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February 25, 2019

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair
Committee on Ways and Means

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Committee Members:

RE: SB 171, SD 1 Relating to Education (Transfer Public Schools from the State to the Counties)

An earlier generation of Hawai'i leaders recognized that all residents of the State deserve equal educational opportunities, regardless of where they live. This foresight created the only Statewide school system in the United States, and although we have not lived up to the ideals and vision reflected in that principle, we should be forever striving to achieve that fundamental goal rather than undermining it.

SB 171, SD1 would be a giant step in the wrong direction. The mainland offers forty-nine examples of how local control of education is great for wealthy jurisdictions where property taxes can fund every bell and whistle that the rich can envision for their children, but reliance on local funding is disastrous for lower income areas. And why should it be so? A student living in a rural county already is disadvantaged, missing out on opportunities that "city kids" have at their fingertips? Why would the State want to compound that disadvantage by leaving the education of our children to the mercy of what each community can afford?

By all means, let's work to improve the education system for all our keiki. By no means should we base that improvement on ability pay.

Please do not approve SB 171, SD1.

Respectfully Submitted,

Harry Kim
MAYOR