

September 15, 2020

To: State of Hawai'i Board of Education
Testimony.BOE@boe.hawaii.gov

Position: Streamline SCC waiver process,
but not at the expense of impartial
oversight.

re: Sep. 17, 2020 GBM **Agenda Item V.(B.)** Delegation of authority for interim approvals of
SCC requests for waivers from policies, rules, or procedures for the 2020-2021 school year.

Aloha,

I commend the Board of Education for taking action to streamline the process for reviewing and making decisions regarding SCC Waiver Requests.

However, I strenuously object to any rule of operation that does not, at its core, contain a system of checks and balances. Giving sole decision-making authority to one person for waivers of *any* DOE regulations or policies institutionalizes totalitarianism. We need *more* openness. More accountability. More public involvement. More shared decision making. More impartial, at least 3-way vote review of all the rule bending that goes on. More checks and balances, please. NOT LESS!

In my own experience the “School Empowerment Model” that the BOE has been endorsing the past few years has become a euphemism for even less accountability to the public than we had before. This model is institutionalizing totalitarianism at the school, complex, and state levels whether you are aware of it or not. So, please be aware – the more you wrest decision making away from groups of impartial observers (such as the BOE). and consolidate all authority into one person (a CAS, the Superintendent, a Principal) the worse the system becomes. We desperately need a Stakeholder Empowerment Model – what SCCs promised but never delivered.

The recent changes to the SCC waiver system may simplify the process, but impartiality is being sacrificed for expedient autocracy. Apparently, the public education system will continue to slide around in mediocrity, or worse, until the BOE recognizes that checks and balances, authentic systems of accountability, are needed at all levels of the DOE yet sorely lacking. Please learn more about checks and balances, and come back to the table with a method that ensures greater accountability, not less.

Mahalo,



Vanessa Ott