



UNIVERSITY
of HAWAII•
HILO

Division of Student Affairs
Pacific Islander Student Center (PISC)

January 29, 2016

TO: BOE Student Achievement Committee Meeting (February 2, 2016)

Agenda Item: VB. Committee Action on new Board Policy 105.14, Language in Education (ELL/Bilingual)

Dear Hawaii State Board of Education Committee Members,

Aloha! Alii! Bula! Hafa Adai! Iakwe! Kaselehlhie! Malo e Lelei! Mogethin! Paing Kom! Fairo! Olomwaay! Ran Karea! Talofa! Wenimomoto...from all of us at the Pacific Islander Student Center at University of Hawai'i at Hilo.

My name is Vidalino Raatior and I am the Director of the Pacific Islander Student Center at University of Hawai'i at Hilo. I am also a doctoral student in the College of Education at UH Manoa.

I support the proposed BOE policy 105.14 on Multilingualism for Equitable Education because of the potentially impactful message to the many indigenous Pacific Islander youth attending schools in the State of Hawai'i. That message is one of positive re-enforcement of their roots and heritage as constitutive elements of their educational journey. As a native Chuukese Micronesian I am proud to have been raised speaking Chuukese. I witness the pride in our Pacific Islanders at UH Hilo who speak their native languages. Our languages keep us rooted and tied to our cultural heritage. I worry about the thousands of Micronesian children growing up in an already difficult discriminatory environment. Schools should be THE place where young people can proudly express themselves in their native tongues and be recognized for it by way of a certificate or stamp. The BOE has the best chance of making this bold statement of support for our diverse Micronesian languages.

Perhaps the Department of Education can utilize the linguistic expertise of the many multilingual college students in the local colleges such as UH Hilo. Let the college students who are fluent in the native languages serve as tutors for their younger counterparts in the local elementary and secondary schools. Doing so would provide peer mentorship, encourage mutually beneficial collaborations, and instill pride among both the younger and older students.

Sincerely,

Vidalino S. Raatior
Director, Pacific Islander Student Center
808.932.7795 | raatior@hawaii.edu

200 W. Kāwili S
Hilo, Hawai'i 96720-4
Telephone: (808) 933-3857 | TTY: (808) 933-3
Fax: (808) 974-7779 Email: pisc@hawaii.edu Web: hilo.hawaii.edu
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