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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: SB 2820 – RELATING TO TEACHER COMPENSATION

FRIDAY, JANUARY 28, 2022

OSA TUI, JR., PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **strongly supports SB 2820**, relating to teacher compensation. This bill appropriates funds for various teacher differentials to help address various labor shortages. These shortages are in the areas of special education, hard-to-staff geographic locations, and Hawaiian language immersion programs.

We do ask for one amendment. The charter school commission does not have the authority to engage in negotiations with the Hawaii State Teachers Association BU5. The proper negotiating entity would be each public charter school's governing board. However, please do appropriate funds separately for the Department of Education and BU 5 members at public charter schools, so that charter schools do get those funds to provide differentials for their teachers in the selected areas. We calculate these amounts, based on Gov. Ige's supplemental budget, would be about \$32.5 million for BU 5 members at the DOE and, by our estimates, \$2 million for BU 5 members at our public charter schools.

Recent data has shown how these differentials were effective; **these differentials worked as planned! According to the department's own data**, the number of teachers transferring into special education positions for the upcoming 2020–21 school year actually increased by 29 percent over the previous school year, while the number of teachers who left SpEd positions decreased by 57 percent. Nearly twice as many educators transferred into hard-to-staff schools for next school year compared to last, while the differentials led to a 41 percent decrease in those leaving hard-to-staff locations.

In Hawai'i, teacher turnover is high, it is not just our new teachers leaving, and the number of teachers leaving continues to rise. Chronic teacher turnover, in turn, forces the department of education to rely on emergency hires and long-term substitute



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teachers, who are not licensed teachers, to fill vacancies resulting in thousands of students each day in a class without a licensed teacher. Our teacher shortage problem is further clarified in the DOE's 2020-21 Employment Report, which shows that teacher voluntary separations increased from 961 for SY2019-20 to 1,199 for SY2020-21, an approximate 25% increase. When looking only at retirements, the numbers went from 287 to 428 over the same time period – a 49% increase!

The 5-year teacher retention drop in 2020-2021 may be indicative of the effects of COVID-19 with teachers not wanting to return to teach in our public schools in Hawai'i after the 2019-2020 school year. We continue to worry that a more difficult 2021-22 school year for all school staff will result in an even larger drop once the 2021-22 data becomes available. Coupled with a likely increase in retirements and other separations from the Department, it would go a long way towards retaining educators to fund these differentials to retain our licensed teachers.

Data from the 2020-21 school year shows that only 51 percent of teachers remained in the Hawaii DOE five years after hire. In addition, about 1,000 long-term substitutes and emergency hires filling vacancies in classrooms are not graduates of a state-approved teacher education program. In fact, some of those subs and emergency hires are not even college graduates.

We need the legislature's help to help end the teacher shortage crisis by funding these differentials for our hardest-to-staff positions, in special education, and in Hawaiian immersion.

To take care of the needs of our hardworking public school teachers, and to provide our keiki with the quality education they deserve, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks for your **strong support** of this bill.