**SEAC Dispute Resolution Committee**

**Ideas for Engaging the Judicial System in Addressing the Lack of Special Education Legal Representation (Access to Justice)\***

(presented to SEAC on March 10, 2023)

Organize a training with CLE (Continuing Legal Education) for attorneys to orient them to special education law and the needs of families of children with disabilities for legal representation in order to exercise their due process rights under IDEA. Invite all attorneys, including the special education attorneys from the Attorney General's Office, to drum up interest and educate them on the spirit of IDEA.

Approach the Exceptional Support regarding their willingness to “loan out” Julie Weatherly, a nationally known attorney who is contracted to brief HIDOE employees as well parents (via LDAH) on due process trends. She might be a good trainer toward our goal of educating the legal community. See handout in the chat.

Work with the Family Law Section of the Hawaii State Bar Association to try to find a firm willing to do pro bono work in this area.  Contact law firms with a history of representing children with disabilities (i.e. Alston, Floyd and Ing) to gauge their interest in providing free legal advice.

Approach the Legal Aid Society.  They had a small grant called **The Whole Child Project** (**Equitable Access to Quality Education**) in 2019-20 that offered legal support, including special education advocacy, to families in Waimanalo.

Send an official letter from SEAC to Chief Justice Mark Recktenwald to bring the issue of inadequate legal representation for special education families wanting to exercise their IDEA due process rights to his attention and to request assistance from the Judiciary. Mark Disher had an informal conversation with Chief Justice Recktenwald recently and he seems interested in helping.

Likewise send official letters from SEAC to the Access to Justice Commission and the Hawaii State Bar Association.

Conduct a survey of attorneys who have been involved as plaintiff attorneys over the last ten years to gain insight into the current shortage of legal representation as well as suggestions for improving access.

\*Thanks to Paul Meng and Mark Disher for their brainstorming on this issue.