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MEDIA CONTACT:  
Kris Tanahara  
Becker Communications, Inc.  
(808) 533-4165

**POLL FINDS STRONG SUPPORT FOR STATE-FUNDED EARLY LEARNING,  
REDEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

*\*\*Statewide survey highlights residents' support of initiatives that enhance student learning\*\**

Honolulu, HI (June 29, 2012) – A majority of Hawaii residents support public education initiatives that promote early childhood learning and innovative partnerships to redevelop aging public schools, according to the results of a recent poll released today by the Hawaii Business Roundtable (HBR) and Pacific Resource Partnership (PRP).

According to The People's Pulse survey, conducted by OmniTrak Group Inc. for HBR and PRP, three out of four residents in Hawaii support publicly funded preschools despite the added costs to taxpayers. Hawaii is one of 11 states that do not have mandatory preschool for 4-year-old children. State lawmakers this year approved the creation of an executive office on early learning that will oversee the start up of publicly funded preschools. The early education program is estimated to cost \$80 million per year.

“Despite the high cost of the program, 77 percent of residents felt it was important that our keiki be given a strong start in developing verbal and cognitive skills,” noted Gary Kai, executive director of HBR, a public policy organization made up of the CEOs and senior executives of companies headquartered or maintaining significant operations in

Hawaii. “Studies have shown that for every dollar spent on preschool, society saves more than \$4 in special education programs.”

When it comes to fixing aging public schools, 59 percent of residents favor the idea of allowing private developers to redevelop schools to 21<sup>st</sup> century standards by leveraging underutilized or vacant public school lands.

“This is an innovative approach that addresses the urgent need to bring our public schools up to modern standards and provide our students with environments that encourage and support learning,” said John White, executive director of PRP, a labor-management relations consortium representing the Hawaii Regional Council of Carpenters and its signatory contractors throughout Hawaii.

The state Department of Education reported that the repair and maintenance backlog for 2010 was \$392 million for 260 public schools statewide. As an alternative to making repairs, the state is considering a plan to allow private developers to build commercial projects on land used by public schools in exchange for building a completely new, modern high-tech school to replace the current school. One in four residents strongly supported the concept.

“The private sector can play a key role in supporting public education. Government does not have to be solely responsible for educating the children of this state. There are many in the private sector who are willing to share this responsibility,” added White.

In addition to education, The People’s Pulse survey measured public sentiment on the economy and legislative issues. OmniTrak Group has been conducting The People’s Pulse since the late 1990s, sharing the results with business leaders, politicians and other decision makers. Its latest survey was conducted May 3-21, 2012 and included 701 residents on all of Hawaii’s major islands. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

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