought of SPED services being cut due to the proposed budget cuts is simply horrific. Our SPED teachers are frontline workers who deal with bodily fluids and come into close contact with students. Cutting their budget to hire support staff puts our SPED teachers at an even higher risk. I am so worried. We will lose even more of our SPED teachers. This in turn will cause our SPED students to not have adequate access to education.

I urge the BOE to not approve the proposed budget cuts. I am so worried for us. So many teachers are already stressed out. We already have a HUGE teacher shortage. Now, with the proposed budget cuts, even more teaching positions are going to be lost. How we will ever recover? Our keiki deserve better. As a parent, my children deserve better.

Mahalo,

--

Raechelle Villanueva | 3rd Grade Teacher



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

Testimony

1 message

Kira Swearingen <kswearingen@waialae.edu>
To: testimony.boe@boe.hawaii.gov

Thu, Dec 3, 2020 at 7:16 AM

Aloha,

My name is Kira Swearingen and I am an inclusion special education teacher at Wai'ala'e Public Charter School. I am writing on **C. Committee Action on recommendation concerning the Department of Education's operating budget for 2021-2023 fiscal biennium**

The budget cuts on 10% for schools would equate about \$400,000 taken away from our school. We already struggle with having enough money within schools and to take a huge chunk away would be a disservice to our keiki. We talk about how we need to change schools for the better and really compensate our teachers so they are able to give their best effort. This would take us steps back.

The 9% cut for special education would really hurt the special education population. I know that I would need to search for another occupation as Hawai'i has high expenses and I am not sure I would be able to maintain a life with a cut or positions loss. This really scares me for me and my family. Please take in consideration the special education population and how these students really need positive, loving, hard working teachers that will change their lives in beneficial ways. Our keiki deserve it and our teachers deserve to be compensated for their work.

Aloha,

Kira Swearingen

Student Support Teacher

Wai'ala'e Elementary Public Charter School

[1045 19th Avenue, Honolulu, Hawai'i, 96816](http://1045%2019th%20Avenue%2C%20Honolulu%2C%20Hawaii%27i%2C%2096816)

(808) 733-4880 ext. 274

<http://www.waialae.edu>**Wai'ala'e School**
Celebrating Childhood

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

Consider the long term impacts wisely

1 message

STEPHENIE BLAKEMORE <stephenieblakemore@sbcglobal.net>

Thu, Dec 3, 2020 at 6:36 AM

Reply-To: STEPHENIE BLAKEMORE <kndlve22@gmail.com>

To: "testimony.boe@boe.hawaii.gov" <testimony.boe@boe.hawaii.gov>

As you consider cuts to public education remember your responsibilities. Although appointed to your positions you are all there to serve the public good in the area of public education. Propsed cuts to the weighted student formula and special education services will cost all of us in Hawaii far more than what you might think is being saved. Like the governor's misplaced prioritization of reopening the state to tourism while K-12 students must stay home or are attending classes part time; approving the proposed cuts to the public school budget so that teaching positions are lost, and classroom sizes increase as we try to recover from the learning loss due to the pandemic, would be the ultimate act of irresponsibility on your part.

Sent from AT&T Yahoo Mail on Android



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

December 3, 2020

TO: Hawai'i State Board of Education Finance and Infrastructure Committee, Chairperson
Bruce Voss

FROM: Rep. Jeanné Kapela, Hawai'i State House of Representatives

TESTIMONY TOPIC: Action Item C: Committee action on recommendation concerning
the Department of Education's operating budget for 2021-2023 biennium

TESTIMONY COMMENTS: Aloha, I'm Jeanné Kapela, state representative for House District 5 on the Big Island. I was recently appointed to serve as the Vice Chair for the House Education Committee for the upcoming legislative session and I want to share with you my concerns regarding the budget cuts being proposed by the DOE today.

To begin, I understand that the board is obligated to put forward a budget proposal that comports with Gov. David Ige's proposed restrictions, which call for significant cuts to government services and potential furloughs. As a state representative and the Education Committee's incoming Vice Chair, I believe that it is my responsibility to prevent these draconian cuts and furloughs from happening. We can come up with the revenue we need to address the economic crisis without harming our schools or our keiki's future.

What is before you today would create educational chaos. A \$100 million cut to Hawai'i's weighted student formula could result in the loss of over 1,000 teacher positions at a time when we're just beginning to address our state's teacher shortage. A \$25 million cut to special education programs would jeopardize critical staffing and support for our school system's most vulnerable students.

Moreover, a \$4 million cut to school-based behavioral health services would disrupt the emotional and psychological assistance upon which highly-traumatized students depend. Before becoming a legislator, I worked as a victim service provider for survivors of sex trafficking. Those survivors cannot function in our schools without adequate trauma care.

