

**TESTIMONY FOR THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Tuesday, March 9, 2010, 2:30 p.m.
Conference Room 309, State Capitol**

Re: SB 2068, SD2 Relating to Early Education

Chair Takumi, Vice Chair Berg and members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony. My name is Robert Peters and I currently serve as Chair of the Early Learning Council for the State of Hawaii. The Council urges you not to pass this bill as it is written but to reconsider the value of JK for our children and amend the bill to provide for the Council, with the assistance of the Department of Education, to assess the Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten programs as established under section 302A-411,

The bill as currently written further erodes the foundation of early learning in our state. With the deep cuts in subsidies from DHS, families are finding it increasingly difficult to enroll their children in preschools and in some cases the quality of early learning settings has come into question because of the need to reduce staff. And, it is anticipated that some of our settings will be forced to close because of poor subscription.

Given this situation, it seems likely that over the next 2 to 3 years we will see a decline in the number of children able to attend quality preschools or Family Child Care settings. When added to the fact that the percentage of kindergarten children who attended preschool prior to kindergarten entry dropped between 2008 and 2009, the school readiness problem we currently face only promises to grow.

Changing the date children are eligible to enter kindergarten to August 1 from the current December 1st (child must be five by Dec. 1st) eliminates almost a half-year of students who could be benefiting from a school experience. It becomes a cost-saving measure rather than a "good" educational practice. The ELC recommends that the Junior Kindergarten be continued but the effectiveness of its implementation be assessed and recommendations made to improve where needed. Such action will not force late-born 5's to wait an additional year, particularly children from vulnerable areas whose families are least likely to be able to afford preschool in today's economy. And this year of schooling, if effectively planned and delivered, will address the two critical areas of literacy and social readiness that enhance chances of school success. Further, the ELC would work to address the Junior K's problems through recommendations in its annual Legislative report.



HAWAI'I EDUCATIONAL POLICY CENTER

Testimony Presented before the
House Committee on Education
e-mail: EDNTestimony@capitol.hawaii.gov
Tuesday, March 9, 2010, Conference Room 309
Representative Roy M. Takumi, Chair
Representative Lila B. Berg, Vice-Chair

SB2068, SD2: Relating to Early Education

Chair Takumi, Vice-Chair Berg, and Members of the Committee

My name is Donald Young and I am the Director of the Hawai'i Educational Policy Center

The Hawai'i Educational Policy Center (HEPC) supports the intent of SB2068, SD2; however we have some specific comments. This bill changes the date of enrollment for entry to kindergarten.

1. Page 2, lines 1-4: the sentence [determined by: (1) A qualified teacher with early childhood education background or experience] should be placed back into the bill.
2. Page 4, lines 12-13: instead of 'highly qualified' which may be misconstrued as the No Child Left Behind definition, we recommend using the word 'prepared.'
3. Page 6, line 1: change to: 'Develop standards that are developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant and applicable to the children of the state of Hawai'i to ensure that high quality early learning experiences are provided by programs and services of the early learning system.'

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Donald Young, Director
Hawai'i Educational Policy Center
young@hawaii.edu
808-956-7961

To: Representative Roy Takumi, Chair
Representative Lyla Berg, Vice Chair
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

From: Elisabeth Chun, Executive Director
Good Beginnings Alliance



Date: Tuesday, March 9, 2010
Conference Room 309

Subject: **SB2068 SD2:** Removes the provision requiring the department of education to establish and maintain a public school junior kindergarten program.

The Good Beginnings Alliance is a nonprofit policy and advocacy organization focused on Hawaii's youngest children and their families. We strive to ensure a nurturing, safe and healthy development for all children from pre-birth to age eight. We believe all children deserve safe and supportive environments that meet their needs as they grow and develop.

