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FOR: SB 2797 Relating to Charter Schools  
DATE: Monday, February 1, 2016  
TIME: 1:15 PM  
COMMITTEE(S): Senate Committee on Education  
ROOM: Conference Room 229  
FROM: Tom Hutton, Executive Director  
State Public Charter School Commission

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**Testimony in support of SB2797**

Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Harimoto, and members of the Committee:

The State Public Charter School Commission appreciates the opportunity to submit this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 2797, which would appropriate \$200,000 to make start-up grants available to pre-opening charter schools that would be priority system needs identified by the Commission. We are grateful to Senator Dela Cruz for his introduction of the proposal and his interest in public charter schools as a potential part of the solution to school overcrowding.

In its current Request for Proposals for new charter schools, the Commission has particularly welcomed applications to create schools that would provide additional enrollment capacity in geographic areas where existing department of education schools are already exceeding, have already reached, or are projected to reach or exceed, full enrollment capacity; or that would serve communities where existing public schools are not performing well under state academic measures. While welcoming such proposals, the Commission has not lowered its rigorous approval bar for these applications.

The targeted availability of grants for start-up schools would add a significant incentive for these especially desirable applications and could provide important support to some newly created, pre-opening schools in their start-up year before they become fully operational and are able to draw per-pupil and other state funding. For a time before the Commission's creation start-up grants were made available to newly approved pre-opening schools. Hawaii is not currently in a position to avail itself of federal grants that have been created for this important

purpose, although that is something the Commission intends to pursue.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.