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January 29, 2019

Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair
Committee on Education
Senator Stanley Chang, Chair
Committee on Housing
Hawaii State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: S.B. 114 - RELATING TO TEACHER HOUSING

Dear Chairs Kidani and Chang and Members of the Committees,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC), Hawaii's State Advisory Panel under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), strongly supports the intent of S.B. 114 which creates a housing voucher program for full time teachers who teach in a hard-to-fill school.

As you know, Hawaii suffers from a chronic shortage of qualified teachers for our public school students. The shortage is most acute for special education teachers who teach some of our most vulnerable students. This school year, only 84% of special education teaching positions were filled by individuals who had completed a state approved teacher education program. Of those teachers, a fair percentage have only general education training.

Retention of qualified teachers is also a growing problem. Last school year saw the most common reason cited by exiting teachers (38%) was moving out of state. We know from exit surveys that the high cost of living (and in particular, housing) was a major factor in the decision to leave Hawaii.

Given the critical personnel shortage to adequately serve the needs of special education students, we ask that your committees consider adding hard-to-fill teaching *positions* as a criteria for voucher eligibility.

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

Sincerely,


Martha Guinan
Chair


Ivalee Sinclair
Legislative Committee Chair