

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

February 27, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Marcus R. Oshiro, Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Lillian B. Koller, Director

SUBJECT: **H. B. 2973, H.D. 1 - RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING**

Hearing: Wednesday, February 27, 2008 1:30 p.m.
Conference Room 308, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of H.B. 2973, H.D. 1, is to create an Early Learning Council to govern the State's early learning system, establish an early learning system, and establish the Keiki First Steps program.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) cannot support this bill as written and would recommend that the Early Learning Council be established within the Department of Human Services or the Office of the Governor.

Also, the Department would recommend that membership of the Early Learning Council should include more childcare and early learning provider representatives to allow for a more well-balanced private-public Early Learning Council.

The Department was a key member of the Early Learning Educational Task Force (Task Force) created under Act 259 (SLH 2006) and played a crucial role in the proceedings of and development of recommendations by the Task Force. We are

pleased to note that some of the recommendations made by the Task Force in a report submitted to the 2008 Legislature are incorporated in this bill.

DHS is committed to increasing the number and quality of formal early childhood education and childcare programs in which young children can participate in as these programs have been shown to provide a strong foundation for learning as children move through the school system. Through this commitment, DHS has implemented a number of services to provide support to the current early learning structure that is in operation.

These services include: ensuring the health and safety of young children through our childcare licensing program; offering subsidies to allow needy families to access preschool programs; providing training to childcare providers to increase their skills in working with young children; offering scholarships to early childhood professionals to increase their knowledge of best practices in working with children through college classes; the Learning to Grow Project which offers training to legally-exempt childcare providers to increase their skills in caring for children; providing appropriate nutrition information; providing a registry of early childhood professionals and for professional development; offering a waiver program to allow staff at preschools to be counted in the staff-employment sequence while in the process of obtaining the required credentials; providing a system for better trained health consultants for preschools to access; offering financial incentives to expand childcare capacity; and offering financial incentives to childcare providers who meet the content standards; and professional development standards so that there is continuous program improvement which results in better care for our young children.

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

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR



LINDA L. SMITH
SENIOR POLICY ADVISOR

**STATE OF HAWAII
GOVERNOR'S POLICY OFFICE
EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
(808) 586-5330**

Testimony of Linda L. Smith
Senior Policy Advisor to the Governor

Before the

HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE
on
HOUSE BILL No. 2973 House Draft 1

Wednesday, February 27, 2008
1:30 P.M.
Room 308

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the committee, the Administration is opposed to House Bill 2973 House Draft 1.

The Administration would like to commend the members of the Act 259 Task Force, whose report presented to the Legislature this year recommended the creation of an early learning council and the establishment of Keiki First, an early learning program that would target four year old at risk children.

Our concerns with House Bill 2973 HD1 in the current form center around three issues.

First, as drafted, this bill provides a definition for "at-risk children" that is fairly broad and doesn't appear to get at the socio-economic class divide that is described in the purpose section of the bill. There is no elaboration in the bill on what screening process will be used, or what entity (entities) will determine this screening process for at-risk children. We also note that the definition does not include any age requirements.

Second, this bill creates the Early Learning Council (ELC) attached to the Department of Education. The ELC is tasked with developing an early learning system of voluntary programs for children zero to five or six, depending on when they enter kindergarten. They are also charged with administering the Keiki First Steps program, and administering public funds for the purposes of the early learning system, including Keiki First Steps. The Administration is opposed to the placement of the Council in the Department of Education. While we understand, and are supportive of the position that this system be one that is based on early learning and education, we do not believe the DOE is the most effective or efficient state agency for

administration of the ELC, or pass through of the funding. We recommend consideration of other options, including the Department of Human Services, the Office of the Governor, and modification of Act 77 which established the Good Beginnings Alliance, Community Councils, and the Interdepartmental Council. We believe there are sufficient options available for consideration that would allow the Administration to support this bill if the ELC were placed in another entity and if reconsideration was given to the membership of the ELC. The HD1 of this bill removed a significant number of the private sector early learning community members from this council. We perceive the new membership of the council as drafted in the HD1 to be heavily public sector. Since the council is tasked with developing the early learning system, administering Keiki First Steps, and authorized to administer any other grants or subsidies to private providers for the purposes of the system, we believe a more balanced council that will accurately reflect the perspective and needs of the private sector is needed. We ask that these members be restored to the council.

Our third major concern with this proposal revolves around Keiki First Steps and the delineation to the council that this be the first phase in the development of the early learning system. The Act 259 task force recommended a program called Keiki First, and recommended the targeted group be at risk four year olds. The task force cost the program out at between \$10.45 million in the first year, and \$180 million in the tenth year. There are significant differences between the care for newborns, toddlers, and early learners. Three and four year olds are on different learning curves; two year olds need significantly more attention and care, and would therefore cost more money to care for. We caution the Legislature in moving forward with a proposal that goes beyond the scope of the recommendations of the task force without any pricing of the proposed program. Should the Legislature prefer to establish Keiki First Steps and target three and four year olds, the Administration would like to see fiscal scenarios similar to the ones presented by the Act 259 task force so that we know what we are dealing with in terms of financial commitment to this system.

Hawaii's economic growth has once again been forecast lower than previously anticipated. It is critical that we choose our financial priorities responsibly. We ask the committee to carefully consider the broad ramifications in this bill. Consider the possibility of revamping Act 77, the existing Interdepartmental Council and county level Community Councils, the Good Beginnings Alliance, and the partnerships with the Department of Human Services that have been developed over the years. We ask that you target any new early learning system to be one that is effective and achievable in terms of spending abilities and educational goals.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

OFFICE OF INFORMATION PRACTICES

STATE OF HAWAII
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HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: 808-586-1400 FAX: 808-586-1412
EMAIL: oip@hawaii.gov

To: House Committee on Finance
From: Paul T. Tsukiyama, Director
Date: February 27, 2008, 1:30 p.m.
State Capitol, Room 308
Re: Testimony on H.B. 2973, H.D. 1
Relating to Early Learning

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on H.B. 2973, H.D. 1.

The Office of Information Practices ("OIP") takes no position on the substance of this bill, which would, among other things, establish an Early Learning Council, but seeks clarification of the provision stating that

All meetings of the early learning council shall be exempt from chapter 92, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

First, this only exempts the council's meetings from chapter 92; arguably the council members would still be required to, for instance, refrain from discussing council business with one another outside a meeting. Second, the Sunshine Law is only part I of chapter 92. Parts II through IV of chapter 92 relate to non-Sunshine Law issues, such as boards' general powers and quorum requirements, copy charges for public records, and publication of legal notices. If the intent of this provision is to exempt the council from the Sunshine Law, OIP recommends that the bill state that the council itself "shall be exempt from part I of chapter 92."

OIP would, however, recommend that this Committee carefully consider whether it is good policy to exempt the council from the Sunshine Law in light of the express policy and intent of the statute.

In a democracy, the people are vested with the ultimate decision-making power. Governmental agencies exist to aid the people in the formation and conduct of public policy. Opening up the governmental processes to public scrutiny and participation is the only viable and reasonable method of protecting the public's interest. Therefore, the legislature declares that it is the policy of this State that the formation and conduct of public policy - the discussions, deliberations, decisions, and actions of government agencies - shall be conducted as openly as possible.

Haw. Rev. Stat. §92-1 (1993).

The matters the council is charged with deciding are important to and will affect the public at large, and the public will in all likelihood want the kind of public scrutiny of and participation in the council's discussions and decisions that the Sunshine Law is intended to provide for government boards in general. In the absence of a compelling reason to exempt this particular board from the Sunshine Law, such an exemption is contrary to Hawaii's general policy of openness as expressed in the Sunshine Law.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Date of Hearing: February 27, 2008

Committee: House Education/Finance

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Patricia Hamamoto, Superintendent

Title: H.B. 2973, H.D. 1, (HSCR 282-08), Relating to Early Learning

Purpose: Creates the Early Learning Council to govern the state's early learning system. Establishes an early learning system. Establishes the Keiki First Steps Program.

