



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION
AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

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State of Hawaii
Board of Education

Testimony by the
Hawaii Government Employees Association,
AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

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Relating to Action Item B on Finance and Infrastructure Committee
recommendations concerning Department of Education's plan for use of
federal funds in the new COVID-19 relief package and annual federal spending

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO, is concerned that cutting education funding would hurt Hawaii's economic recovery. Economic experts both locally and nationally advocate for investing in education because it is a major contributor to any state's economic growth. President Joe Biden's Treasury secretary nominee Janet Yellen testified before a Congressional committee on Tuesday that governments need to "spend big" to shore up the economic recovery. Yellen said, "Over the next few months, we are going to need more aid to distribute the vaccine; reopen schools; to help states keep firefighters and teachers on the job." With that type of signal from Washington, D.C. it is premature to move forward with a plan that drastically cuts the Hawaii Department of Education's budget and slashes positions.

We ask the Board to not repeat the mistakes made during the Great Recession when drastic across-the-board cuts badly hurt public education and services. We advocate for the use of all federal money available to us, and we are hopeful that additional relief and assistance is coming to schools not only to provide the funds needed to withstand the COVID-19 pandemic, but also to strengthen the future of education. We urge the Board to defer action on this agenda item until they get answers to all of the questions and concerns being raised about the proposed use of the federal relief funds.

Last June, the Board passed a resolution in which you asked the Department to "act with hope" amid this global pandemic. It is now time for the Board to also "act with hope" and continue to support and invest in our future through public education.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our testimony.

Sincerely,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director