
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the mind is shaped
2 significantly by experiences and other stimuli in the first five
3 years of a child's life. This period sets the foundation in
4 which a person forms their behavioral, emotional, social, and
5 decision-making skills, values, self-esteem, and lifelong
6 learning ability. In short, this period paves the way for a
7 child's healthy, successful development.

8 Neglect and inadequate care in the early years can hold a
9 child back from achieving the child's full potential and instead
10 place the child at risk for poor outcomes later in life, which
11 has considerable social costs.

12 Research and studies have shown that providing children
13 with proper early childhood care and education has a far-
14 reaching, long-term impact on their development. Thus, the
15 legislature recognizes the importance of providing children with
16 early learning opportunities of the highest quality. Early
17 learning programs, both public and private, should meet
18 professionally-accepted standards, be staffed by well-trained,



1 appropriately-compensated educators, and be available to all
2 children.

3 With this in mind, the legislature created the temporary
4 early childhood education task force in 2005 to, among other
5 things, develop plans and proposals to increase access to early
6 learning programs for all children, increase participation in
7 these programs by promoting their value, and improve the quality
8 of programs and practitioners.

9 The legislature also finds that forty per cent of four-
10 year-old children are already being served by public schools
11 through the kindergarten program. Having recognized this, the
12 legislature, through Act 219, Session Laws of Hawaii 2004,
13 established junior kindergarten in public elementary schools for
14 children who are at least five years old after August 1 and
15 before January 1 of the school year, beginning with the 2006-
16 2007 school year. The intent of Act 219 was to implement a
17 flexible, developmentally appropriate curriculum to ensure a
18 child's school readiness.

19 The benefits of early learning programs have already been
20 proven in states such as Oklahoma, which has provided state
21 funding for voluntary pre-kindergarten or junior kindergarten
22 programs since 1998 through its Early Childhood Four-Year-Old



1 Program, resulting in a closing of the achievement gap among
2 students: the test scores of low-income students improved by
3 twenty-six per cent, and those of Hispanic students improved by
4 fifty-four per cent.

5 The purpose of this Act is to further develop and refine
6 the recommendations of the task force, and to build upon the
7 existing framework for junior kindergarten, with the specific
8 goal of ensuring universal access to early learning
9 opportunities for all children in the state who are four years
10 old on January 1 of that school year, by establishing an inter-
11 departmental working group to plan a state early learning
12 system.

13 SECTION 2. (a) There is established the early learning
14 working group, to be attached to the department of education for
15 administrative purposes only.

16 The working group shall develop plans and timelines for a
17 coherent, comprehensive, and sustainable early learning system
18 that maximizes public and private resources to provide early
19 learning opportunities for all children in the state who are
20 four years old on January 1 of that school year. The early
21 learning system shall:



- 1 (1) Expand upon the current system of public education
2 services for all four-year-old children;
- 3 (2) Retain and expand the role of the department of human
4 services in providing early learning opportunities
5 through programs such as the preschool open doors
6 program;
- 7 (3) Retain and expand the role of the department of
8 education in extending educational services to all
9 four-year-old children who wish to enroll;
- 10 (4) Be primarily site-based in public facilities, whether
11 the program is publicly or privately run;
- 12 (5) Recognize a variety of early learning approaches and
13 service deliveries; and
- 14 (6) Be sustained by various types of funding, including
15 federal, state, and private funds.
- 16 (b) The working group shall make recommendations for the
17 early learning system, relating to:
- 18 (1) Developing standards for age- and developmentally-
19 appropriate curriculum;
- 20 (2) Recruiting teachers into public and private schools
21 who are certified in early childhood education;
- 22 (3) Continuing professional development of teachers;



- 1 (4) Maintaining small class sizes and adult-to-child
2 ratios; and
- 3 (5) Encouraging more family involvement.
- 4 (c) The working group shall be composed of nine members as
5 follows:
- 6 (1) The superintendent of education or the
7 superintendent's designee;
- 8 (2) The director of human services or the director's
9 designee;
- 10 (3) The director of health or the director's designee;
- 11 (4) The chair of the board of education or the chair's
12 designee;
- 13 (5) The dean of the University of Hawaii college of
14 education or the dean's designee;
- 15 (6) Two members from the community, appointed by the
16 superintendent of education; and
- 17 (7) Two members from the community, appointed by the
18 director of human services.
- 19 (d) The chairperson of the working group shall be selected
20 from among the community members appointed to the working group,
21 by a majority of the members of the working group.
- 22 (e) The working group may form subcommittees to:



- 1 (1) Obtain input from stakeholders, early education
2 professionals, and any other individuals as may be
3 determined necessary by the working group; and
4 (2) Perform any other functions as may be deemed necessary
5 by the working group for the fulfillment of its
6 functions.

7 (f) The subcommittees shall be exempt from chapter 92,
8 Hawaii Revised Statutes.

9 (g) The department of education and department of human
10 services may enter into a contract with a non-profit
11 organization to administer or implement any part of this Act.

12 (h) The members of the working group shall serve without
13 compensation but shall be reimbursed for expenses necessary for
14 the performance of their duties, including travel expenses.

15 SECTION 3. The early learning working group shall submit
16 reports to the governor and legislature as follows:

- 17 (1) An interim report of its progress, including any
18 proposed legislation, to be submitted no later than
19 twenty days prior to the convening of the 2007 regular
20 session; and
21 (2) A final report of its progress, findings, and
22 recommendations, including any additional proposed



1 legislation, no later than twenty days prior to the
2 convening of the 2008 regular session.

3 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
4 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$250,000 or so much
5 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2006-2007 for the
6 operations of the early learning working group.

7 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
8 education for the purposes of this Act.

9 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2006, and
10 be repealed on July 1, 2008.



HB 3237 HD1

Report Title:

Early Childhood Education

Description:

Establishes an inter-departmental working group to plan a state early learning system that will be accessible to all four-year olds in the state. (HB3237 HD1)

HB3237 HD1 HMS 2006-1949

