



**S E A C**  
**Special Education Advisory Council**

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**Special Education  
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Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair  
Committee on Education

Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
Committee on Human Services  
State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: SCR 153 / SR 115 - REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT  
OF EDUCATION TO CONDUCT A TWO-YEAR PILOT  
PROJECT TO IMPLEMENT CONTRACTS FOR SERVICES  
FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ON A BLOCK BASIS  
RATHER THAN ON A ONE-TO-ONE BASIS

Dear Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC), Hawaii's State Advisory Panel under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), **strongly supports** SCR 153 and SR 115 that create a pilot program within the Department of Education to implement contracts for supports for students with disabilities on a block basis. Block basis refers to a flexible unit of service to address the diverse needs of one or more students based on each student's Individualized Education Plan. It includes both one-to-one services and group services as appropriate for the identified needs of the students served.

This resolution originated from the community. The Coalition on Children with Special Needs, of which SEAC is a participating member, has been on record for several years in advising the Department on maintaining continuity of quality support to students with disabilities through more cost effective utilization of contracted personnel. Given our interest, we are pleased to be included in the working group outlined in the legislation.

At a time when legislators and other policy makers are focusing on appropriate supports to improve the dismal academic performance of students with disabilities, as well as the efficient use of special education funds, SCR 153 and SR 115 offer an opportunity to address three drawbacks of the current contracting system:



- 1) the potentially negative (although unintentional) effects on some students with disabilities receiving one-to-one contracted paraprofessional services. A number of educational studies have documented the unintended detrimental effects of “excessive paraprofessional proximity” including, but not limited to:
  - separation from classmates,
  - unnecessary dependence,
  - limited access to appropriate instruction,
  - interference with the engagement of teachers,
  - provocation of problem behaviors,
  - interference with peer interactions, and
  - loss of personal control (Giangreco et al., 2005);
- 2) the lack of flexibility for efficient use of classroom personnel in group instruction; and
- 3) the high cost of one-to-one programming.

In the pilot project students requiring one-to-one services per their IEP will continue to receive those services, while other students needing intermittent support and opportunities to learn alongside their typically developing peers will also benefit from receiving appropriate services through flexible service delivery models. SEAC anticipates the two-year pilot will demonstrate substantial cost savings to the Department through more efficient use of contract funds. The flexible use of contracted personnel may also help to mitigate the missing supports resulting from a chronic shortage of Educational Assistants. In addition, the working group and pilots will help to research and determine evidence-based models for providing flexible and effective supports to students per their IEPs.

SEAC is aware of the issue of families and providers mistrusting the intentions of the Department and is committed to working collaboratively with the Department, providers and families to ensure robust communication, transparency and positive outcomes for students with disabilities. In addition, there is a general perception that contract costs are inherently more expensive than employee-based service delivery models. SEAC anticipates that the required cost-benefit analysis and comparison of a block contract model vs. an employee-based model may reveal a number of hidden costs in the employee-based model, making the expenditures comparable. The data provided by the analysis will help to provide greater clarity for decision-making about service delivery models that are beneficial to the student in terms of continuity and quality of support, while at the same time being cost effective.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important legislation. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me.

Respectfully,

  
Martha Guinan, Chair