We oppose SB2068 SD2 and its intent to eliminate Junior Kindergarten (JrK). This bill, if passed, will be disastrous to our keiki and result in Hawaii reverting to a pre-1943 situation – to the days before we implemented full-day kindergarten in our public schools. We note that for School Year 2010-2011, only 7/12 (58%) of all children previously eligible for entrance to public kindergarten will be able to enroll. This equals approximately 6,000 children who will be left out. About half of these children will come from families whose income is low enough to qualify for preschool subsidies--below 185% (e.g., \$46,916 for a Hawai'i family of 4) of the Federal Poverty Level. These low-income families have limited options for their children. Eliminating JrK will leave a number of the affected parents without viable options for their children—and set them back when their children do enter kindergarten. **We instead recommend that the money used for the JrK students be instead allocated to fund quality early learning by private early childhood programs with priority given to underserved or at-risk children.** In reviewing this bill, we believe it must be viewed in context of other cuts and program changes that are negatively impacting our keiki and families.

In 2009, Hawaii's comprehensive early childhood system suffered great losses. Young children and their families were significantly affected by cuts to early childhood development programs, especially those previously funded by the Departments of Health and Human Services. Good Beginnings Alliance (GBA) has worked closely with private funders and organization to support and advocate for a number of early childhood programs and initiatives. However, as much as we work together maintaining the planning for the early learning system; as private funders come to forward to assist families, the quality improvement and professional development work; and as we launch advocacy and public awareness outreach – our young children and their families are suffering and at risk of further losses.

We note that effective February 1, 2010, the Department of Human Services implemented their decreased subsidy rates for child care and preschool for low income children to preclude running out of money by February 28, 2010. While we applaud DHS's efforts at minimizing the impact

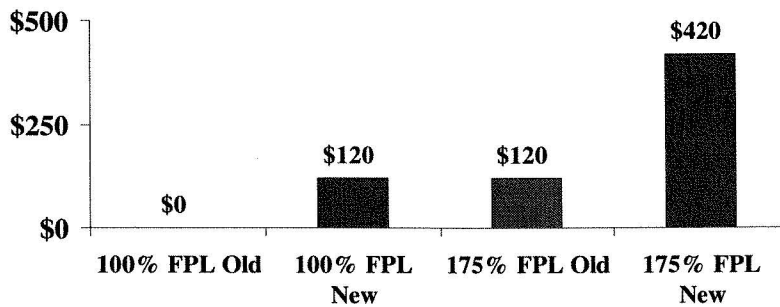
on affected families through the State Homeless Grant Program, this program got a “late start” with contracts not signed until well after the February 1 start date. The following slides show the impact to young children and their families.

The first slide shows a hypothetical family of four with one child attending preschool at a tuition cost of \$600 per month. A family whose income is 100% of the Federal Poverty Level saw an increase from \$0 to \$120 per month parent co-pay. For a family whose income is 175% of the Federal Poverty Level, their parent co-pay increased dramatically from \$120 to \$420 per month.



Sample Parent Co-Pay Increase

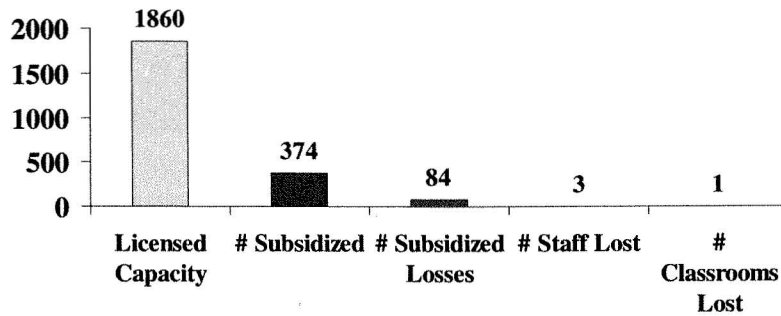
Family of 4 w/ \$600/month PS Tuition



The next two slides show the impact on the preschools on O`ahu and Kaua`i as of March 3, 2010. We note that the O`ahu numbers are based on the responses received from a number of the preschool directors and is not a 100% response rate. Our Kaua`i data was provided to us by Alu Like, the DHS-contracted emergency subsidy agent on that island. We`re already seeing some losses in subsidized children from the preschools, and there are reports of parents not even completing the State Homeless Grant application.

