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May 30, 2013

Council Chair Ernie Martin and Members of City Council
530 South King Street, Room 202
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: Bill 11 (2013) and DTCH

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CITY CLERK
HONOLULU, HAWAII

Dear Council Chair Ernie Martin and Members of the City council,

Aloha, my name is Merle Tashiro. I am writing in support of Bill 11 (2013). I am a parent (born and raised in Hawaii, particularly Maui) with a child who suffers from Dyslexia and ADHD. My son is in desperate need for tutoring. Dyslexia Tutoring Center of Hawaii has certified tutors in an Orton-Gillingham based reading program. Which is usually needed for a dyslexic person.

I have been advocating for my son for the past 8 years. The number one thing I've been asking the DOE for is tutoring. I did my research. I even tried to educate the school(s) about Dyslexia. I flew DTCH over to Maui for a seminar called "What is Dyslexia?" I've mention about how Congress created a "National Reading Panel" to find out how children learn to read. There are basically 5 components. 1—Phonemic Awareness, 2—Phonics, 3—Spelling and Vocabulary, 4—Fluency, and 5—Comprehension. National Reading Panel indicated that it is to be taught in this sequence.

Because my son has Dyslexia, he has never mastered the first 3 basic reading skills. He learns differently. I think his High School feels it is ridiculous to be teaching a student these basic reading skills in high school and truly do not understand Dyslexia. So they decided to concentrate on fluency and comprehension. That's just ridiculous. I gave the school analogies... You're putting an entertainment center together, if you skip the first few "steps", it's not going to turn out right...When I started my career of becoming an electrician with my dad, he taught me how to wire houses. When it was time to take the test to become a licensed journeyman electrician, I could not pass. Why? Because I did not get the foundation/understanding of harvesting electricity and electrical codes,NEC. Once I did, passing the test was a breeze. This is the same for my son and his reading. Without the "foundation" of basic reading skills and the "understanding" of the written language, how can he move forward? This is where DTCH comes in. DTCH has a purpose. They provide this foundation/understanding for Dyslexic students.

I feel that DTCH is different from other non-profit organizations. They actually do make a difference in a child's life. By teaching them how to read and understand what they read and more. "Hawaii Stars presents...with Kimo Kahoano and Carol Kai" had a special called "Read First". I cried watching this television special. It showed how important reading is. The local guests on the show expressed how reading opened doors, brought opportunities, and literally opened the world to them.

Before finding DTCH, I went to other non-profit organizations, seeking help for my son. These other non-profit organizations gave "information". DTCH actually does something. They tutor. They make a difference. They give understanding to their students about their disability.

My son has many cousins. I have witnessed many of his cousins going the wrong path. They are good hearted people who probably has Dyslexia (dyslexia is hereditary) but never got the help they needed. Some did serve time in jail. Statistics show a high percentage of inmates in jail, having some type of learning disability.

In conclusion, I have expressed the need for a non-profit organization like DTCH. As Council Members who have the authority to make a difference, please consider Bill 11 and Dyslexia Tutoring Center of Hawaii. Please "open the eyes of your hearts" to make the right decision. Politicians should help politicians to make things right. Congress laid the foundation about education, but because HI-DOE does not voluntarily provide what is needed (that is why there are so many Due Process Hearings), as politicians, Be Pono...Do the right thing. Give the people of Hawaii the opportunity to have somewhere to go to gain skills (reading and writing) that can lead them to positive opportunities. To prepare them for further education, employment and independent lives. Statistics show that 15 to 20 percent of the population has some severity of dyslexia.

Mahalo,
Merle Tashiro