Department's Position: The Department of Education (Department) is in full support of H.B. 2973, H.D. 1, (HSCR 282-08). This bill will allow the work of the Early Learning Educational Task Force to continue, and ultimately ensure that the developmental and early learning needs of young children are equitably addressed throughout the state.

The Department welcomes the opportunity to continue working with its early childhood partners, in both public and private settings, to ensure universal access to quality early learning opportunities. This initiative will allow state agencies to work more collaboratively to coordinate early childhood services throughout the state. Our collective efforts will help young children to be at optimal levels of readiness for learning, particularly as they make the transition into a K-12 learning system.

As a comprehensive plan for early childhood education develops further and is integrated into other transformational initiatives, such as the Hawaii P-20 Initiative, our State will be the beneficiary. Hawaii's graduation rate will improve, more high school graduates will pursue post-secondary education and careers which pay more than the minimum wage, and the number of citizens who are incarcerated or on government subsidies will decline.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
February 27, 2008 at 1:30 pm

By

Linda Johnsrud, Vice President for Academic Planning and Policy,

HB 2973, HD1 – RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

I am Linda K. Johnsrud, Vice President for Academic Planning and Policy, University of Hawai'i System. On behalf of the University System, I am testifying in support of House Bill 2973, House Draft 1, which establishes an early learning system for Hawai'i, creates an Early Learning Council to govern the system, and establishes the Keiki First Steps Program as a first phase.

The University of Hawai'i is a strong advocate of measures to increase the success of Hawai'i's students as they move through the educational pipeline from birth through adulthood. We are an active partner in the Hawai'i P-20 Initiative, and firmly believe that higher education's role is critical if we are to improve the educational level of all of Hawai'i's citizens. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation Grant of \$10 million is an example of our efforts at statewide collaboration and commitment toward early childhood education at the community level.

As a partner in Hawaii's P-20 Initiative with Superintendent Pat Hamamoto and Good Beginnings President Liz Chun, we grapple with the questions as to what strategies are needed to ensure every child enters school ready to succeed, schools are ready for children, and early childhood professionals have access to education that will increase their capacity to teach and nurture the young learner.

We believe there must be a concerted effort to provide quality early education for Hawai'i's keiki, to ensure the elementary schools are ready for the young learner, and to commit to higher education's support for expanding the statewide capacity to educate the early childhood professional.

We know that ultimately how successfully children progress through the educational pipeline will affect their entrance into higher education and lifelong learning.

Although the University of Hawai'i is not specifically mentioned in House Bill 2973, may I offer that, as the only system of public higher education in the state, your university will work hand in hand with the early learning system to provide the preservice education

and professional development for a well-qualified early childhood workforce that is referenced in the language of the bill.

Four of our community colleges, Honolulu, Hawai'i, Kaua'i, and Maui Community College offer courses in early childhood education leading to an Associate of Science Degree. These programs are articulated with the Bachelor of Arts degree in the Social Sciences with a concentration in Early Childhood Education from the University of Hawai'i at West O'ahu. The College of Education at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa offers a Bachelor of Education with a focus in Early Childhood Education. A Master's Degree of Education in Early Childhood Education was approved by the Board of Regents in March 2002.

These programs provide pathways to degrees and improved educational qualifications for those in the early education profession, including associate teachers, lead teachers, and center directors. In the very short term, the University of Hawai'i has the capacity to increase the numbers of students that we serve in our programs. In the longer term, we will need resources to build capacity in order to meet anticipated workforce needs. The system academic planning and policy office would work with each of our campuses to plan as a system to address the needs we anticipate. For example, we would need to increase the number and type of courses, programs, and delivery methods to improve access for targeted regions and populations; to add support staff to tutor and remediate returning adults who must update their basic skills while seeking credentials; to work with early childhood centers to recruit students, promote job placements, and ensure that we are being responsive to the early childhood professional community.

We strongly support the intent of the bill to increase the numbers and enhance the quality of the early learning workforce by offering higher education scholarships to existing or potential early childhood educators and administrators. Steps such as supplementing child care subsidy rates and providing substitute teacher allowances, as listed in the bill, show a commitment to those in the early learning workforce as well as to the childcare centers that employ them and encourage educational development. In addition, may I point out that the University of Hawai'i has taken an initial step through its Kellogg grant to increase capacity for distance learning in early childhood courses.

The intent of HB2973, HD1 is to move the state toward a comprehensive early childhood system, a direction that the University of Hawai'i fully supports. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

WRITTEN ONLY

TESTIMONY BY GEORGINA K. KAWAMURA
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
STATE OF HAWAII
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 2973, H.D. 1

February 27, 2008

RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

House Bill No. 2973, H.D. 1, establishes: 1) a comprehensive early learning system to maximize the potential for children to experience success upon entry into kindergarten, 2) an early learning council to develop and administer the early learning system, and 3) the Keiki First Steps program for three- and four-year-olds as the first phase of the early learning system.

We do not support this bill.

In response to the Council on Revenues' most recent projections, the Administration is currently taking precautionary fiscal measures to address a potential revenue reduction of over \$39 million in FB 2007-09. Therefore, while State-sponsored early childhood education is a laudable goal, the Department of Budget and Finance believes that it is far too costly to implement at this time.



HB 2973, HD1 Relating to Early Learning
House Committee on Finance

February 27, 2008
308

1:30 pm

Room

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs supports the purpose and intent of HB 2973, HD 1 (HSCR 282-08)

High quality early care and education is not important; it is indispensable. Despite its importance to society, early care and education is severely under funded and uncoordinated—resulting in limited access, mediocre quality, and poor outcomes (Cost, Quality & Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995). When services are not available or are low quality, opportunities for early learning are squandered and worse, children's development may be impaired. Research has demonstrated that high quality early care and education programs not only lead to school readiness and better developmental outcomes, but to a significant reduction in later expenditures for remediation, prisons, and social welfare programs (Barnett, 1996; Campbell, et al., 2002; Masse & Barnett, 2002; Reynolds, et al., 2001, 2002; Schweinhart, Barnes, & Weikart, 1993). Early care and education is a vital service that provides critical opportunities to enhance healthy child development and school readiness. It is also a family support that supplements parents' efforts to raise their children to become productive citizens. Moreover, early care and education is an industry that has significant positive impacts on the economy and community well-being (M. Cubed, 2002; Rolnick & Grunewald, 2003).

Data from the Hawai'i Department of Human Services indicate that approximately 60% of the families whose incomes are low and who qualify for child-care subsidies select kith and kin care for their children ages 5 or younger (G. Kemp, personal communication, July 2000). This choice persists despite the availability of higher subsidies for licensed care. Of interest is the fact that almost half (49%) of the families choosing to place their children with relatives or friends identify themselves as Hawaiian/Part-Hawaiian. This preference of Hawaiian families may be rooted in the value placed on the

family, or `ohana, in which the extended family is the basic social unit and relationships are maintained and reinforced by mutual support and sharing. When child nurturance and care are needed, it is not unusual for Hawaiian and part-Hawaiian grandparents or other relatives to provide these services. This is in keeping with a culture that cherishes children and views children as not belonging exclusively with their biological parents (Pukui, Haertig, & Klee, 1972). In keeping with this view of shared responsibility for our children, the need for a system that creates and guides effective early learning program options, offers critical support for families, promotes program accessibility and is committed to and responsible for the recruitment, training and retention of qualified early childhood educators becomes apparent.

A system that involves members of the many facets of the early learning community that are committed to providing families with the information needed to formulate sound, individually appropriate decisions for their children is an essential component of the development of a proactive approach towards strengthening the foundation of our society.

Mahalo nui loa for your serious consideration of this testimony.



