



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

January 28, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Norman Sakamoto, Chair
Senate Committee on Education

The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing

FROM: Lillian B. Koller, Director

SUBJECT: **S.B. 2466 RELATING TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

Hearing: Monday, January 28, 2008; 1:15 p.m.
Conference Room 225, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The 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.

L A T E

Date of Hearing: January 28, 2008

Committee: Senate Education/Human
Services and Public Housing

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Patricia Hamamoto, Superintendent

Title: S.B. No. 2466, 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 this bill, 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 three revisions to the bill, as written.

- On page 3 beginning with line 14, revise to say (b) a special education eligible student may receive special education and related services in a private preschool program that is located on a public school site or in the community, if the services are required by the student's individualized education program.
- On page 3 beginning on line 18, reword to say, (c) Special education personnel may provide services as provided in a student's individualized education plan at any preschool site.
- Regarding page 3 lines 20 – 22, “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 12th grade, 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 supports S.B. 2466 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.



CENTER ON DISABILITY STUDIES

L A T E

January 28, 2008

The Honorable Norman Sakamoto, Chair
Senate Committee on Education and
The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing
And All Committee Members

RE: SB 2466, Relating to Early Childhood Education

Aloha:

On behalf of the Center on Disability Studies, I am testifying in strong support of this legislation which would create more opportunities for your children with disabilities in Hawai'i to be educated in the least-restrictive setting. Hawai'i's preschool children with disabilities currently spend less time with their typically-developing peers than preschool children in any other state.

Last year the Legislature passed Act 289, which in large part was a reaction of families, who after receiving services in natural environments under Part C, did not want their children to be transitioned into more restrictive settings in the Department of Education. Full inclusion at the preschool level is a very important beginning for young children to enable them to continue their education, expecting to be part of general education and taught under the same curriculum as their peers. It prepares them to live as adults, fully included in their communities.

As a member of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Hawai'i Early Intervention Coordinating Council, and the Good Beginnings Alliance, I commend the authors of this legislation in trying to put into practice evidence-based research on what is best for young children.

The Center on Disability Studies would be pleased to have the opportunity to work with the community on the implementation of this legislation.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jean L. Johnson

Jean L. Johnson, DrPH
Associate Director