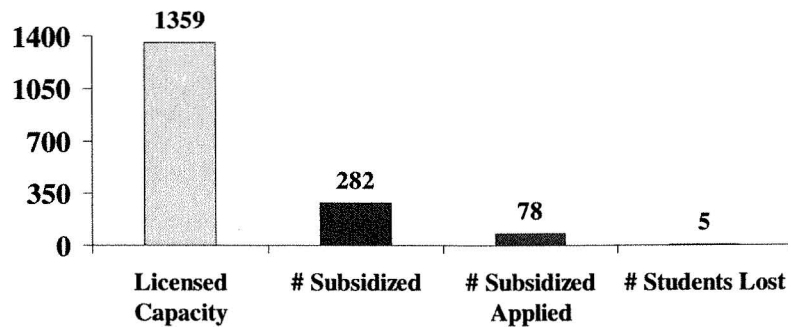
O`ahu PS Impact

As of March 3, 2010
(29 Preschools' Responses)



Kaua`i PS Impact

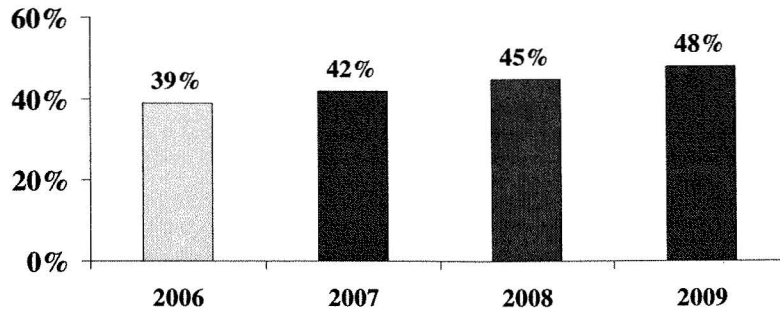
As of December 24, 2009
(Data Per Alu Like)



As mentioned earlier, we must take a holistic view of early childhood in context of the comprehensive “universe” of young children in Hawai`i. For example, the number of public school kindergarten children who qualify for free/reduced lunch or English as a Second Language has increased from 2008 to 2009. However, the percentage of kindergarten children who attended preschool prior to kindergarten entry dropped in the same time period. With the new parent co-pay rates that went into effect on February 1, 2010, we predict an even bigger drop in preschool attendance in the next 2-3 years. Moreover, working parents may have to quit their jobs to care for their children. Thus, early learning opportunities will be further exacerbated if JrK is eliminated.

