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HGEA Reaches Tentative Agreement on Pay Parity for Educational Assistants, Teaching Assistants and Vice Principals

HGEA MAKES PROGRESS IN ADDRESSING SCHOOL EMPLOYEE PAY EQUITY

Following our urgent calls on the state to resolve pay equity for school employees, the Hawaii Government Employees Association is pleased to have reached a tentative agreement that addresses pay parity for those who help educate and care for Hawaii's students.

HGEA would like to thank Gov. Josh Green and Superintendent Keith Hayashi for their willingness to work with us to resolve pay equity among state workers, especially in the state Department of Education.

"This tentative agreement, pending ratification of our membership, signals to public workers across the state that this administration, unlike its predecessors, desires increased collaboration with public sector unions to make state government work better for the people of Hawaii," said Randy Perreira, HGEA executive director.

The issue of pay inequality for school-level personnel intensified with recent pay increases for teachers. HGEA demanded that the governor and superintendent turn their attention to the rest of the team that educates and cares for our children.

Educational assistants and teaching assistants in our public schools play a critical role in student learning, working side-by-side with classroom teachers, especially with the most vulnerable students. Historically, fewer jobs in the DOE paid lower than EAs, despite the vital nature of their roles.

"While education officials have acknowledged outrageously low pay and a lack of career ladder for educational assistants since at least 2008, officials consistently failed to address the problem, creating a recruitment and retention crisis that has only deepened over the years," Perreira said.

For vice principals, state officials acknowledged that pay bumps for teachers created a situation where some teachers were making more than their supervisors. If the DOE is going to continue to recruit and retain high quality educators to become principals or vice principals, the pay should be competitive enough to entice teachers to leave the classroom to lead their schools.

The DOE is facing historic staff shortages in critical positions, with nearly 600 educational assistant vacancies and some 160 vice principal positions unfilled. This agreement, which is just a first step to addressing pay disparity, is a move in the right direction toward addressing the recruitment and retention crisis throughout the public schools.

“Today’s deal represents years of promises that are finally coming to fruition for these dedicated educators. Our work is not yet done, however. The rest of the administrative and support staff in our schools deserve pay parity with their education counterparts, as well, and the Green Administration has signaled a willingness to work with us on this,” Perreira said.

Hawaii’s students receive quality education in a safe and nurturing environment because a multitude of school-level professionals are on the job. The DOE works because WE do.

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***About HGEA:** HGEA was founded in 1934 to ensure fair and equitable representation for government employees. HGEA is the largest labor union in Hawaii, with more than 37,000 members. HGEA represents state and county employees in nine bargaining units. HGEA also serves a large associate membership of retirees, other state and county employees and officials, and federal and private sector employees.*

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