To: Representative Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Representative Marilyn Lee, Vice Chair
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

From: Elisabeth Chun
Executive Director, Good Beginnings Alliance

Date: Wednesday, February 27, 2008
1:30 p.m., Room 308
Agenda 4

Subject: HB 2973, HD1 Relating to Early Learning

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the House Finance Committee, I strongly support the intent of this bill to create an Early Learning Council and the Keiki First Steps Program.

Quality early childhood education will provide Hawaii's keiki with the solid foundation for them to succeed in school and in life. Reports from our public school kindergarten teachers are that many of their students are not ready for school when they start kindergarten. This lack of a solid foundation significantly hampers our keiki in their ability to succeed in school, and this is very evident with only 52% of our third graders reading at grade level in 2006.

Hawaii is one of only 10 states in the nation without some type of publicly-funded early education program, and it is imperative that we as a state make a firm commitment now. Further, studies by nationally-recognized economists such as Art Rohlneck, Federal Reserve Board of Minneapolis, and Dr. James Heckman, Nobel Prize Winning Economist from the University of Chicago, have shown that for every public dollar invested in quality early childhood education, a savings of up to \$7 will be realized in lower special education, school dropouts, incarceration, and adult welfare in the future. Early childhood is one of the best investments that a state can make.

I have been involved with early childhood education for over 30 years, and I have been the Executive Director of Good Beginnings Alliance for the last 11 years. I have also been involved in 5 different task forces trying to develop an early learning system for Hawaii, and the Act 259 Early Learning Educational Task Force has achieved the most in this endeavor. The Task Force has developed a high-quality system that has the standards needed for our children to have a quality foundation in school and life.

Additionally, we will need investments in workforce development to ensure our children are being educated by the highly-trained and degreed professionals. We not only have to

increase access, but we must also improve the quality of our existing programs. Our keiki deserve the best.

We also support the creation of the public-private Early Learning Council that is administratively attached to a state agency. This council will provide the required visionary and professional leadership for quality early learning to flourish and grow in Hawaii. For it to succeed, it must be given the fiscal and administrative authority for this proposed early learning system. Moreover, this council must have neighbor island representation and another early childhood professional to ensure the right level of balance and expertise for this critical body.

Thank you for considering this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Elisabeth Chun".

Elisabeth Chun
Executive Director
Good Beginnings Alliance



KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Hearing Date: Tuesday, February 26, 2008
1:30 p.m. – Conference Room 308

By Christopher Pating
Vice President, Strategic Planning & Implementation
Kamehameha Schools

Wed., February 27, 2008

Re: HB 2973, HD1 - Relating to Early Learning

Good morning Chair Baker, Vice Chair Tsutsui and members of the Education Committee and Human Services and Public Housing Committee. My name is Christopher Pating and I am Vice President, Strategic Planning & Implementation for Kamehameha Schools. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on SB 2973, HD1.

Kamehameha Schools applauds the legislature for its interest in establishing an early learning program and to enhancing the early education opportunities of children across the state. We have been participating extensively in the Early Learning Education Task Force established by the legislature and strongly support the Task Force's report. We look forward to participating in on going dialog on this critically important matter. *Now, however, it is critically important for you to advance this measure.*

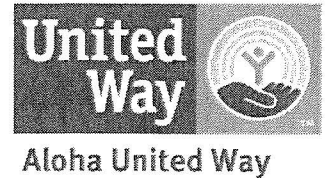
Founded in 1887, Kamehameha Schools is a statewide educational system supported by a trust endowed by Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop, whose mission is to improve the capability and well-being of Native Hawaiian children through education. We serve 5,400 K-12 students through campus programs on O'ahu, Hawai'i and Maui, and 1,317 three-and-four-year-olds at 31 preschool sites statewide. Last year, we provided \$4.4 million in scholarships to 850 keiki attending community preschools.

Since its inception more than 20 years ago, the Kamehameha Schools Early Childhood Education (ECE) Division has provided more than 11,000 keiki with their first preschool experience. Early childhood education and parental support is the cornerstone of the Education Strategic Plan adopted in 2005, which seeks to foster long-term intergenerational change in the way Native Hawaiian families approach learning. Research demonstrates that early education is a key factor in lifelong success for all children, and we strongly urge the legislature to promote, enhance and support the efforts of the State of Hawai'i to appropriately address the needs of Hawaii's pre-kindergarten children.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Aloha United Way

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Fax (808) 543-2222
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February 25, 2008

House Committee on Finance
Rep. Marcus R. Oshiro, Chair
Rep. Marilyn B. Lee, Vice Chair
Wednesday, February 27, 2008, 1:30 p.m.
Conference Room 308

HB 2973, HD1 Relating to Early Learning – Written Testimony in Support

Dear Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, and Members of the Committee:


Aloha United Way strongly encourages your favorable consideration of HB 2973, HD1 which creates the Early Learning Council and the state's early learning system known as Keiki First.

Keiki First is the outcome of the Act 259 Task Force and is the first step in a process that will create a comprehensive early learning system for Hawaii's children. An alarming 40% of our children arrive at kindergarten so far behind their peers that their success in our education system is questionable. When children don't succeed in school they require additional services, are over represented in the juvenile justice system and fail to achieve the skills necessary to live a self-sufficient life as adults. An early investment in our children will significantly reduce the added cost to society in future years – national studies indicate that a \$1 investment in early childhood development will save \$7 in future costs.

Aloha United Way is cognizant that 2008 will be a difficult year financially. We fully understand that the legislature will have to make some very tough choices. We believe that Keiki First deserves the highest priority because it addresses at its the root a key cause of poor school performance – a lack of readiness for school.

Simply put, Keiki First presents the legislature with the opportunity to positively and significantly impact our future – our Keiki. We must begin this long process of establishing our early learning system. To help inform this process, Aloha United Way has produced a report with the UH Center on the Family entitled School Readiness in Hawaii. We hope you will find it helpful as you consider this important issue. Aloha United Way thanks you for your consideration and we strongly encourage favorable consideration of HB 2973, HD1.

Sincerely:



Susan Doyle
President & Chief Professional Officer



To: Representative Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Representative Marilyn Lee, Vice Chair
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

From: Elisabeth Chun
Executive Director, Good Beginnings Alliance

Date: Wednesday, February 27, 2008
1:30 p.m., Room 308
Agenda 4

Subject: ~~SENATE~~, SD1 Relating to Early Learning
HB 2973

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the House Finance Committee Senate Ways and Means Committee, I strongly support the intent of this bill to create an Early Learning Council and the Keiki First Steps Program.

Quality early childhood education will provide Hawaii's keiki with the solid foundation for them to succeed in school and in life. Reports from our public school kindergarten teachers are that many of their students are not ready for school when they start kindergarten. This lack of a solid foundation significantly hampers our keiki in their ability to succeed in school, and this is very evident with only 52% of our third graders reading at grade level in 2006.

Hawaii is one of only 10 states in the nation without some type of publicly-funded early education program, and it is imperative that we as a state make a firm commitment now. Further, studies by nationally-recognized economists such as Art Rohnick, Federal Reserve Board of Minneapolis, and Dr. James Heckman, Nobel Prize Winning Economist from the University of Chicago, have shown that for every public dollar invested in quality early childhood education, a savings of up to \$7 will be realized in lower special education, school dropouts, incarceration, and adult welfare in the future. Early childhood is one of the best investments that a state can make.

I have been involved with early childhood education for over 30 years, and I have been the Executive Director of Good Beginnings Alliance for the last 11 years. I have also been involved in 5 different task forces trying to develop an early learning system for Hawaii, and the Act 259 Early Learning Educational Task Force has achieved the most in this endeavor. The Task Force has developed a high-quality system that has the standards needed for our children to have a quality foundation in school and life.

Additionally, we will need investments in workforce development to ensure our children are being educated by the highly-trained and degreed professionals. We not only have to increase access, but we must also improve the quality of our existing programs. Our keiki deserve the best.