The list goes on. I hope that the BOE will take a hard look at the proposal before you and consider what's best for our teachers and our children. No matter what proposal you pass,

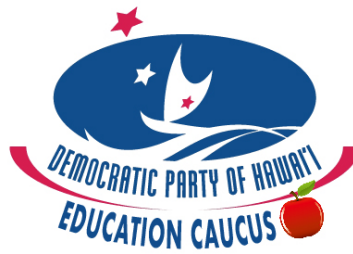
however, I promise to be an eager partner with you in resolving the department's fiscal dilemma. **These cuts are not inevitable.** Whether by floating additional bonds to raise operating funds, closing unfair tax loopholes, temporarily suspending certain state payments and tax exemptions, or asking our state's highest earners to pay a little more to deliver the schools our keiki deserve, we have an opportunity and a duty to create structural changes that sustain, rather than undermine, the quality of our learning system.

We cannot afford to take a sledgehammer to education funding. Instead, we must work together to fix our fiscal problems in a way that allows our children to continue reaching for the stars.

Sincerely,

Jeanné Kapela

D-5 (Naalehu, Ocean View, Capt. Cook, Kealakekua, Kailua-Kona)



FINANCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE MEETING ACTION ITEM C: COMMITTEE ACTION ON RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S OPEATING BUDGET FOR 2021-2023 FISCAL BIENNIUM

DECEMBER 3, 2020 · HAWAII STATE BOARD OF
EDUCATION · CHAIR BRUCE VOSS

COMMENTS: Austerity economics is fatal. Across the world, when policies predicated on austerity are put forward, people suffer. Services on which working families rely evaporate, leaving vulnerable people to struggle alone. Inequality worsens. Ultimately, the financial recovery we're delicately trying to craft is undermined, as austerity leads to lengthier and deeper recessions.

The same is true when it comes to education. The budget cuts proposed by the DOE would jeopardize the ability of our school system to function and imperil the academic future of our keiki. A \$100 million cut to Hawai'i's weighted student formula could prompt the loss of 1,000 teaching positions according to the Hawai'i State Teachers Association, leading to drastically bloated class sizes, less individual attention for at-risk students, and an overall reduction in the quality of our state's instructional delivery.

A \$25 million decrease in special education funding would cause massive staffing shortages and endanger our schools' ability to provide a free and appropriate education to high-needs students. That problem would only be worsened by the suggested cuts to behavioral analysis and school-based behavioral health services, which provide essential care for special needs, emotionally vulnerable, abused, disadvantaged, and highly traumatized children.

While not totaling a large dollar amount, the proposed athletics reductions include restrictions to gender equity funding. The department's inability to ensure gender equity in athletics facilities reached a point at which it had become a legal matter in recent years, which spurred the department to take action. Even small cuts to gender equity funding will further institutionalize discrimination against girls and gender-nonconforming students.

While the board is required to follow Gov. David Ige's budgetary guidelines, it's important to understand that these guidelines are not gospel. State lawmakers can protect our school system, this year, by increasing corporate and high-earner income taxes, closing excise tax loopholes, granting the governor the authority to issue bond sales, temporarily repealing excise tax exemptions, and more to close the projected budget deficit. We hope that the board will adopt proactive policy positions in support of these and other revenue generating efforts.

Let's not allow our children's future to become a casualty of COVID-19. In the coming months, let's unite to find a way to protect our schools from financial ruin.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kris Coffield". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Kris" and "Coffield" being capitalized and prominent.

Kris Coffield
Chairperson, Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus



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

Budget Cuts Testimony

1 message

David Samulski <dsamulski@waialae.edu>
To: Testimony.BOE@boe.hawaii.gov

Wed, Dec 2, 2020 at 2:20 PM

Aloha,

As a teacher I am constantly extending myself beyond my working capacity to build the best environment for my students, both in person and online. It is with much apprehension that I receive the news about proposed budget cuts. During this time where we are literally being asked to put our lives on the front lines of the COVID-19 Pandemic that we need support and security the most. I am a single income individual without any family support. At best my financial situation is stable but here in Hawaii the reality of cost of living is a constant struggle. I choose to do teaching because I love this career and choose to do it despite the typical low pay. I am terrified though if I can continue to make ends meet if my pay is cut. How many individuals like myself will be able to keep working without a stable livelihood secure? Especially us new teachers, starting at the lowest rungs of the pay scale, are severely threatened by this action. We ask for YOUR support in keeping our pay as is so WE can continue to support our keiki through this troubling time.

Mahalo nui, David Samulski

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