
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 his or her behavioral, emotional, social,
5 and 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,
10 instead, place the child at risk for poor outcomes later in
11 life, which 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 Accordingly, the legislature created the temporary early
4 childhood education task force in 2005 to:

- 5 (1) Develop plans and proposals to increase access to
6 early learning programs for all children;
- 7 (2) Increase participation in these programs by promoting
8 their value; and
- 9 (3) Improve the quality of programs and practitioners.

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

20 The benefits of early learning programs have already been
21 proven in states such as Oklahoma, which has provided state
22 funding for voluntary pre-kindergarten or junior kindergarten



1 programs since 1998 through its Early Childhood Four-Year-Old
2 Program, resulting in a closing of the achievement gap among
3 students: the test scores of low-income students improved by
4 twenty-six per cent, and those of Hispanic students improved by
5 fifty-four per cent.

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

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

17 The early learning working group shall develop plans and
18 timelines for a coherent, comprehensive, and sustainable early
19 learning system that maximizes public and private resources to
20 provide early learning opportunities for all children in the
21 state who are four years old by January 1 of that school year.
22 The early 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 early learning working group shall make
17 recommendations for the 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 early learning working group shall be composed of
5 nine members as 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 chairperson of the board of education or the
12 chairperson's 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 early learning working group
20 shall be selected from among the community members appointed to
21 the early learning working group, by a majority of the members
22 of the early learning working group.



1 (e) The early learning working group may form
2 subcommittees to:

3 (1) Obtain input from stakeholders, early education
4 professionals, and any other individual as may be
5 determined necessary by the early learning working
6 group; and

7 (2) Perform any other function as may be deemed necessary
8 by the early learning working group for the
9 fulfillment of its functions.

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

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

15 (h) The members of the early learning working group shall
16 serve without compensation but shall be reimbursed for expenses
17 necessary for the performance of their duties, including travel
18 expenses.

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

21 (1) An interim report of its progress, including any
22 proposed legislation, to be submitted no later than



1 twenty days prior to the convening of the 2007 regular
2 session; and

3 (2) A final report of its progress, findings, and
4 recommendations, including any additional proposed
5 legislation, no later than twenty days prior to the
6 convening of the 2008 regular session.

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

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

13 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2020, and
14 shall be repealed on July 1, 2008.

H.B.NO.3237

Report Title:

Early Childhood Education

Description:

Establishes the Early Learning Working Group to plan a state early learning system that will be accessible to all four-year olds in the state. (HB3237 HD2)

HB3237 HD2 HMS 2006-2370