We also support the creation of the public-private Early Learning Council that is administratively attached to a state agency. This council will provide the required visionary and professional leadership for quality early learning to flourish and grow in Hawaii. For it to succeed, it must be given the fiscal and administrative authority for this proposed early learning system. Moreover, this council must have neighbor island representation and another early childhood professional to ensure the right level of balance and expertise for this critical body.

Thank you for considering this bill.

Sincerely,

Elisabeth Chun
Executive Director
Good Beginnings Alliance

To: Representative Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Representative Marilyn Lee, Vice Chair
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

From: Sharon Taba
President of the Board of Directors
Good Beginnings Alliance

Date: Wednesday, February 27, 2008
1:30 p.m., Room 308

Subject: HB2973 HD1, Early Learning System; Early Learning Council; Keiki First Steps

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the House Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding SB2973 HD1. On behalf of the Good Beginnings Alliance, I, Sharon Taba, President, strongly support the intent of this bill.

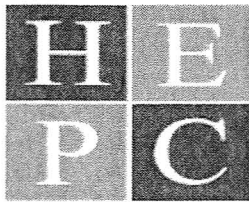
The Act 259 Early Learning Educational Task Force has truly proposed a high-quality early learning program for Hawaii's 4-year-olds, which culminated in the task force's final report to the Legislature in December 2007. These principles of quality, such as degreed teachers and administrators, appropriate teacher-student ratios, accredited programs, or curricula that meet the Hawaii Preschool Content Standards are "must-pay" foundational elements for our keiki to succeed in school and in life.

We also support the creation of the public-private Early Learning Council that it be attached to a state agency for fiscal and administrative purposes only. This council must have a broad representation from both the public and private sectors, and especially from the early learning community and neighbor islands.

Further, we urge your continued support for helping our early education professionals to obtain their required college degrees and early childhood courses. Extensive research has shown that highly-trained teachers and administrators significantly impact the quality of the early learning experience for children, and this will truly be worthwhile investment.

Finally, we must ensure our early childhood professionals receive competitive and fair compensation. Their current salary levels are way too low, and failure to recognize this inequity will result in more teachers leaving this highly-valued profession and hurl our efforts to offer quality early childhood education to all of Hawaii's keiki.

Our children need and deserve the best start in life to become contributing citizens and leaders in our communities, state and nation. I strongly urge you to support this bill for the good of all of Hawaii's children.



HAWAI'I EDUCATIONAL POLICY CENTER
Informing the Education Community

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance

February 27, 2008, 1:30 pm, Room 308

Written Testimony

by

Donald B. Young, Director
Hawai'i Educational Policy Center
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB2973 HD1: Relating to Teachers

Chair Baker, Vice Chair Tsutsui, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i Educational Policy Center supports HB 2971 H.D. 1, which creates the Early Learning Council to govern the state's early learning system and establishes an early learning system, Keiki First Steps Program.

HB 2973 H.D. 1 incorporates a number of recommendations from the Act 259 Task Force in which the University actively participated. The Task Force has also provided your committee with funding recommendations that have been well thought out and take into consideration both the need for an early learning system and the State's current ability to provide funding for it.

We believe that high-quality universal preschool programs are essential to the future of our state. There is overwhelming evidence that children who begin their K-12 education ready to learn are more likely to succeed in school. Early attention to key elements of literacy helps ensure that a child is able to read by third grade, a critical factor in school achievement. Success in school is related to a better prepared workforce and to college-going behavior.

HB 2973 H.D. 1 targets at-risk populations in developing a statewide early learning system. These are the students least likely to have access to high-quality early learning experiences. The bill also supports the preparation of highly qualified educators to serve our children.

We believe that our state should join the vast majority of other states in supporting a comprehensive early learning system.

To: Rep. Marcus R. Oshiro, Chairman
Rep. Marilyn L. Lee, Vice Chair
House Finance Committee

From: Carol Y. Suda
GBCC Council Member Maui County
Project Director for 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant for the King
Kekaulike Complex of Schools

Date: Wednesday, February 27, 2008
1:30 p.m.
Room 308

Subject: HB 2973 HD1

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the House Finance Committee, I strongly support the intent of this bill to create an Early Learning Council and the Keiki First Steps Program.

Quality early childhood education will provide Hawaii's keiki with the solid foundation for them to succeed in school and in life. With over 80 percent of our current public school kindergarten classes not having most of their students displaying the necessary pre-literacy skills during their first month of kindergarten, we need to make a stand now. Research shows that early childhood education makes a difference in a child's learning from the very beginning. We need to prepare our children before they enter kindergarten with all the skills necessary to make them successful. In fact, 40 other states already have some type of publicly-funded early childhood education program in their states, and the time is now for Hawaii to step up to the plate.

We need investments in workforce development to ensure our children are being educated by the highly-trained and degreed professionals. We want to increase access for to top-quality programs and staff. And in order to do this we need to help in getting the workforce trained to provide the top-quality programs that we want for our children.

We also support the creation of the public-private Early Learning Council that is administratively attached to a state agency. This council will provide the required visionary and professional leadership for quality early learning to flourish and grow in Hawaii.

Now is the time for Hawaii to make a commitment for the future of our children, our communities, and our state. The Task Force's recommended sum of \$10.45 million is an outstanding investment that will reap dividends for years to come.



**Maui Economic
Opportunity, Inc.**
Est. 1965

99 Mahalani Street
Wailuku, Hawai'i 96793
808-249-2990
Fax: 808-249-2991



To: Representative Marcus R. Oshiro, Chair
Representative Marilyn L. Lee, Vice Chair
HOUSE FINANCE

From: Debbi Amaral, MEO Director of Early Childhood Services

Date: Wednesday, February 27, 2008
1:30 p.m., Room 308

Subject: HB2973HD1, Relating to Early Learning

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the House Finance Committee, I am respectfully submitting written testimony to ask the committee to pass HB2973HD1 concerning Keiki First Steps. Research has shown a direct impact on early intervention, creating positive pathways that determine a child's educational future.

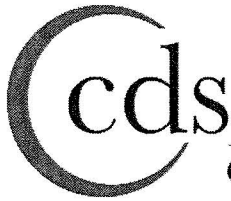
A task force comprised of respected early childhood professionals was tasked with the responsibility to develop a quality system. A plan was developed for four year old children with the intent to serve birth to three in future years. As a director of our Maui County Head Start program, I share in the concern of other community preschools in our challenge of finding and retaining quality staff that meet qualification requirements. In order for many preschools to increase salaries, they are faced with the difficult decision to increase tuition. This ongoing dilemma impacts staff and families as costs are involved for both parties. Support on behalf of workforce development and equitable compensation is vital to the overall proposed system.

I support the organization of a public-private Early Learning Council that is administratively attached to the state agency. I would like to respectfully request that representation from each county and each option available to families, including center-based, family child interaction learning, and family child care, be assigned to the Early Learning Council. This opportunity will afford the council to be represented in a comprehensive manner fulfilling all needs of the various diverse communities.

The Task Force recommended the sum of \$10.45 million as an initial investment to implement a quality system plan for the State of Hawai'i. This investment will directly impact the future of our keiki for generations to come. I sincerely thank you for taking time to review this request and respect your dedication in serving our children and families.

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CENTER ON DISABILITY STUDIES

February 26, 2008

TO: The Honorable Marcus R. Oshiro, Chair
The Honorable Marilyn B. Lee, Vice-Chair
And Members
Committee on Finance

Subject: HB 2973, HD1, Relating to Early Learning

Aloha:

On behalf of the Center on Disability Studies, I strongly support the intent of this bill to create an Early Learning Council, and the Early Learning System and Keiki First Steps Program.

As an early childhood educator and a Board Member of the Good Beginnings Alliance, I know how important early learning opportunities are for children to enable them to be healthy and ready to continue learning when they get to school. Extensive research has documented the value of high-quality preschool education as an economic investment that pays off handsomely in lower special education rates, fewer high school dropouts, and fewer young people entering the juvenile justice system.

