



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

March 2, 2018

Dear Parents and Guardians,

This letter is to address school safety and upcoming student-led movements known as "walkouts."

Rumors or threats made against school campuses have become a nationwide issue. Here in Hawaii, the Honolulu Police Department (HPD) reported more than a dozen school threats since January. None of the threats were credible and a majority of them were made on social media. On Feb. 23, I joined the HPD in a news conference to address the seriousness of these threats. Individuals connected to a threat can face criminal charges of terroristic threatening along with school discipline, including suspension.

Police officials also reinforced the fact that our schools are safe. The well-being of our students is a community effort and it takes all of us to keep all of our students safe.

The Hawaii State Department of Education (HIDOE) is also addressing the national call for student-led civic engagement efforts, specifically, school walkouts. There are two walkouts being promoted on social media – March 14 at 10 a.m. for 17 minutes to honor the 17 lives lost in the recent Florida high school massacre; and, April 20 at 10 a.m., which falls on the 19th anniversary of the Columbine High School shootings in Colorado.

In anticipation of a planned walkout or gathering during school hours, we have advised schools to consider creating a designated walk-out area and encourage students to use the time to share ideas for improving campus safety, security and culture. HIDOE supports students' Constitutional rights to a peaceful assembly and free expression. Disorderly conduct that disrupts school operations is not acceptable and will be appropriately handled in accordance with the Code of Student Conduct. Students who leave school will be marked with an unexcused tardiness or absence. Participation in an organized walkout is voluntary.

What we hope to gain from these experiences are student voices that help to shape how we can better design schools with safety in mind. I encourage you to speak to your child about their thoughts on this nationwide movement and if they choose to participate in a walkout activity.

Our goal in responding to walkout plans and other forms of peaceful assembly is to support student and staff safety and keep the focus on teaching and learning.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "CKM".

Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto
Superintendent

CMK:ddc