



MidWeek

This column by Senator Michelle Kidani
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Legislative update

We are approaching the half-way point in our 60 working-day legislative session. By our internal deadline calendar, Senate bills have passed final reading and are being sent to the House and vice versa. An updated list of bills I introduced that are still moving through the hearings process is posted on my Senate member website.

Check online at: <http://capitol.hawaii.gov>, click on Senate, and then click on Senators.

This year, the Legislative session is a “Budget Session.” Our priority is coming up with a spending plan for the two-year budget period that begins on July 1. Budget analysts are saying we should proceed with caution, expecting that while the state’s economy will continue to grow, the rate of growth will be slower than we have been enjoying. The Governor has already had to revise his version of the budget – sent to the Legislature in mid-December – reducing his recommended expenditures by more than \$200 million based on lower tax revenue projections. The Governor has indicated that public education is his priority. Despite that, his revised budget shows the largest reductions in spending are from the education budget.

Meanwhile, the Senate’s budget committee is setting its own priorities that will be finalized next week. I have had numerous discussions with Committee Chair Senator Jill Tokuda and continue to fight for full funding for education programs. The Hawaii Council on Revenues that calculates projected revenues on which we base our budget will meet again on March 13. We’re hoping for positive news this time around so that we have more flexibility in setting budget priorities.

Deadlines approaching

The Department of Education is reminding parents that they have just one more week to participate in the annual **School Quality Survey (SQS)** before the **March 17 deadline** for returning forms or responding online. The survey provides information on how schools are doing with respect to school culture, satisfaction, safety and engagement, with the feedback used to support school planning and improvement efforts. Here’s your chance to speak up about how you feel our public schools are serving our *keiki*. Questions? Call 733-4008.



The **National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators (NHCSL)** awards scholarships each year to high school seniors of Hispanic heritage who live in a district represented by a Senator of Hispanic heritage. I have been active in the Caucus for many years, and Hawaii has been fortunate to see two students whose families live in my district receive these \$3,000 scholarships – **Isis Osborne** from Mililani High School’s Class of 2014, and **Sydney Millerd**, Waipahu High Class of 2016. We are especially proud of this since the Caucus only awards eleven of these scholarships nationwide each year. Applications for the 2017 awards are now being accepted, and I urge qualified students to apply by the **March 24 deadline**. Download the application at: <http://www.nhcsl.org/>.

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The **Preschool Open Doors** program provides preschool tuition subsidies to qualified families each year. If you need help paying for any preschool of your choice for the year beginning July first, apply by the **March 31 deadline**. Check online at www.patchhawaii.org for the application form and more information.



Need help paying for preschool?

Preschool Open Doors

Accepting Applications January 23-March 31, 2017

Applications accepted for children born August 1st 2012 through July 31st 2013.

Preschool Open Doors (POD) program provides monthly preschool tuition subsidies to qualified families. Parents may choose any DHS-licensed preschool. This application period is for program Participation between July 1, 2017-June 30, 2018.

For information and applications please call

POD Oahu POD Toll-Free

(808) 791-2130 1-800-746-5620

Download an application at

www.patchhawaii.org

Applications must be received at the Oahu office by March 31, 2017 to be considered. Return

completed applications to:



PATCH
Supporting Hawaii's Child Care Needs

PATCH-POD
560 N. Nimitz Hwy,
Suite #218
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

FAX: 808-694-3066
PODAdmin@patch-hi.org



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