



**STATE OF HAWAII
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

P. O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Senate Committee on Education and Housing
Hearing: Friday, March 19, 2010 at 1:30 p.m. in Room 225
Testimony in **Strong Opposition to SB2790**, Relating to Education

Chair Sakamoto, Vice-Chair Kidani & Members of the Committee:

Passing SB2790 will negatively impact public education in the following ways: stifle the learning process and the development of critical thinking skills; give teachers more paperwork and less teaching time; and impose excessive costs to schools that must provide every single adverse student a unique controversy-free alternative learning activity.

Board Policy 2210, Controversial Issues Policy, states, in relevant part: "Student discussion of issues which generate opposing points of view shall be considered a normal part of the learning process in every area of the school program. . . . Stress shall be placed on learning how to make judgments based on facts." (Emphasis added.)

Whereas the Board considers discussions with "opposing points of view" a normal part of the learning process, SB2790 would deem all such academic discussions as abnormal and something parents should be able to protect their children from.

Excellent teachers encourage educational opportunities to arise organically. Ideally teachers will create environments where students can ask questions and other students feel comfortable exchanging their insights. If a discussion with opposing viewpoints begins to take place, SB2790 would force teachers to stop all such discussions for fear that they will be sanctioned, have their license revoked or forced to take a leave of absence.

If every parent were prompted to demand a controversy-free education suited for their particular sensibilities, the costs to schools would be staggering. Imagine how many separate classrooms would be needed to ensure there was no cross contamination of what one parent might consider a safe "alternative learning activity" with what another parent might consider to be just as "potentially controversial".

The Department of Education General Learner Outcomes include "the ability to demonstrate critical thinking". Without opposing points of view, there would be nothing to critique and nothing to think critically about.

I urge this committee to oppose SB2790 because it is antithetical to learning, overly broad and excessively costly. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Kim Coco Iwamoto, Esq.
State of Hawaii Board of Education Member, Oahu-at-Large