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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING

RE: AGENDA ITEM VII, A, BOARD ACTION ON PUBLIC COMMENT  
PROCESS FOR EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (“ESSA”)  
CONSOLIDATED STATE PLAN DRAFT

TUESDAY, APRIL 18, 2017

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT  
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Mizumoto and Members of the Committee:

In December of 2015, Congress passed and then President Barack Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act, which replaced punitive measures of school accountability with prospects for educator empowerment. Gov. David Ige embraced the law by establishing an ESSA Task Force to reimagine the direction of public education in Hawai'i and develop a new vision for our children's scholastic future.

As the Board of Education considers whether or not to approve submitting the Hawai'i State Department of Education's ESSA Plan for public comment, HSTA offers the following feedback on the outline of the plan being presented by the department today. Before we begin, however, we want to note our concern that the board is not being presented with the plan in full, this afternoon, but rather an executive summary of the department's ESSA Plan that omits critical details about what the plan will include, how it aligns with the ESSA Blueprint and Joint BOE-DOE Strategic Plan, and how it will involve hardworking teachers in its realization.

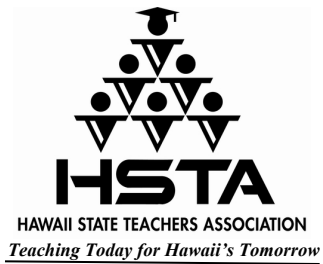
When reviewing the department's outline and executive summary, we have three primary concerns. First, we feel that the DOE's plan continues to overemphasize standardized testing. While we understand the need to provide timely feedback to schools, teachers, students, and parents about academic progress, student assessment is too often tied to excessive amounts of standardized tests, which are

routinely accompanied by mandated curricula that violate teachers' academic freedom and professional expertise. According to a 2014 study conducted by the National Education Association, 72 percent of teachers feel considerable pressure to improve test scores. Over half of teachers surveyed reported spending too much time on testing and test preparation, with the average teacher of a tested subject spending approximately 30 percent of their time on tasks related to standardized testing. Test-driven curricula, in turn, replace creativity and critical thinking with test-taking skills and rote content, diminishing the overall quality of our children's education experiences.

Second and relatedly, the DOE's plan does not grasp ESSA's assessment flexibility, including ESSA's innovative assessment pilot program. ESSA provides states with increased latitude in the use of standardized testing. States may now choose what test to use for annual school assessments at different grade levels to determine proficiency and are strongly encouraged to limit the amount of time that students spend preparing for and taking standardized tests. ESSA also extends funding to states for auditing and streamlining assessment systems. These changes reflect years of public outcry over the high level of testing that has flooded our state's and nation's classrooms. We have the opportunity to end over-testing in our schools and explore more meaningful assessment programs. We must seize it.

Third, the department's plan does not outline a new model of support for struggling schools. Instead, the plan relies on the same school accountability model crafted under the era of No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top, which fails to forge a new direction for our school system. Instead, it reinforces practices that are proven to suppress innovation and dismisses research-proven indicators that correlate with higher achievement, like lower class sizes and access to highly qualified teachers.

To rectify these problems, HSTA proposes the following revisions to the state's ESSA Plan. To begin, we believe that the plan should refocus on opportunity, especially those indicators that encapsulate the "inputs" that impact student learning. Currently, the department's plan weights academic measurements at 80 percent of a school's overall score within the state's proposed STRIVE HI 3.0 accountability framework, which is part of the DOE's ESSA Plan. Yet, ESSA only requires that a minimum of 51 percent of a state's accountability plan come from academic measurements. We believe that the department's plan should follow suit by limiting academic measurements to 51 percent of STRIVE HI 3.0 scores, with the other 49 percent covering items like class size and teacher case load, access to



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qualified teachers (including SPED/ELL teachers), access to arts and career and technical education courses, and access to prekindergarten programming. Maryland, for instance, accomplished precisely this kind of balance, as follows:

### Example of Maryland Indicators, Refocused on Opportunity

ACADEMIC INDICATORS 51% of Total Score	OPPORTUNITY INDICATORS* 49% of Total Score
PARCC Proficiency*	Class Size and Caseload Ratios
PARCC Student Growth (Elementary/Middle)*	Access to Pre-Kindergarten (Elementary)
English Proficiency for ESOL Students*	School Climate Survey Results
Graduation Rate (High)*	Access to Advanced Courses
Chronic Absenteeism Rate	Access to Related Arts Courses
Career and Technology Certification Rate	Advanced Teacher Certification Rate

\*Required by ESSA (ESSA requires one or more non-academic indicators of school success)

Moreover, we urge the board and the department explicitly include in the ESSA Plan a commitment to apply to be one of seven states authorized to pilot innovative assessments. We understand that the USDOE has not yet released the application for the innovative assessment pilot program. One of three things is likely to occur: 1) the USDOE may continue the pilot program, in which case we may be authorized to pilot authentic assessments in Hawai'i; 2) the USDOE may halt the pilot program, in which case we waste only printer ink in committing ourselves to applying; or 3) the USDOE may allow states to proceed with assessments as they see fit, deeming educational assessments to be a state's rights issue.

Similar to senior projects and literary critiques, authentic assessment aligns learning content with real-world applications and meaningfully measures students' knowledge and skills over time. Authentic assessments are designed to promote critical thinking and ownership of the learning process. As HSTA has informed the board before, authentic assessments are currently being implemented by New York

Consortium schools. Since their enactment, the consortium schools have doubled the graduation rate of special needs students compared to other NYC schools, decreased their dropout rate by half, increased their graduation and college-going rates for minorities; and reduced teacher turnover to roughly a quarter of the overall NYC turnover rate. To borrow language from Goal 1A of the Strategic Plan's "Student Success" section, authentic assessments will "increase student engagement and empowerment through relevant, rigorous learning opportunities that incorporate students' voices," create "relevant" learning opportunities that connect with real world experiences, and "empower" both teachers and students to engage in interdisciplinary, collaborative, and innovative problem-based learning.

Finally, we encourage the board and the department to adopt a holistic system of support for struggling schools. Today, struggling schools are pressured to improve test scores, leading to more time spent on test preparation and a narrowing of scholastic curricula to tested subjects at the expense of art, music, electives, career and technical education, and Hawaiian language and cultural courses. Teachers, in today's accountability model, are held responsible for factors beyond their control that impact the learning environment—a teacher cannot control the socioeconomic status of a child's family, for example, despite such status being the biggest predictor of student success, as numerous studies have found. Today's accountability system also relies on outside "experts" to tell struggling schools how to improve, effectively outsourcing our education system to private mainland consulting firms.

We need a paradigm shift. Specifically, we must install a system of support for struggling schools that advances whole child education (including wraparound services for disadvantaged and special needs students), expands academic curricula, and empowers teachers to become change agents in addressing community needs. One evidence-based strategy for assisting low performing schools is the community schools model, which emphasizes wraparound services, like health care, and amplifies social services' access to school campuses. In employing high quality teaching and culturally sensitive curricula, prioritizing restorative justice, and highlighting community engagement, community schools have been shown to increase graduation rates and college enrollment, while decreasing behavioral referrals and health risks. Under ESSA, up to 7 percent of Title I funding may be used to uplift our state's lowest performing 5 percent of schools. We hope that you will take this opportunity to use federal funds to build these schools our keiki deserve for those who are most in need.