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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING

TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 2017

RE: AGENDA ITEM IV, D, INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE STATUS REPORT

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Mizumoto and Members of the Board:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association is concerned that the BOE's decision to solicit funding for the superintendent search from the Castle Foundation has given the foundation undue influence over the search process. The Castle Foundation's decision to temporarily revoke their \$50,500 grant under the belief that Darrel Galera had an inside path to the superintendent position, as well as Galera's subsequent decision to rescind his application, shows that the foundation has the power to predetermine the outcome of the search.

Did the Castle Foundation pull their funding because they disapproved of Galera as a candidate and, in turn, what he might do if he became superintendent? While we will never know for sure, the question of outside influence nonetheless mars the process. Despite the foundation's long record of funding public education initiatives, no private entity should be able to decide who our next superintendent will be by controlling the search process's purse strings. Until the Castle Foundation is removed as a funding source for the search, stakeholders will justifiably worry that if foundation leaders have knowledge and disapprove of future candidates, they may intervene by restricting their funding again.

Recent problems also raise concerns about the makeup of the search process's Advisory Group, on which sits only one teacher out of twelve members. No distinction was made between elementary, middle and intermediate, and high schools. Moreover, not a single special education teacher was included in the group's

composition, despite the board's frequent overtures about boosting SPED achievement. Gov. David Ige said, "I believe that those closest to the children should be making the decisions about how funds should be spent, what the curriculum should look like, and what's the best way to help our students...and I'm committed to implementing those ideals." For that philosophy to work, we must empower multiple teachers' insights into the direction of our school system—elementary school, middle school, high school, special education, and non-classroom teachers alike.

We ask that you amend the superintendent search to prevent any outside organization from facilitating or funding the selection process. Please immediately discontinue funding from the Castle Foundation and, instead, fund the search internally. With a price tag of only \$50,500 (about the cost of cooling half of a classroom), it is reasonable to request that Gov. Ige and the Hawaii Department of Budget and Finance allocate spare funds to the BOE to conduct an internal search, especially when the survey results being presented today demonstrate that the top priority for all education stakeholders is choosing a superintendent who understands local culture and values. Just as we criticize reliance on mainland recruiting to resolve our islands' teacher shortage, we reject the notion that a high-priced mainland search firm is equipped to find local leadership that meets Hawai'i's unique educational needs.

Our next superintendent will direct the future of public education in Hawai'i, impacting our state's social wellness and economic prosperity. Thus, we ask you to ensure that search process is as transparent, inclusive, and unbiased as possible.