Dear Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) supports funding of the Hawaii Department of Education (HIDOE) budget request for FFY 2023 and, more specifically, funding for EDN 150 (special education). After a budget briefing by Budget Director Alex Kagawa at our February 11, 2022 SEAC meeting, our membership agreed with DOE’s priority of making the budget whole again. By rebuilding this foundation, the Department will be better able to improve outcomes for students with disabilities through evidence-based initiatives providing by qualified and effective educators. Specifically, we ask your support for the following:

SEQ # 100-001  Special Education and Student Services   $4,431,663  
EDN 150 monies lost to the base budget during the pandemic

SEQ # 101-001  SPED & Student Support Services       $97,202
SEQ # 102-001  SPED & Student Support Services       $193,740
SEQ # 103-001  SPED & Student Support Services       $197,904
Monies needed to restore general fund salaries for positions that were converted to temporary federal funds during the pandemic.

SEQ # 104-001  SPED & Student Support Services       $189,559
SEQ # 105-001  SPED & Student Support Services       $99,298
Five office support staff positions and one Educational Specialist position lost to shortfalls.

SEAC also supports the following EDN 150 initiatives that advance education for students with disabilities:

SEQ # 107-001  18 Skilled Nursing Positions       $2,404,936
Additional Complex Area Registered Nurses and a School Nursing Section Administrator needed to address the unmet health needs of all

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students, including students with disabilities who have chronic health conditions such as seizures, asthma, diabetes, and life-threatening allergies.

SEQ # 108-001 Systems Analyst IV - Medicaid Claiming $52,956
SEQ # 109-001 Office Assistant IV - Medicaid Claiming $31,056

Additional funds for staff to assist in reclaiming Medicaid monies for expenses incurred in providing related services to Medicaid eligible students with disabilities to help to bring additional federal dollars back to the state.

Finally, SEAC asks your Committee’s consideration in considerably increasing funding for the following budget item to adjust pay rates for skilled nursing services:

SEQ # 106-001 Skilled nursing hourly rate increase $274,076

The Governor only left $274,076 in his budget request to adjust the current hourly rate for contracted skilled nursing services to be in alignment with the Medicaid fee-for-service reimbursement rate for nursing services in Hawaii. **For the Department to meet student medical needs at a competitive rate, it would need a total of $10,462,677 to move from the current rate of $50/hour to the competitive rate of $90/hour for skilled nursing services.** Contracted skilled nursing services are critical to Hawaii’s medically fragile students in order to allow them to attend school and benefit from their individualized education services. When there are staff shortages, it can prevent these students from being able to come on campus, and their educational progress is jeopardized. Providing competitive pay rates makes it more likely that schools can maintain an adequate supply of nursing personnel.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this important legislation.

Respectfully,

[Signature]

Martha Guinan
Chair

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