But the operative word is high quality. We must have well qualified teachers, with appropriate staff-child ratios, and safe environments for learning to take place. Highly qualified teachers are the pivot on which quality preschool education rests.

The real question is not, "how can we afford it," but instead, "how can we not afford it?" Our children, and ultimately our communities, our state, and our country will greatly benefit by adopting and funding Keiki First.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify, and I commend you for your leadership in addressing this critical issue.

Sincerely,

/s/ *Jean Johnson*

Jean Johnson, DrPH
Associate Director

To: Representative Marcus R. Oshiro, Chair
Representative Marilyn L. Lee, Vice Chair
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

From: Linda Buck
Coordinator, Early Childhood Programs
Honolulu Community College

Date: Wednesday, February 27, 2008
1:30 p.m., Room 308

Subject: HB2973 HD 1, Relating to Early Learning

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the House Finance Committee, I strongly support the intent of this bill to create an Early Learning Council and the Keiki First Steps Program.

Through Act 259 the 2007 Legislature asked the Early Learning Task Force to design and cost a system to provide effective quality education and care for all Hawaii's young children, beginning with 4-year-olds. The recommendations of the Task Force have the credibility of diverse and extensive stakeholder input, the advice of national experts, and the evidence available from the 40 other states that currently implement publicly funded early childhood education programs.

In addition to my strong support for creation of an Early Learning Council to oversee development of the Keiki First Steps Program, I urge you to remember that to a great extent the success of Keiki First Steps will stand on the shoulders of the early childhood educators who will teach these young children.

One of the strongest Early Learning Task Force recommendations is to support the development of a highly qualified workforce for early childhood programs. Research shows that not only are teachers with college degrees important predictors of successful outcomes for children, but on-going professional development to support staff as they do their vital work is also essential. As a college educator and an early childhood professional with more than 30 years experience, I have seen the difference that teachers can make when they not only know what to do, but why they are doing it. An investment in the workforce by increasing accessibility to higher education and on-going professional development will be returned many times over. Recognition of the importance of this work through compensation appropriate to qualifications and improved working conditions is also critical for the success of the proposed Keiki First Steps program.

Now is the time for Hawaii to make a commitment for the future of our children, our communities, and our state. The Task Force's recommended sum of \$10.45 million is an outstanding investment that will reap dividends for years to come. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the intent of HB 2973 HD1.

To: Representative Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Representative Marilyn B. Lee, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Finance

From: D. Keala Naluai, Windward O'ahu, Substitute Teacher
PO Box 4982
Kaneohe, HI 96744, 239-1281

Wednesday, February 27, 2008
1:30 pm, Room 308

RE: Support of **HB2973_HD1_HSCR282-08**, "Relating to Early Learning"

I am in support of this bill for an Early Learning System and Keiki First Steps Program. I hold a DOE Substitute Teaching Certificate and have been teaching for 4 years, including SPED classes. I have taught special needs, special education students' preschool to 6th grade and regular preschool to 6th grade classes in the Windward O'ahu Castle Complex. I hold a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's in business administration.

Many children do not have preschool learning experiences before entering kindergarten. With the growing numbers of preschool children on waiting lists for private, public and/or free preschool education and the shortage of classes to provide this service to 3 and 4-year-olds, our current early childhood teacher and qualified education assistant resources are seriously lacking. I see the struggles in the classrooms of those young students who have not had pre-kindergarten learning experiences. Many are behind in grade level readiness capabilities and in some cases the effects carry on into the first grade, sometimes second and third grades, which then put these children at a critical disadvantage to "catch up" to grade level competency and in a situation for special education needs services. This problem is growing and may be a contributing factor to some scoring lower in the Hawaii State School Readiness Assessment (HSSRA).

We will need to increase the number of qualified early childhood teachers and preschools as soon as possible with **adequate incentives to increase and retain our early childhood teacher workforce** by providing educational scholarships, grants and loan forgiveness. Our public university will also need incentives to provide expanded access to early childhood education courses and certification. To ensure program improvements for higher quality learning, early childhood programs will need sufficient funding to implement higher quality teaching programs with the help of an Early Learning Council.

I support this measure. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Act 259 Early Learning Educational Task Force

February 25, 2008

To: House Finance Committee, Rep. Marcus Oshiro, Chair
From: Elaine Yamashita, yamash@hawaii.edu, 808-984-3208

I am writing to ask that the committee pass HB2973 HD1 concerning Keiki First. As you well know, high quality early childhood education makes a difference for young children, especially for children who come from challenging situations of poverty and instability.

The Act 259 Task Force created by the 2006 Legislature has examined many issues and gave the 2008 Legislature its 150+ page plan for four year olds (planning for birth to three year olds is next) and it shows that workforce development and equitable compensation for early childhood educators with higher qualifications is crucial to building and sustaining the proposed system. As the representative for the UH Community Colleges on the Task Force, I can tell you that my students are excited at the potential to be able to earn a decent living wage with increased qualifications. Of course, that can only happen with your support.

Because the early childhood arena is so complex, a governing/coordinating entity is crucial to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of state, federal, county and private investments and avoid duplication of services.

The Task Force is asking for \$10.45 million for this first year, which would be an initial investment into the proposed system. You probably know that \$1 invested into high quality programs results in as much as \$7 saved in social costs by the time the child is 18 (less special education services, higher high school graduation rates, less juvenile delinquency, etc.). You would be making a wise investment for Hawai'i's future.

From: Linda Elento, Member of The Hawaii Down Syndrome Congress

To: COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Rep. Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Rep. Marilyn Lee, Vice Chair

Re: FIN February 27, 2008, 1:30 pm

HB2973, HD1 In Support of Intent

Relating to Early Learning.

With Comments to Support Including **HB2435** (Preschoolers)

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of the intent of HB2973. We appreciate your Committee's consideration of the purpose of **HB2435** (to meet mandated services to preschoolers with disabilities) as it relates to preschool age children **within the scope of this Early Learning bill HB2186.**

What did our Department of Education report to the US Department of Education? (See page 2 of testimony)

Hawaii's Part B FFY 2005 SPP State Performance Plan /APR Annual Performance Report Response Table (Fed. Law: IDEA 2004)

Hawaii's Report on settings with typically developing peers (i.e., **early childhood settings, home, and part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education settings.** **Status:** The State's FFY 2005 reported data is a **dismal 35.86% (64% of our keiki with disabilities are not receiving educational/developmental services in environments with typically developing peers.**

Percent of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated **parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities: Only 34% of parents** (I was asked to leave my disabled child's classroom).

Questions: Would Keiki First replace or include Open Doors tuition assistance program? Replace Healthy Start? Why was Jr. Kindergarten started in the first place and is it working? Why or why not? How many children participate in part-time private programs, short-term sessions (such as the summer month before Kindergarten)? **Could a cabinet-level early childhood office (or a deputy chief to report to DOH, DOE, DHS and DLIR) achieve the early childhood needs of our state, within a practical timeframe and cost?**

In consideration of the time spent the past two or three years developing the early childhood plan, there still has been no studies, or policies implemented in order for the State of Hawaii to meet its obligations of the federal law Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 and related state laws (Quality early education plan) to meet the developmental and educational needs of children with disabilities, including young children with Down syndrome.

