

Administrative Testimony Testimony of Kamana'opono Crabbe, Ph.D. Ka Pouhana, Chief Executive Officer

Hawai'i Board of Education General Business Meeting AGENDA ITEM VII.B. BOARD ACTION ON 2018 LEGISLATIVE REPORT: ANNUAL REPORT ON THE STATE'S PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS IN ACCORDANCE WITH HAWAI'I REVISED STATUTES SECTION 302D-21

December 6, 2018 1:30 p.m. Queen Lili'uokalani Building

The Administration of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) appreciates the opportunity to provide the following <u>COMMENTS</u> relating to the Hawai'i Board of Education's Report to the 2019 Legislature on Hawai'i's public charter schools (Board Report).

OHA has been a strong supporter of Hawai'i's public charter schools, many of which provide a culturally-grounded education for Native Hawaiian and other children. 17 of the 37 public charter schools in Hawai'i are Hawaiian culture-based or Hawaiian language immersion schools, in which OHA has invested over \$18.6 million between FY 2005-2006 and FY 2016-2017. On October 19, 2017, the OHA Board of Trustees approved an additional \$3 million total to these charter schools for FY 2017-2018 and FY 2018-2019. OHA has made this investment because research has found that Hawaiian students exposed to culturally-driven educational strategies have a stronger sense of socio-emotional well-being, deeper engagement with their schools, and a stronger commitment to civic activities in their community, factors which are directly tied to greater academic achievement.

The Hawai'i Board of Education (Board) has recognized the importance of our public charter schools, as an integral component of our public education strategy. On December 6, 2016, the Board approved an updated State Education Strategic Plan (Plan) for 2017-2020, which describes "the shared objectives for <u>equity and excellence</u> for every child across Hawai'i's nearly 300 public schools, including our public charter schools and Hawaiian language medium schools"; the Plan includes the objective that "Hawai'i public charter schools will foster innovation and the expansion of existing public school 'Bright Spots,' which includes learning from charter schools that were established as innovation labs" (emphasis added).

Hawai'i's public charter schools are indeed deserving of equity and have already demonstrated their potential for innovation and excellence notwithstanding their

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significant financial and other challenges. Within this context, OHA provides the following comments on the Board Report:

Facilities Funding. OHA strongly agrees with the Board Report's identification of the lack of charter school facilities funding as a major and perennial problem. Although Act 234, Sess. Laws 2015 (codified in HRS §302D-29.5) took a step toward addressing this problem by requiring the Legislature to consider making an appropriation and bond authorization to the State Public Charter School Commission (Commission), tasking the Commission with developing criteria for fund distribution, and creating a Facilities Funding Working Group to develop a priority list of schools to receive funding, none of these events has transpired. The ongoing lack of facilities funding is the greatest disparity between funding for public charter schools and DOE schools, and must be addressed. As noted by the Commission in past testimonies to the Legislature, lease or rental payments constitute a substantial portion of facilities expenses incurred by public start-up charter schools, who collectively spent over \$5.3 million on rent or lease payments for school facilities in school year 2015-2016; in 2016-2017, public charter schools spent an approximate total of \$10.4 million on rent and lease payments, repair and maintenance, and utilities payments. Unfortunately, without the facilities funding allocations envisioned by Act 234, public charter schools have been forced to use their per-pupil allocation to meet their facilities costs. Accordingly, OHA supports the Board Report's recommendations that the Legislature provide some form of facilities funding to address this unmet need, that the Commission complete and adopt the facilities funding criteria called for under Act 234, and that the Facilities Funding Working Group reconvene to create a priority list for the allocation of facilities funds.

Implementation of multiple charter school authorizer system. OHA further appreciates and supports the progress made towards the creation of a process for establishing additional charter school authorizers for our public charter schools. Throughout the years, Hawai'i's charter school laws have undergone several major revisions, most recently in 2012 through Act 130 (codified in HRS Chapter 302D). Act 130 created the Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission as an initial charter school authorizer, and envisioned the establishment of additional charter school authorizers pursuant to administrative rules promulgated by the Board; such rules have since been promulgated and made effective as of February 2017. OHA notes that the Board Report states that the Board has not made much progress on the development of key documents required under the rules, due to other Board priorities taking precedent. However, OHA is encouraged by Student Achievement Committee ("SAC") Chair Margaret Cox's December 6, 2018, Update on the status of multiple charter school authorizer system, which recognizes the Board's legal obligation to establish a system for the creation of multiple charter school authorizers; contains a new timeline targeting Mid-December 2018 to late January 2019 for the development of initial drafts of three key documents; and targets school year 2020-2021 as the first school year for the establishment of new authorizers. OHA extends its deep appreciation to SAC Chair Margaret Cox, for her work and her commitment to "work with the Board Chairperson to

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endeavor to allocate enough of the Board's staff time to meet the new timeline," and further expresses its appreciation to the Board and its staff for advancing the creation of additional charter school authorizers in Hawai'i. OHA notes that five entities have already expressed interest in becoming new charter school authorizers - Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani, University of Hawai'i - Hilo; University of Hawai'i - West O'ahu; 'Aha Pūnana Leo, Inc.; Kanu o ka 'Āina Learning 'Ohana; and Lei Ho'olaha Community Development Financial Institution.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to provide testimony on Agenda Item VII.B. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact OHA Public Policy Advocate Monica Morris at (808) 594-0285.

'A'ohe lua e like ai me ka ho'ona'auao 'ana o ke kamali'i. Nothing can compare in worth to the education of our children.