



S E A C
Special Education Advisory Council

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**Special Education
Advisory Council**

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

RE: SB 2486 - Relating to Education Data

Dear Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) **strongly supports** SB 2486 which requires the HIDOE to provide a standardized data collection process and collect and analyze data relating to student discipline, school climate and student achievement.

SEAC has been deeply concerned about suspensions rates for students eligible for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) since a study during the Felix Consent Decree revealed a significant disparity--special education suspensions were three times higher than for students without disabilities. This disparity has remained consistently two to three times higher than that for the student population as a whole (source: IDEA 618 Data Reports). As a result, these exclusionary disciplinary practices disproportionately impact instruction for students with disabilities and contribute to poor academic and post school outcomes. Additionally, there is little evidence that suspensions deter students from misbehaving again.

SEAC, as Hawaii's State Advisory Panel under IDEA, has a responsibility to advise the Department of Education on the unmet needs of students with disabilities as well as on policies affecting their academic success. SEAC annually tracks Hawaii's statewide discipline data required by the USDOE and has consistently called attention to the need to reduce these rates through sharing trend data in our annual report and providing recommendations to the Superintendent and to the Board of Education.

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SEAC's ability to adequately advise the HIDOE has been significantly hampered, however, by a lack of access to school- and complex-level data. We therefore deeply appreciate the detailed reporting requirements in SB 2486 including information collected on all subgroups, restraints data, and evidence-based strategies schools and complexes are using to provide inclusionary discipline.

During Hawaii's Race to the Top initiative, all schools were required to develop data teams and early warning systems to signal when students are beginning to experience academic failure or chronic absenteeism. SEAC believes the data reporting requirements of SB 2486 are within the capability of our public schools and in the interest of all students, especially students with disabilities who experience the highest incidence of out of school suspensions and restraints. This enhanced reporting will also help to promote consistent best practice across the state and keep parents and the community informed.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important legislation. We are more than happy to provide additional information as needed.

Sincerely,


Martha Guinan
Chair


Ivalee Sinclair
Legislative Committee Chair