



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

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Catherine Payne, Chairperson
Hawaii State Board of Education
P. O. Box 2360
Honolulu, HI 96814

RE: IV. B. Board Action on Approving for Public Hearing Draft
Amendments to Hawaii Administrative Rules, Chapter 8-27,
Transportation of Students

IV. F. Board Action on Board Resolution directing the Department to
prepare for the reopening of schools for the 2020-21 School Year

Dear Chair Payne and Members of the Board,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) appreciates this
opportunity to offer comments on two Board agenda items:

Amending Administrative Rules for Student Transportation

SEAC is in full support of proposed amendments to Chapter 8-27
that require the Department to provide free transportation to and from
school for students with disabilities who require transportation as a
related service to benefit from their educational program provided at a
public charter school. The amendments also mandate the Department
to provide transportation services to those students with disabilities who
have been placed programmatically at a school other than their home
school. These transportation services should have already been in place
for all IDEA and Section 504 students who require them. However, the
Office of Special Education Programs found that they have not been
provided consistently to students with disabilities across the state, and
in particular, to students residing in rural areas and attending charter
schools.

Board of Education Resolution Regarding the Reopening of Schools

SEAC is appreciative of the Board's thoughtful and timely draft
resolution offering broad guidance to the Department regarding the
re-opening of schools for SY 20-21. We fully support encouraging all
stakeholders to embrace the three principles--giving hope, acting with
kindness and working toward togetherness. These same principles
have long been espoused by SEAC as the foundation for family-school



partnerships.

SEAC is also in full support of the Board's priorities for delivering services to Hawaii's public school students. The first priority--maintaining the health and safety of students and staff--takes precedence over all others. It is extremely important for the Department to adopt standards for health and safety in the context of COVID-19, as well as clear and detailed guidelines on how to successfully achieve these standards. These guidelines must include how to adapt procedures to meet the unique needs of student subgroups, like students with chronic health conditions and students whose households are transient. School autonomy must take a backseat to ensuring safe practices are consistently applied in every school. Likewise, schools must have equal access to the supplies and PPE that will protect students, faculty and families.

With schools reopening a little more than six weeks away, we urge the Department to publish its guidelines and distribute them to all stakeholders within the next week or two. Uncertainty has led to fear and indecision amongst families on whether to send their children back to in-person learning in the classroom. It will be difficult for schools to anticipate the demand for in-person instruction until families have confidence in the ability of each school to keep students safe and healthy.

SEAC supports the Board's recommendation that the Hawaii Department of Health be the primary source of updated information in order to minimize confusion regarding best practices for maintaining safe schools and communities. These practices will no doubt change over time as new information becomes available, requiring a robust effort on the part of the Department to provide timely updates to families and staff.

SEAC offers its support in the Department's endeavors, including the dissemination of information to families of students with disabilities. Please let us know how we may be of assistance.

Respectfully,

Martha Guinan
Chair

Ivalee Sinclair
Legislative Committee Chair