

State of Hawaii
Board of Education
Human Resources Committee

Testimony by the Board of Directors of Bargaining Unit 6 – Educational Officers,
Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

March 4, 2021

Agenda Item IV.D. Committee Action on recommendation
concerning new Superintendent Employment Contract

Under Agenda Item IV.D., the Committee is being asked to act on a recommendation concerning a new Superintendent Employment Contract for current Superintendent Christina Kishimoto. The Unit 6 Board of Directors of HGEA is asking the Committee to recommend to the BOE that a new employment contract not be offered to the Superintendent when the one-year extension to her three-year contract expires on July 31, 2021. By law, the Superintendent may be appointed for a term of up to four years. The three-year contract and the one-year extension will have fulfilled the current four-year appointment and we, as a board made up of educational officers serving the Hawaii Department of Education (DOE), believe it is time for change.

As educational officers, our commitment is in establishing structures and systems that support staff, teachers, and administrators to maximize student learning. This is accomplished with careful consideration in the management of personnel, facilities, operations, and fiscal resources. While we have a direct impact on student achievement, a cohesive and effective system of support is necessary to create the conditions in which success is maximized. This system of support is lacking under the current Superintendent.

What should that system of support look like? It must include the voice of educational officers and a commitment to empowering school leaders. It should also include a commitment to building and growing leadership ability and capacity, as well as targeted interventions and supports that are descriptive, specific, and timely. This support needs to come from the Superintendent as well as her Deputy, Assistants, and Complex Area Superintendents, who should each have the wisdom, experience, respect, and a proven track record of being leaders of leaders. The last requirement for a system of support in a large organization as the DOE is clear, open, timely and consistent communication of school related initiatives, programs, and compliance requirements. Educational officers cannot perform and lead when communication is poor and information is inconsistent or lacks clarity, leading to confusion.

This past year has been a year unlike no other. Our resilience has truly been tested during this pandemic. As we go forward, here is what we need in a Superintendent and her leadership team:

- 1) Decisions to include the voice of educational officers - consultation and feedback from those on the front line.
- 2) Clear guidance and direction properly communicated to the field; there shouldn't be much variation when it comes to health and safety issues.
- 3) Resources that need to be provided and readily available when decisions are announced and not a "now you have to figure it out" response.

The time has come to hold the Superintendent accountable for achieving the DOE's goals as set out in the DOE and BOE's joint strategic plan and as outlined in her position description. Now is also the time to find a Superintendent who will provide the cohesive and effective system of support that educational officers need to succeed and ensure our public education system is not failing the students we are committed to serve. The opportunity to set a clear path with a new Superintendent is at our doorstep. Let us not be derelict in our responsibility to provide hope to our students and instill confidence in our public education system with our parents, guardians, and the community statewide.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our testimony in opposition of offering the Superintendent a new employment contract.

Sincerely,

Unit 6 Board of Directors

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