



To: Senate Committee on Education
Re: Support for SB 821
From: Deborah Bond-Upson, HE'E Interim Director
Date: February 26, 2025

Hui for Excellence in Education, or "HE'E," is a statewide coalition of diverse stakeholders committed to working collaboratively to identify opportunities to improve public education. We work to provide Hawai'i families and organizations with a resource for educational policy.

We write in support of SB 821 appropriating funds to the Department of Education for community schools and a program manager position. Evidence has long shown that family and community engagement in schools has a powerful effect on student achievement.

Our legislature through 2008's Act 51 and our BOE and DOE through successive strategic plans, have stated the aim to engage families in schools for the benefit this brings to students achievement, comfort, and success and for the schools overall success. Engaging the community and families in the schools further brings authenticity, relevance, diversity, warmth and support.

Yet for all the determination and repeated attempts, families become less and less engaged and involved as students progress in grades. In some schools family and community engagement is very low. Family resource centers and Community Schools are showing real progress in family and community engagement.

We have been watching the growth of Community Schools and Family Resource Centers and see them as a way to support student mental health and good attendance as well as a solid route to improved student achievement. We urge you to support SB 821.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our thoughts.

HE'E Coalition Members and Participants

Academy 21
Alliance for Place Based Learning
American Civil Liberties Union
Atherton YMCA
Education Institute of Hawai'i
*Faith Action for Community Equity
Fresh Leadership LLC
Girl Scouts Hawai'i
*HawaiiKidsCAN
*Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance
*Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
*Hawai'i Association of School Psychologists
Hawai'i Athletic League of Scholars
*Hawai'i Children's Action Network
Hawai'i Education Association
Hawai'i Nutrition and Physical Activity Coalition
*Hawai'i State PTSA
Hawai'i State Student Council
Hawai'i State Teachers Association
Head Start Collaboration Office
It's All About Kids*INPEACE

Joint Venture Education Forum
Junior Achievement of Hawaii
Kamehameha Schools
Kanu Hawai'i
Kaua'i Ho'okele Council
Keiki to Career Kaua'i
Kupu A'e
*Leaders for the Next Generation
Learning First
McREL's Pacific Center for Changing the Odds
Native Hawaiian Education Council
Our Public School
*Pacific Resources for Education and Learning
*Parents and Children Together
*Parents for Public Schools Hawai'i
Special Education Provider Alliance
*Teach for America
The Learning Coalition
US PACOM
University of Hawai'i College of Education
*Youth Service Hawai'i

Voting Members () Voting member organizations vote on action items while individual and non-voting participants may collaborate on all efforts within the Coalition.*