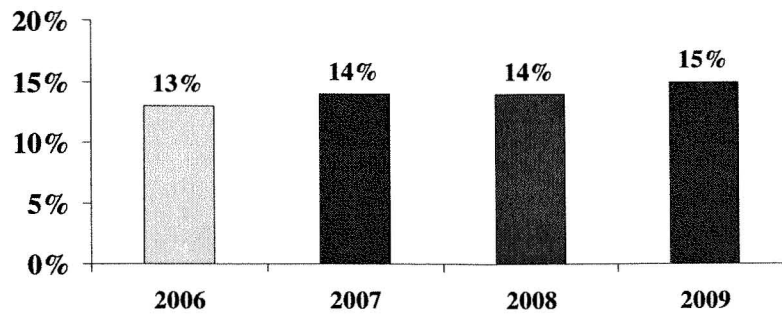
Kindergarteners – Free/Reduced Lunch

% Students Free/Reduced Lunch



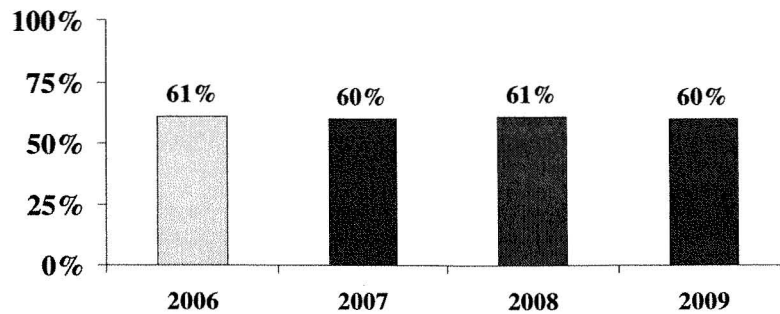
HSSRA Schools' Early Education Profile

% Students Non-Native English Speakers



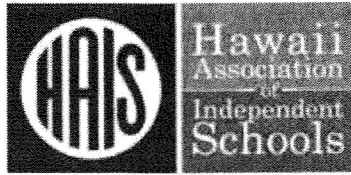
Children Ready for School

% Entering K w/ Preschool Experience



Again, we recommend you not pass this bill and continue to allow the Early Learning Council to review the JrK program in the context of the entire early learning system that they are developing for children birth to the time they enter kindergarten.

Mahalo for your support. For more information contact: Good Beginnings Alliance; Phone: 531-5502; lchun@goodbeginnings.org.



Tuesday, March 9, 2010

2:30 p.m.

Conference Room 309

TESTIMONY TO
THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: SB2068, SD2 – Relating to Early Education

Chair Takumi, Vice Chair Berg and Members of the Committee:

My name is Robert Witt and I am executive director of the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools (HAIS), which represents 99 private and independent schools in Hawaii and educates over 33,000 students statewide.

The Association **opposes Senate Bill 2068, SD2– Relating to Early Education**, which would remove the provisions requiring the Department of Education to establish and maintain a public school junior kindergarten program and change the date children are eligible to enter kindergarten.

HAIS urges the Committee to reconsider the value of Junior Kindergarten and amend this bill to provide that the Early Learning Council, with the assistance of the Department of Education, assess the Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten programs as established under section 302A-411, ensuring that the needs of junior kindergartners are addressed. The Early Learning Council could further address Junior Kindergarten concerns through recommendations in its annual Legislative report.

Changing the date children are eligible to enter kindergarten to August 1 will eliminate almost a half-year of students who could benefit from a school experience, and will most affect those children from vulnerable areas whose families are least likely to be able to afford preschool in today's economy. If effectively planned and delivered, this junior kindergarten year of schooling will address the two critical areas of literacy and social readiness that enhance children's chances of school success.

As written, this bill further erodes the foundation of early learning in Hawaii, and the school-readiness problem we currently face only promises to grow.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in opposition to this measure.



Hawai'i
Association for the
Education of
Young
Children

1806 So. King St. #30 Honolulu, HI 96826 (808)942-4708 FAX (808)955-2739 Email:
haeyc@hawaiihaeyc.org www.hawaiihaeyc.org

Before the House Committee on Education & House Committee on Higher Education

DATE: Tuesday, March 9, 2010
TIME: 2:30 P.M.
PLACE: Conference Room 309

Re: SB 2068 SD2 Relating to Early Education

The Hawai'i Association for the Education of Young Children (HAEYC) understands the intent of SB 2068 SD2, to end the Jr. Kindergarten in the public school system. While it was intended to provide developmentally appropriate classrooms for younger children, in most cases it has not met the original intent.

High quality early childhood classrooms have a positive impact on young children and families. HAEYC supports and looks forward to our state investing in more high quality programs for children. Support for Head Start expansion would help to alleviate the effect of cutting children who are born Aug. 2 – Dec. 31 from the kindergarten rolls. However, Head Start does need time to revamp its admissions schedules to accommodate those children and that time should be included in the bill.

