

Date of Hearing: February 12, 2008

Committee: House Human Services &
Housing

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Patricia Hamamoto, Superintendent

Title: H.B. No. 2435, H.D. 1, Relating to Early Childhood Education

Purpose: Requires the department of education to increase opportunities for special needs preschoolers to interact with their non-disabled peers. Appropriates funds.

Department's Position: The Department of Education (Department) agrees with the purpose of H.B. No. 2435, H.D. 1, to increase opportunities for special needs preschoolers to interact with their non-disabled peers. Currently, there is limited space in Head Start and other community preschools for children with disabilities who are eligible for services from the Department. The Department currently operates thirty-three inclusion preschool sites in cooperation with Head Start – twenty-two on Oahu, one on the island of Hawaii, seven on Maui and three on Kaua'i. In addition, there are ten preschools operated in cooperation with private organizations for a total of forty-five inclusion classrooms statewide. Many of the sites have a limit of approximately six children with disabilities that may be enrolled which means that approximately 270 out of over 2,000 eligible children are able to participate with their typically developing peers for the majority of

their day. Other preschool children with disabilities are integrated to various degrees with kindergarten classes at their school or participate in joint activities with community preschools. The Department has made a concerted effort to increase opportunities for all special needs preschoolers as appropriate to the individual child. In recent years, however, the efforts have not resulted in significant increases in the number of children able to fully participate in a setting with typically developing peers.

The Department would like to suggest one revision to H.B. No. 2435, H.D. 1, as written on page 2, under §302A (c) “Special education personnel may also provide services to general education students in a special education classroom.” At this time the Department receives funding only for children from Junior Kindergarten through grade 12, and for children aged 3-5 with disabilities. If the intention of this item is to achieve reverse mainstreaming (bringing typically developing children into a setting designed to serve children with disabilities) then the Board of Education and the legislature would need to revise current policies and funding. The Department respectfully requests that this item be deleted from the bill.

The Department supports H.B. No. 2435, H.D. 1, as far as it is consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and H.A.R. Chapter 56, and does not replace the current BOE priorities.

LINDA LINGLE
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February 12, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Maile S.L. Shimabukuro, Chair
House Committee on Human Services & Housing

FROM: Lillian B. Koller, Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 2435, H.D.1 RELATING TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

Hearing: Tuesday, February 12, 2008; 8:40 a.m.
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

PURPOSE: This bill requires the Department of Education (DOE) to increase opportunities for preschoolers with special needs to interact with their non-disabled peers and appropriates funds to increase these opportunities.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the concept of providing opportunities for children with disabilities to interact with typically developing peers. The Department does have a concern about the provision in the bill that recommends that the Department increase the preschool program tuition subsidies to enable all parents to access preschool programs.

The child care subsidies that DHS provides is to meet the needs of the Department's target group of low-income families. Also, the Federal funds provided by DHS for child care can be provided only to those families who are at or below the income threshold of 85% of the State Median Income. Currently, families of children

with disabilities that meet the eligibility requirements for child care subsidies through DHS are reimbursed for a portion of the cost of placing their children into private preschool settings.

General funds will be required for tuition subsidies to those families that do not meet the Department's eligibility requirements for Federal funds. The number of families who will apply for and qualify for this tuition subsidy is unknown. The Department respectfully requests that any funding for this bill not replace nor adversely impact the priorities in the Executive Supplemental Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this bill.



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February 12, 2008

The Honorable Maile S.L. Shimbukuro, Chair
House Committee on Human Services and Housing
Twenty-Fourth Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Representative Shimabukuro and Members of the Committee:

SUBJECT: HB 2435 HD 1- RELATING TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The position and views expressed in this testimony do not represent nor reflect the position and views of the Department of Education (DOE).

The State Council on Developmental Disabilities **SUPPORTS THE INTENT OF HB 2435 HD1**. The purpose of the bill is to increase opportunities for special needs preschoolers to interact with their non-disabled peers.

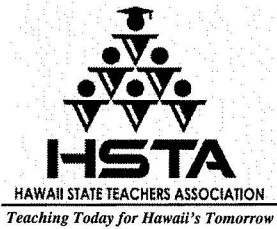
This bill provides a mechanism for DOE to partner with parents and private providers in providing opportunities to include classes with students in general education and students in special education. We defer to DOE for the financial costs to implement the provisions of this bill.

The Council recognizes the importance and value for preschoolers with disabilities to interact with preschoolers without disabilities in inclusive settings. The benefits include increase in their cognitive, language, and social skills. We support initiatives that increase opportunities for preschool age children to interact with their typically developing peers and appreciate the Legislature's interest and concern in this area.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony supporting the intent of HB 2435 HD1.

Sincerely,

Waynette K.Y. Cabral
Executive Administrator



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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
HUMAN SERVICES & HOUSING**

RE: HB 2435, HD1 – RELATING TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

February 12, 2008

**ROGER TAKABAYASHI, PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION**

Chair Shimabukuro and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association supports HB 2435, HD1. We believe all students, including preschool students with special needs, have the right to free quality public education.

Currently, inclusion classes at all levels of education exist in which students with special needs are given the opportunity to learn and interact with non-special needs students in a regular education classroom. These special needs students may not be with their non-special needs peers for the entire day. However, this arrangement has benefited both special needs and non-special needs students. The special needs students develop a higher level of socialization and developmental gains in language, motor and cognitive skills, along with improved play skills. At the same time, the non-special needs students' developmental gains can be seen as well, as they become more accepting and are more responsive to assist others.

There are in existence, preschools for special needs students on public school campuses. However, the children attending them are not given the same opportunity as the special needs students aforementioned. We believe these special need preschoolers should have the opportunity to be included in a preschool with non-special needs preschoolers in order to obtain the benefits mentioned. This is especially important since education at the preschool level is becoming more widely recognized as important for the betterment of a child's educational development in elementary school and beyond. This bill will give these special needs preschoolers the highly desirable opportunity to interact with non-special needs students and benefit from that experience.

We urge the committee to pass this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.