Families of children born with Down syndrome need extra help from their communities to become their children's first teacher, to provide for health and medical needs, developmental and educational research and resources. **We appreciate your support for immediate policy changes, not just a lump-sum to begin another early learning council.**

Attention: Rep. M. Oshiro, Chair, Finance, and Rep. Marilyn Lee, Vice Chair, Finance **HB2973 Support Intent**

From: Linda Elento, The Hawaii Down Syndrome Congress (808) 235-7610 In support of including HB2435 in HB2973

Purpose: To meet the mandated requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 by including children with disabilities. US DOE website: <http://www.ed.gov/fund/data/report/idea/partbspap/2007/hi-aprtbl-2007b.doc>

Hawaii's Part B FFY 2005 SPP State Performance Plan /APR Annual Performance Report Response Table

Monitoring Priorities and Indicators	Status	OSEP Analysis/Next Steps
<p>6. Percent of preschool children with IEPs who received special education and related services <u>in settings with typically developing peers (i.e., early childhood settings, home, and part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education settings).</u> [Results Indicator]</p>	<p>The State's FFY 2005 reported data for this indicator are <u>35.86%</u>. This represents progress from the State's FFY 2004 reported data of 35.65%. The State did not meet its FFY 2005 target of 38%.</p>	<p>Please note that, due to changes in the 618 State-reported data collection, this indicator will change for the FFY 2006 APR, <u>due February 1, 2008</u>. States will be required to describe how they will collect valid and reliable data to provide baseline and targets in the FFY 2007 APR, <u>due February 1, 2009</u>.</p>
<p>7. Percent of preschool children with IEPs who demonstrate improved:</p> <p>A. Positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships);</p> <p>B. Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy); and</p> <p>Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs. [Results Indicator; New]</p>	<p>Entry data provided.</p>	<p>The State reported the required entry data and activities. The State must provide progress data and improvement activities with the FFY 2006 APR, <u>due February 1, 2008</u>.</p>
<p>8. Percent of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated <u>parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities.</u> [Results Indicator; New]</p>	<p>The State's FFY 2005 reported baseline data for this indicator are <u>34%</u>.</p>	<p>The State provided baseline data, targets, and improvement activities and OSEP accepts the SPP for this indicator.</p> <p>OSEP's March 23, 2006 SPP response letter required the State to: (1) clarify whether parents of preschool-aged children with disabilities participate in the survey; and (2) submit a copy of the survey with the February 1, 2007 APR. The State reported that parents of preschool children participate in the parent survey and that the State's baseline data reflects this participation. However, the State did not include a copy of the survey as was required by the instructions for the SPP/APR submission for this indicator. The State must submit a copy of the parent survey in the FFY 2006 APR <u>due February 1, 2008</u>.</p>

SUBMITTED BY: Gale McNish, Member
Good Beginnings Community Council - Maui

FOR House Bill 2973 HD1

DATE: February 27, 2008 1:30 p.m.

PLACE: Room 308

COMMITTEE: House Finance Committee

Members of the Committee:

I am strongly in support of House Bill 2973 HD1 (Keiki First) and its intention to create an Early Learning Council and early learning system in the state of Hawaii. Such a system will enable families to access a range of quality early learning opportunities for their children. These learning opportunities are greatly needed in order to ensure that all our kids can enter kindergarten on an equal footing. Research shows that unless such early learning opportunities are provided, there will continue to be a gap between those who are ready for school and those who are not. It is a gap that is hard to close and one which in fact only widens with time.

I have worked in the field of early childhood on Maui for over 30 years. During this time I have worked as a Head Start teacher, a DOE teacher, a teacher trainer, and a parent educator. I have served on the Good Beginnings Community Council – Maui since its inception when it was formed Under Act 77. As a result of this involvement, I have come to understand the issues surrounding early childhood education quite thoroughly, and I believe in the need for legislation such as this HB2973 to address them. A system that is firmly rooted in the public sector, while also incorporating the current existing private programs and services, is one that can effectively meet the needs of Hawaii's families.

Act 259 requested that a Task Force examine all the issues surrounding early education in our state and provide recommendations for bringing about needed changes through a system wide approach. The Task Force's Keiki First reflects the understanding they have of the issues and provides recommendations for policy change. I strongly want us as a state to commit to those recommendations. An important aspect of these recommendations is that of creating an Early Learning Council that reflects not only the ethnic and cultural diversity in our state, but also the geographical diversity. It is important that the neighbor islands be provided with a significant voice in the process. For this reason, I recommend that counties have such a voice through their existing County Coordinators, who are well versed in the early childhood needs in their counties and who can undertake necessary research and dialogue on the local level as the process evolves. To leave those local voices out would be to weaken the process from the very start.

Another important aspect of Keiki First is the urgent need for workforce development. Without growth in the workforce – both in quantity and in quality -- our state will not be able to provide the quality early learning experiences that are so necessary to the state's continued growth. Keiki First recognizes what those needs are and lays out a plan for incremental development of the workforce through education and training. While it seems so very expensive to do allocate so much funding to developing the early childhood workforce, it is an essential part of the overall plan. Studies show that progress in children's learning occurs only when their teachers are well educated and well trained. In other words, children's ability to make gains and be prepared for formal schooling does not just occur in "any old" setting. Children need a high quality environment and daily interaction with adults who are of the highest caliber if gains are to be achieved.

The State needs to make the necessary commitment of both funds and structure to enable the Task Force recommendations to become policy. While \$10.45 million seems an enormous sum to provide, it is only through such an investment that we can truly give our keiki their due.

Mahalo.
Gale McNish

To: Representative Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Representative Marilyn Lee, Vice Chair
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

From: Ed T. Yonamine
Association Director

Date: Wednesday, February 27, 2008
1:30 p.m., Room 308

Subject: HB2973 HD1, Early Learning System; Early Learning Council; Keiki First Steps

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the House Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding SB2973 HD1. I am the Associate Director of Good Beginnings Alliance, and have been in the early childhood education profession for over thirty years. I strongly support the intent of this bill.

The Act 259 Early Learning Educational Task Force has proposed a high-quality early learning program for Hawaii's 4-year-olds which culminated in the task force's final report to the Legislature in December 2007. These principles of quality, such as degreed teachers and administrators, appropriate teacher-student ratios, accredited programs, or curricula that meet the Hawaii Preschool Content Standards are "must-pay" foundational elements for our keiki to succeed in school and in life.

I also support the creation of the public-private Early Learning Council. This council must have a broad representation from both the public and private sectors, and especially from the four early learning settings (*center-based, family child care, family child interaction learning program and home-based instruction*) and our neighbor island communities.

Further, I urge your continued support for helping our early education professionals to obtain their required college degrees and early childhood courses. Extensive research has shown that highly-trained teachers and administrators significantly impact the quality of the early learning experience for children, and this will truly be a worthwhile investment.

Finally, we must ensure our early childhood professionals receive competitive and fair compensation. Their current salary levels are way too low, and results in teachers leaving this highly-valued profession. The turnover rate affects the overall quality of early childhood education for all of Hawaii's keiki.

Our children need and deserve the best start in life to become contributing citizens and leaders in our communities, state and nation. I strongly urge you to support this bill for better school successes and opportunities in life for all of Hawaii's children.

To: Representative Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Representative Marilyn Lee, Vice Chair
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

From: Jan I'i
Program Assistant, Good Beginnings Alliance

Date: Wednesday, February 27, 2008
1:30 p.m., Room 308

Subject: HB2973 HD1, Early Learning System; Early Learning Council; Keiki First Steps

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the House Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding SB2973 HD1. I am a Program Assistant for Good Beginnings Alliance. I strongly support the intent of this bill.

The Act 259 Early Learning Educational Task Force has truly proposed a high-quality early learning program for Hawaii's 4-year-olds, which culminated in the task force's final report to the Legislature in December 2007. These principles of quality, such as degreed teachers and administrators, appropriate teacher-student ratios, accredited programs, or curricula that meet the Hawaii Preschool Content Standards are "must-pay" foundational elements for our keiki to succeed in school and in life.

I also support the creation of the public-private Early Learning Council that it be attached to a state agency for fiscal and administrative purposes only. This council must have a broad representation from both the public and private sectors, and especially from the early learning community and neighbor islands.

Further, I urge your continued support for helping our early education professionals to obtain their required college degrees and early childhood courses. Extensive research has shown that highly-trained teachers and administrators significantly impact the quality of the early learning experience for children, and this will truly be worthwhile investment.