HAEYC also hopes that as the economy picks up, Hawai'i will choose to invest in its young children and families and implement the plan put forward by the 2006 Early Learning Task Force.

**DEAN R. LISKUM, Ph.D.
MARRIAGE, FAMILY & CHILD THERAPIST
2682 Kiu Anu Place
Kalaheo, Hawaii 96741**

**Representative Roy Takumi
Chair, House Education Committee
Hawaii State Legislature
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813**

**Hearing on March 9, 2010
2:30 P.M.
Conference room 309**

In support of SB 2068

Dear Representative Takumi,

I am in support of SB 2068 because it will enable our kindergarten children to be in sync with the standard kindergarten curriculum. Kindergarten readiness is a match between the average age for a kindergarten child and the kindergarten curriculum which was created to address the average 5 year old. The average entrance age of a kindergarten class on the mainland is 5 years and 6 months. In Hawaii it is 5 years 1 month (age range from 4 years 8 months to 5 years 7 months) a full 5 months younger. At the age of 5 years, five months is a huge difference in physical maturity, social, emotional and intellectual abilities.

The implementation of SB 2068 will also allow for another significant matching of age to curriculum. The average 8 year old, the usual age of a third grader, is able to make the transition from concrete to abstract thinking enabling them to earn abstract concepts. Nationally normed science testing of third graders in Hawaii is the lowest of all the scores for third graders in Hawaii. Hawaii is the only state in which females outscore males in nationally normed math tests. Our third graders are simply not ready for the concepts presented by the third grade curriculum.

The proof of this mismatch was clearly demonstrated in two studies using data from the Hawaii Department of Education. The first study, which was replicated 3 times and showed the same trends, showed that those students born during the latter half of the year (the younger group) are statistically significantly and educationally lower than those born earlier in the year. This study surveyed over 10,000 students in each of the 4 grades tested on nationally normed tests of reading and math.

The second study, a survey of specific learning disability (SLD) students revealed 24% more SLD students were born during the latter half of the year (the younger group). Together these two studies prove that many of those students who are now labeled junior kindergarteners are simply over placed. Kindergarten readiness can be addressed by moving the cutoff date to August 1st for all kindergarten students.

