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**HAWAII
TECHNOLOGY ACADEMYSM**

Hawaii Public Charter School #551

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February 27, 2013

Honorable Sylvia Luke, Chair
Honorable Scott Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Honorable Aaron Ling Johanson, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance
Hawaii State Capitol

**Re: HB674 HD1, Relating to Education – Support
Conference Room 308, 11:30 a.m. (Finance Agenda #2)**

Aloha Chair Luke, Vice Chairs Nishimoto and Johanson, and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Hawaii Technology Academy (HTA), a public charter school serving students on Oahu, Kauai Hawaii Island, Maui, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

Since returning to Hawaii to take on this role at HTA, I have committed myself to working alongside with many of our charter school supporters throughout the state. I am a firm believer that we need to improve the educational outcomes of Hawaii's students. As such, I am happy to support the advancement of this legislation to clarify the governance structure for Hawaii's charter school system with clear lines of authority and accountability that will foster improved student outcomes.

HTA appreciates all the work that has been put into recasting a strong foundation for Hawaii's public charter schools and all the subsequent work that has been done to further refine the new system being implemented this year. However, we continue to have serious concerns regarding the chasm in funding for public charter school students which has declined significantly since Fiscal Year 2007 by 34.5% from \$9,063 to \$5,933 for FY 2013, which is why we also support the changes to establish facilities funding for schools. Studies and audits confirm it costs about the same to provide an online and/or blended learning public school education as it does for a traditional public school education. Online public schools may have less overhead costs than traditional schools but spend significantly more on courses and assessments, learning management systems, technology and instructional materials. Therefore, in order to improve and maintain

improvements to student's educational outcomes, adequate funding is needed for all public charter schools.

HTA also strongly supports the changes proposed in Section 17 of this bill that clarifies that students enrolled at charter schools whose curriculum incorporates virtual education have the same opportunity to participate in athletics as is provided to students at other public schools. There are innumerable examples of how participation in extra curricular activities benefits students in the classroom. HTA is committed to fostering the development of students both inside and outside of their traditional learning environments.

The changes contained in this bill are steps in the right direction because children attending a public charter school should not be deprived of the same extra-curricular opportunities or funding provided for children attending a traditional public school.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on this matter.

Sincerely,

Leigh Fitzgerald
Executive Director
Hawaii Technology Academy