

Testimony for returning Dr. Ramos as Principal of HSDB at General Business Meeting 09/05/19

Tom Graham, long time teacher and supporter of Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind (HSDB)

Aloha! I'm a Deaf person and grew up in Hawaii's DOE system (I graduated from Kalani High School - 1979 and from UH Manoa - 1987). After receiving my Masters in Deaf Education, I returned my family to Hawaii and have worked as a DOE Teacher for the past 26 years. 23 of these years, I've worked at Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind (HSDB). This is one of the most unique schools in Hawaii where the staff uses American Sign Language to communicate and teach its children and to bridge this language to textual English. I have worked under a number of administrators and Principals and even served as a TA Vice Principal for one year.

Three years ago, after an expensive and time consuming national search, Dr. Angel Ramos was hired to lead HSDB. As the school's Registrar, I work very closely with him. I have watch him empower our staff and support us as we expanded the school's ASL Program, the After School Program, the Robotics Program (of which I co-coach) and many other programs. Dr. Ramos has created a welcoming environment where communication is clear and has helped our student population increase (not an easy task for a school that only accepts Special Ed students based on their IEP needs). Under his Leadership, the HSDB Dorms opened for Oahu students (for those who live far from the school or have various challenges - including homelessness). Dr. Ramos has worked under three Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) - including the BOE Chair, Ms.

Catherine Payne. Until the most recent CAS, he has received favorable evaluations of his work at HSDB.

On August 1st, Dr. Ramos was reassigned to a hearing school as a Vice Principal w/ ASL Interpreter support and a TA Principal who is non-signing and has no training in Deaf Education (esp. w/ the use of ASL) was assigned (w/ interpreter support) to our school. It is like being on a ship and having the captain reassigned then receiving a new captain who can only speak to its staff and students through an interpreter and has no real idea where to guide the ship. We strongly encourage the Board of Education to investigate this matter and encourage CAS Mahoe to reinstate Dr. Ramos. This action has caused our ship, our house to become divided and without direction. Returning Dr. Ramos is the pono thing to do and will help our school to reunite and regain its sense of direction. Mahalo!