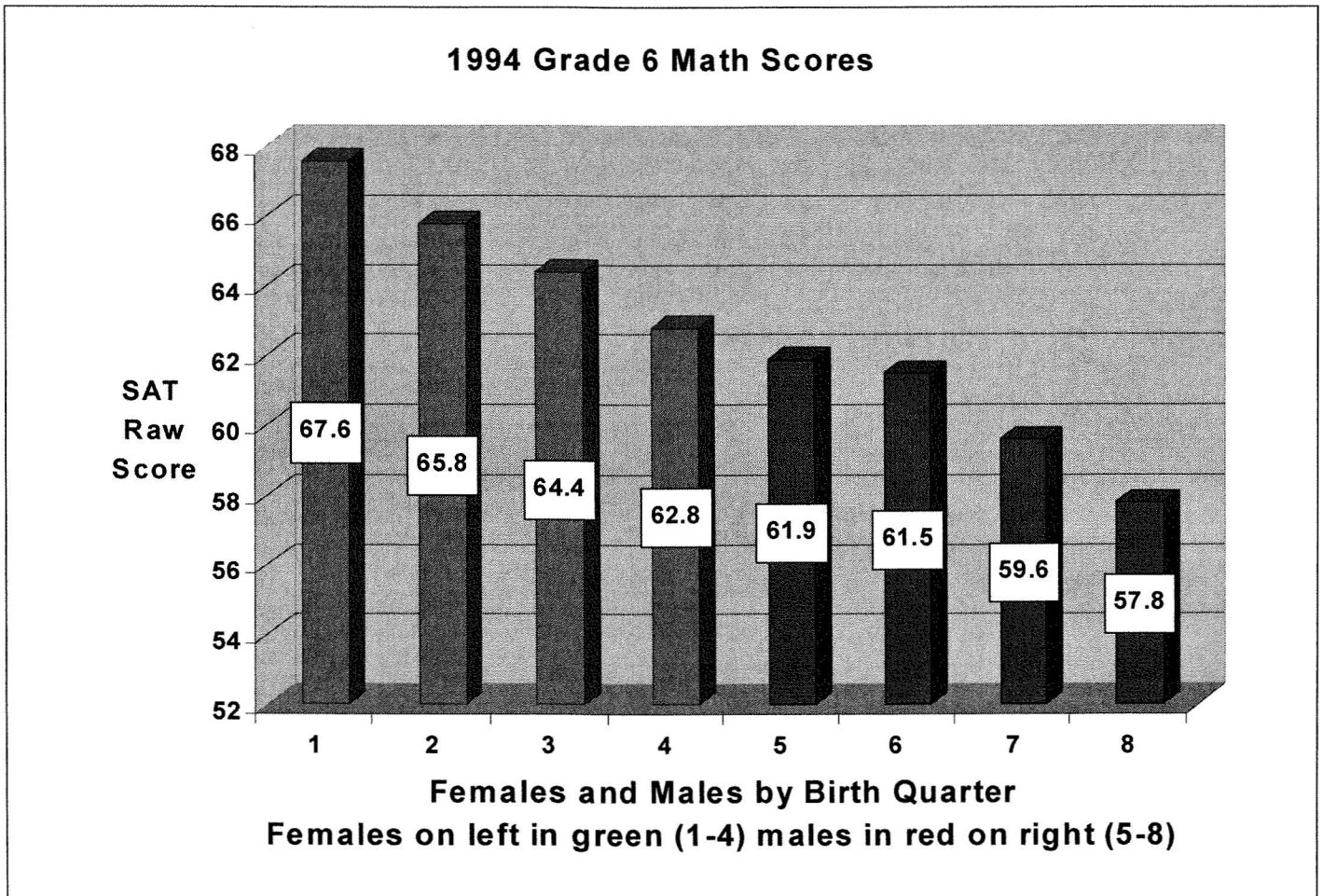
The National Education Association (NEA) in a resolution created in 2002 recognized the need for standardization of readiness for kindergarten children. Their resolution said: "The Association supports regulations requiring children starting kindergarten to have reached age five at the beginning of a kindergarten program."

At this time I would like to offer one amendment to SB 2068. In light of the dire circumstances the state is in financially and the huge lag in test scores on nationally normed tests I strongly urge you to implement SB 2068 as soon as the 2010-2011 school year.

Thank you for allowing me to testify in support of SB 2068.

