



HCR81

Reviewing the Per-Pupil Funding System for Public Charter Schools

This measure seeks to better ensure that public charter schools and students receive their fair share of state education funds, by requesting the Department of Budget and Finance to conduct a study on whether the non-facility general fund per-pupil funding system for charter schools ensures equitable funding, and to consider whether alternative statutory funding options may achieve greater funding parity for public charter schools and lead to their long-term operational sustainability.

Hawai'i's public charter schools are intended to cut red tape, provide choices, and be risk takers for innovation in education. Very significantly, our charter school laws have provided Hawaiian cultural and language education leaders the opportunity to design and operate schools more responsive and attuned to the needs of Hawaiian families. Today, 34 public charter schools operate in the state; of these, 17 are Hawaiian culture-based or Hawaiian language immersion schools.

Our public charter schools, including our Hawaiian culture-based and language immersion schools, have demonstrated their potential to significantly advance the state's educational standards. This includes high rankings in a number of the latest Strive HI SY 2015-2016 performance measures, including in their students' American College Testing (ACT) scores, graduation rates, and college matriculation. However, long-standing concerns suggest that the realization of public charter schools' full potential may be inhibited by systemic funding inequities and challenges.

To fully realize the potential for innovation and greater student success in our public school system, adequate resources must be provided for Hawai'i public charter schools.

WHY A STUDY?

The requested study would provide the Legislature with critical information on whether the current per-pupil funding system for public charter schools ensures equitable funding for public charter schools and students, and whether an alternative statutory funding option would achieve greater funding parity for public charter schools, and lead to their long-term operational sustainability. These alternative options include the Board of Education's weighted student formula approach, or an alternative weighted student formula approach.

Notably, such a study would be consistent with the recently approved State Board of Education (BOE) updated State Education Strategic Plan 2017-2020, which recognizes the need to maximize allocation of resources to advance equity and excellence, including through a review of charter schools' per-pupil funding system.