Finally, we must ensure our early childhood professionals receive competitive and fair compensation. Their current salary levels are way too low, and failure to recognize this inequity will result in more teachers leaving this highly-valued profession and hurl our efforts to offer quality early childhood education to all of Hawaii's keiki.

Our children need and deserve the best start in life to become contributing citizens and leaders in our communities, state and nation. I strongly urge you to support this bill for the good of all of Hawaii's children.

To: Representative Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Representative Marilyn Lee, Vice Chair
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

From: Nalani Galariada
Oahu Partnership Coordinator, Good Beginnings Alliance

Date: Wednesday, February 27, 2008
1:30PM, Room 308

Subject: HB2973 HD1, Early Learning System; Early Learning Council; Keiki First Steps

Chair Baker, Vice Chair Tsutsui, and members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, I strongly support the intent of this bill to create an Early Learning Council and the Keiki First Steps Program.

Over 80 percent of our current public school kindergarten classes have most of its students not displaying the necessary pre-literacy skills during their first month of kindergarten. As a coordinator working with vulnerable families with young children who may be homeless or isolated, I believe that a quality early childhood education program will provide Hawaii's keiki with a solid foundation for them to succeed in school and in life. A publicly-funded early childhood education program such as Keiki First Steps will help them but we must take a stand now.

Act 259 charged the Early Learning Educational Task Force to develop a quality system and the Task Force recommended \$10.45 million as the initial but necessary investment that can reap dividends for years to come for our vulnerable families. The Task Force also pointed out investments in workforce development to ensure our children are being educated by highly-trained and degreed professionals. All of our children deserve the best.

Finally, as a GBA staff member, I support the creation of the public-private Early Learning Council. This council can ensure that our early learning system is accountable, and that visionary and professional leadership will help to grow our quality early learning system in Hawaii for all families and children.

We must make a commitment to Hawaii's children's, families and communities. We must take a stand for our state's future.

February 26, 2008

To: House Committee on Finance
Rep. Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Rep. Marilyn Lee, Vice Chair

From: Robert G. Peters, EdD
Early Childhood Task Force, co-chair

In Re: **HB2973 HD1**

Chair Oshiro, vice Chair Lee and members of the House Finance Committee, I am pleased to provide this testimony in support of the intent of **HB2973 HD1** to create a public/private Early Learning Council and the Keiki First Steps Program.

As you are well aware from current research, quality early learning experiences enhance school success. Children develop the needed literacy and social skills required for both school readiness and school success. Longitudinal studies indicate that communities as a whole benefit from quality early learning as more students graduate from high school, incarceration rates decline (as do school remediation needs) and the general population contributes more productively to their communities.

The efforts of the Act 259 Task Force, a rigorous study to determine costs for implementing a comprehensive program in Hawaii, have resulted in a well-documented report that indicates the time is now for us to launch a quality early learning system. Such a move is both an investment in today's young keiki and our state's future. While the economic and social benefits may not be immediately noted, the long-term improvement in the quality of life for our families will contribute to a sustainable future for Hawaii. The need is obvious as 80 percent of our current Kindergarten classes do not have most of their students displaying the pre-literacy skills necessary for success in school. We cannot allow this situation to continue.

The Task Force argues strongly for the need to fund the building of a workforce, both from a capacity and quality professional development perspective. A governing council must be supported to establish policies guaranteeing quality, high levels of accountability and effective administration of resources. And, we need to begin to expand opportunities for our families to access and be able to afford quality early childhood learning for their children that is consistent with family and cultural needs.

The State needs to make the commitment now. Our keiki cannot wait nor can their needs be superseded by any others. Investing in the first year at the sum of \$10.45 million will begin a quality, early learning system which promises to yield quality outcomes throughout our state. We must put our Keiki first!

FINtestimony

From: Melanie Padgett [goodbeginningsmaui@hotmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, February 26, 2008 9:14 AM
To: FINtestimony
Subject: In support of HB2973HD1

To: Rep. Marcus Oshiro and Rep. Marilyn Lee
House Finance Committee

From: Melanie Padgett
Project Specialist Good Beginnings - Maui County

Date: Wednesday, February 27, 2008 1:30p.m. Room 308

Subject: HB2973HD1

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the House Finance Committee, I strongly support the intent of this bill to create an Early Learning Council and the Keiki First Steps Program.

As Good Beginnings - Maui County Project Specialist, I help to administer a Maui County child care subsidy intended to help families who don't qualify for other types of financial assistance, such as Child Care Connection or Headstart because they are slightly over income, pay the ever increasing cost of family home care or preschool for their children. The problem is that there are many more families in need of help than our small budget (\$37,500) can cover. Every day I get phone calls from concerned parents who want to provide their children with opportunities for early childhood education, but can't afford it, and I have to tell them that we have no more funds available. Another problem is that even if they have money to pay for it, parents can't find space in existing programs to enroll their children. There aren't enough qualified teachers and staff to meet the demand for quality early childhood education and care.

I believe that the intent of SB2878 to create an Early Learning Council and the Keiki First Steps Program is definitely the right direction toward solving these problems. **Please also consider that it is important to ensure representation from the Outer Islands on this Council.**

Do not forget that money spent on early childhood education results in savings on social programs and the penal system later! Hawaii can afford this program if we truly care about our children.

Sincerely,
Melanie Padgett
242-1608

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To: Representative Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Representative Marilyn B. Lee, Vice Chair
HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE

From: Celia Chang Takahashi
Facilitator, Good Beginnings Oahu Council

Date: Wednesday, February 27, 2008
1:30 p.m., Room 308

Subject: HB2973, HD1, Relating to Early Learning

Aloha Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the House Finance Committee.
Thank you for allowing me to testify in regards to House Bill 2973 HD1.

My name is Celia Chang Takahashi and I am the Oahu Coordinator with the Good Beginnings Alliance and the Facilitator of the Good Beginnings Oahu Council (GBOC). GBOC is made up of individuals who provide direct services to young children and their families throughout the island of Oahu.

At this time it is my honor to submit this testimony on behalf of GBOC.

GBOC would like to compliment the Legislature for their desire to establish a comprehensive, cohesive, and sustainable early learning system that ensures a spectrum of quality early learning opportunities through HB2973 HD1. Some of the major intents of the Bill, as currently written, include:

1. Ensuring a spectrum of quality early learning opportunities for children, including center-based, family child care, family-child interaction learning programs and home-based instruction settings.
2. Providing Hawaii families with young children from birth until the time they enter kindergarten with a seamless learning experiences that is sensitive to family choice and cultural elements.
3. Establishing an Early Learning Council that develops and implements methods of maximizing the involvement of parents, caregivers and teachers in the early learning system.

To help the Legislature achieve the above mentioned intents GBOC would like to recommend that the Legislature expanding the Early Learning Council from the proposed 13 members to include members that represent

1. center-based;
2. family child care;
3. family-child interaction learning programs;
4. home-based instruction;

5. urban communities; and
6. rural communities.

Rationale

Currently the Early Learning Council, as designed by HB2973 HD1, is made up of 13 members, one of which is a representative of child care program providers.

GBOC is making this recommendations because if the Legislature truly wants to create a comprehensive system that includes public or privately run programs that represents a spectrum of quality early learning opportunities, including center-based, family child care, family-child interaction learning programs and home-based instruction settings each setting type needs to be represented individually, and equally, on the Early Learning Council as each service provider type has different clientele, implementation plans, goals, challenges, etc.

Having one individual representing ***all*** types of providers ***will not*** achieve the development and implementation of methods to maximize the involvement of parents, caregivers, and teachers in the early learning system as each setting type, and the families that access them, are very unique. Designing a “one size fits all” representation will fail not only the proposed Early Learning System, but Hawaii’s keiki.

