



## HAWAII STATE LEGISLATURE

STATE CAPITOL  
415 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

June 24, 2020

Board of Education  
PO Box 2360  
Honolulu, HI 96804

Re: Department of Education Plans for Reopening Schools

The Legislature is extremely concerned about the situation at the Department of Education. The recent HDOE distance learning survey highlighted extremely troubling data.

Student participation in distance learning was lacking and inconsistent particularly among secondary schools. Among middle and high school teachers, almost one half reported that less than 20% of students consistently participated in distance learning. Only 10% reported more than 60% of students consistently participated. The elementary school situation is only slightly better with about 20% of teachers reporting that less than 20% of students consistently participated in distance learning, and about a third of teachers reported that more than 60% of students consistently participated.

The situation with internet connectivity and devices is also concerning. Only about three-quarters of the students reported that they have reliable internet access at home and have enough devices in their home to conduct distance learning.

The 2020-2021 school year will start on August 4. We appreciate that the Board drafted a Resolution on the re-opening of schools and understand that the Department will issue a plan on July 2. In these difficult fiscal times the Legislature cannot issue funding to any Department without a clear, concise, and detailed plan on the use of requested resources. As of the date of this letter, the Legislature has only received an estimated budget using a Federal calculator to show what it could potentially cost for the reopening of schools. This constitutes neither prudent financial planning nor a clear plan for the use of our limited State funds.

The DOE has received \$42 million in CARES funding to address challenges due to COVID-19, including distance learning. The Legislature has yet to receive a complete detail on how these funds were used and whether the funds led to student success. Currently, the data shows that the approach taken by Superintendent and the DOE, even with the influx of Federal funds, led to dismal results. As such, additional funding without a comprehensive plan would be a disservice to our students.

If the July 2 plan does not clearly articulate how any requests for funding would be utilized to achieve the requirements set forth in the BOE Resolution, the Legislature will find it very difficult to justify allocating the State's limited resources.

We implore the Board to ensure that the Department's reopening plans include a clear fiscal accounting of how State and Federal funds will be used to ensure the health, well-being, and education of our Keiki. We further ask that the Board's Finance and Infrastructure Committee convene an emergency meeting on July 2<sup>nd</sup> to vet the Department's plan for financial implications and resource requirements and provide a report to the Legislature.

Mahalo,



Senator Ron Kouchi  
Senate President



Representative Scott Saiki  
House Speaker



Senator Michelle N. Kidani  
Chair, Senate Committee on Education



Representative Justin Woodson  
Chair, House Committee on Lower and Higher Education




Senator Donovan Dela Cruz  
Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means




Representative Sylvia Luke  
Chair, House Committee on Finance

  
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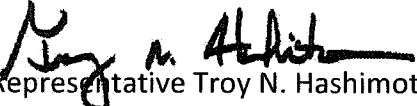
  
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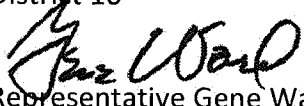
  
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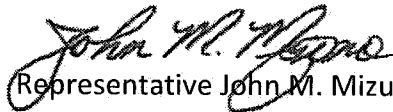
  
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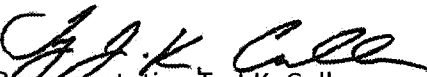
  
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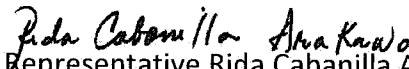
  
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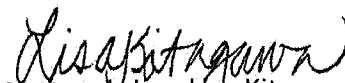
  
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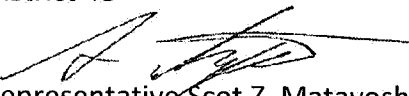
  
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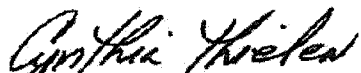
  
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Board of Education  
PO Box 2360  
Honolulu, HI 96804

Re: Department of Education Reopening Plan

  
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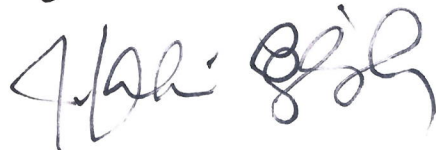

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