HB2973 HD1 also states that the Early Learning Council membership shall reflect regional and cultural and ethnic diversity to ensure representation of the needs of all children in the state. However the proposed membership roster is largely made up of individuals that represent State offices or programs that are “housed” in Honolulu.

GBOC is also recommending that the Council be expanded to include members from urban ***and*** rural communities. GBOC firmly believes that the only way the Early Learning Council can effectively address the diverse regional, cultural and ethnic needs that makes up our great state is by giving equal representation to both rural and urban communities.

In conclusion, GBOC strongly encourages the Legislature to expand the Early Learning Council from the proposed 13 members to include members that represent

1. center-based;
2. family child care;
3. family-child interaction learning programs;
4. home-based instruction;
5. urban communities; and
6. rural communities.

GBOC firmly believes that these recommended additions are a good way for the Legislature to reach its goal of creating a comprehensive, cohesive, and sustainable early learning system that ensures a spectrum of quality early learning opportunities for all of Hawaii’s keiki. These recommendations are one of the best ways to put Keiki First!

Act 259 Early Learning Educational Task Force

To: Representative Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Representative Marilyn Lee, Vice Chair
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

From: Kathy Murphy
Co-Chair, Act 259 Early Learning Educational Task Force

Date: Wednesday, February 27, 2008
1:30 p.m., Room 308

Subject: HB2973 HD1, Early Learning System; Early Learning Council; Keiki First Relating to Early Learning

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the House Finance Committee, I strongly support the intent of this bill to create an Early Learning Council and the Keiki First Steps Program.

I have been a preschool teacher, center director, and now am President of the Hawaii Association for the Education of Young Children. I wholeheartedly believe in quality early childhood education and have dedicated my entire adult life to this great profession. Our Act 259 Early Learning Educational Task Force has developed a high-quality early learning system for Hawai'i's 4-year-olds that will benefit all of Hawaii for many years.

This bill will help to provide our young children with the solid building block for success in school and life. Studies throughout the nation have shown the definitive value of investing in quality early learning, with improved student learning and achievement, reduced K-12 special education, decreased high school drop outs, and a slew of other benefits to children and society as a whole. We are 1 of only 10 states without some type of publicly-funded early learning system, and we must act now.

I also support the creation of the public-private Early Learning Council and that it be attached to a state agency for fiscal and administrative purposes only. This council must have a broad representation from both the public and private sectors, and especially from the early learning community and neighbor islands.

Additionally, I strongly urge your continued support for helping our early education professionals to obtain their required college degrees and early childhood courses. Extensive research has shown that highly-trained teachers and administrators positively impact the quality of the early learning experience for children.

Finally, we must ensure our early childhood professionals receive competitive and fair compensation. Our professionals are receiving low wages, and this is negatively impacting both recruitment and retention in this highly-valued profession. Our children need and deserve the best start in life to become contributing citizens and leaders in our communities, state and nation. I strongly urge you to support this bill for the good of all of Hawai'i's children.

To: Representative Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Representative Marilyn Lee, Vice Chair
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

From: David Tom

Date: Wednesday, February 27, 2008
1:30 p.m., Room 308
Agenda #4

Subject: HB2973 HD1, Early Learning System; Early Learning Council; Keiki First Steps

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the House Finance Committee, I strongly support the intent of this bill to create an Early Learning Council and the Keiki First Steps Program.

Nearly 2 years ago, I completed a 27.5-year career in the United States Air Force, and one of the hallmarks of both the Air Force and all the services has been their investment in quality early childhood education. In fact, the Department of Defense's early learning system is recognized as the finest in the nation and is a huge benefit for our military families. This was achieved through federal law and targeted funding investments

I have worked on the Act 259 Early Learning Educational Task Force for the last 18 months, and the Task Force's report truly fulfills the mandate of Act 259. This early learning system will provide Hawaii's children with a bedrock foundation to succeed in school and in life. Less than 20% of our public school kindergarten classes display the necessary pre-literacy skills at the start of school, and I believe this is one of the major contributors to only 52% of our third graders reading at grade level in 2006. Educators know that a child learns to read from pre-kindergarten to the third grade, and reads to learn from the fourth grade onward. This quality early learning system for Hawaii will make a huge impact for our children's learning success.

The Department of Defense and 40 other states have recognized the need to invest in some type of publicly-funded quality early learning system, and Hawaii must make this next step forward now. It is really about not only our children, but our state's future.

Additionally, the early childhood workforce is an underpaid career path, and we must fund these professionals' workforce development through more distance learning and college financial aid. These professionals are what make a quality early learning program, and they need our help.

I do support the creation of the public-private Early Learning Council that is administratively attached to a state agency. This council must have the administrative and fiscal authority to oversee the early learning system, and I am very happy with the recognition of this needed governance body.

To: Representative Marcus R. Oshiro, Chair
Representative Marilyn L. Lee, Vice Chair
HOUSE FINANCE

From: Anna Peters
Member, Early Learning Educational Task Force
Kauai Island Coordinator, Good Beginnings Alliance

Date: February 27, 2008
1:30 p.m.
Room 308
Agenda 4

Subject: HB2973HD1, Relating to Early Learning System

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support of HB2973HD1. My name is Anna Peters and I had the opportunity of serving as the Kauai County Alternate representative to the Early Learning Educational Task Force. I am also the Good Beginnings Alliance Kauai Island Coordinator.

As part of the Good Beginnings Coordinator, I also facilitate a Community Council made up of different early childhood agencies, preschools, state departments, and parents. We meet regularly to address on-going issues on our island such as turnovers from our teachers, not enough qualified teachers, a long waiting list for our families as they try to find an appropriate space for their child and not having enough facilities on our island just to name a few.

As a GBA coordinator identifying needs for early childhood and charged with affecting change within Kauai County, the challenges and barriers in addressing the on-going issues above is alarming. There needs to be a more coordinated system.

Research shows that 85% of a child's intellect, personality and social skills are formed by age 5, Keiki First will provide the quality early learning experiences to improve school readiness, literacy and comprehension skills (just to name a few) required for school success no matter what income level. We need to provide opportunities for our children now to ensure a wise investment for Hawaii's future.

Mahalo,

Anna Peters
Good Beginnings Alliance
Kauai Coordinator
P.O. Box 3077
Lihue, HI 96766
Phone: 632-2114

To: Representative Marcus R Oshiro, Chair
Representative Marilyn L. Lee, Vice Chair
HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE

From: Ka'ina Bonacorsi
Maui County Early Childhood Resource Coordinator

Date: Wednesday, February 27, 2008
1:30 p.m., Room 308

Subject: HB2973HD1, Relating to Early Learning

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the House Finance Committee, I am writing to ask that the committee pass HB2973HD1 concerning Keiki First Steps Program. It is a well known fact that providing high quality early childhood education has a profound impact on their future successes.

The Act 259 tasked the Task Force to develop a quality system, and the Act 259 Early Learning Educational Task Force's Report certainly did this with the plan for four year olds (and the intention to address birth to three next). As a community coordinator I am aware of the continuous struggles that many preschool directors or family child interaction program directors have in recruiting and retaining qualified staff to provide the quality education we are looking for. I am also aware of the costs associated with quality care and education and the impact that this will have if preschools and or programs pass this on to the families who are already struggling to invest in the success of their child's future. It is imperative that workforce development and equitable compensation for early childhood educators be factored in to support the proposed system.

I also support the creation of the public-private Early Learning Council that is administratively attached to a state agency. A governing / coordinating body will play an important role in the efficacy of the program. I would like to encourage you to consider including representation from each county and each setting (center based, family child interaction learning, and family child care) on the Early Learning Council. Having such representation on the Task Force was essential in the process that was used to develop the plan and will be pertinent system building and sustainability of the early learning system.

The Task Force has recommended the sum of \$10.45 million as an initial investment into the proposed system. This is a wise investment in our states future; this investment will make a profound impact on our Keiki's future.