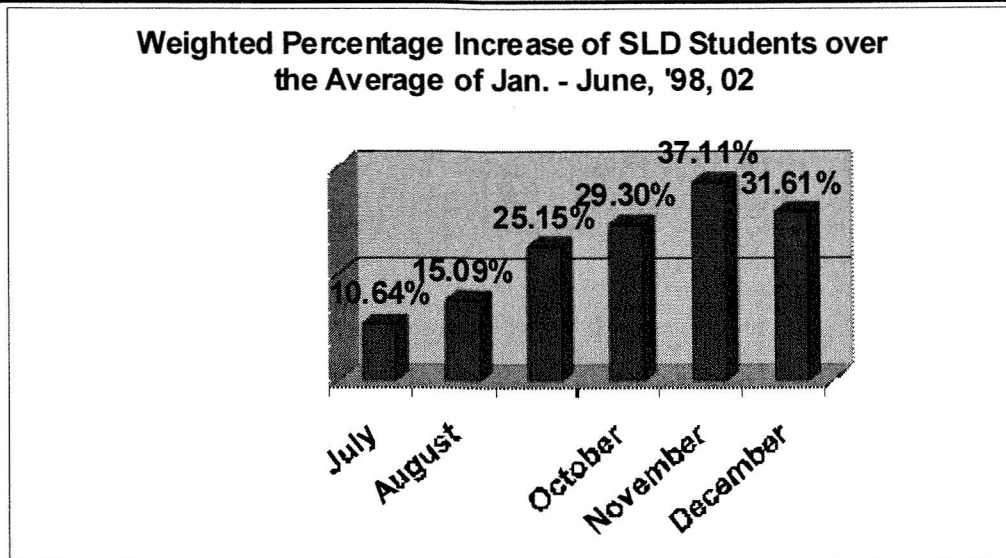
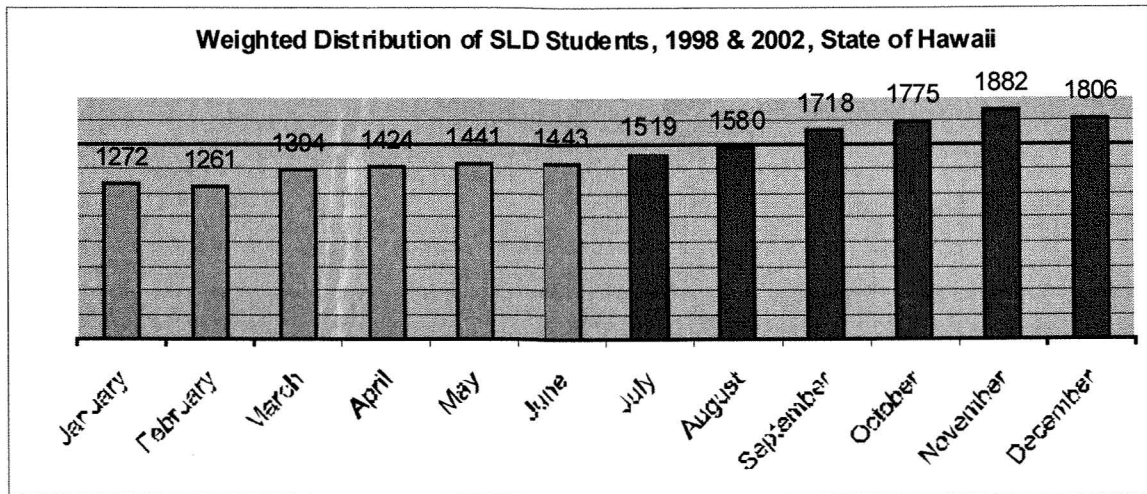
Charts below are from the two above mentioned studies.

1) Analysis of the Hawaii Statewide SAT raw scores of regular education students for Grades 3, 6, 8 and 10 for 1994 and 1995 was done by me with the technical support of the DOE Test Development Section. It showed that in both years, for each for those grade levels, students born in the months of July-December (Q3-Q4; these are the younger students) scored statistically significantly lower than those born in January-June (Q1-Q2; older students). In addition, in both reading and math, in grades 6, 8 and 10, males scored statistically significantly lower than females. Hawaii is the only state where females outscored males in math. Results from 1999 and 2000 statewide testing showed the same trends. The chart below is typical of other grades.



2) A survey of specific learning disability (SLD) students done in 1998 and 2001 showed there were 24.8% (weighted against 14 years of live births in the State of Hawaii) more SLD students born July-December (younger students) than those born January-June (older students).

There were 1,200 more students identified as SLD in 2001 who were born during the latter half of the year. At about \$10,000/student/year that's about \$12 million dollars a year that can be better spent. A reduction of that percentage of SLD students will still be within the guidelines set by the



federal government.

The chart above is the weighted distribution of SLD students by birth month. The 10.64% increase of SLD students born in July, and as much as a 37% increase born in November over the average of those born January – June are statistically and very educationally significant (according to a DOE statistician). Something goes wrong with the system in July. SLD certification is supposed to be dependent on specific criteria and not dependant on age but the chart clearly shows that age is a factor. Many of these SLD students are misidentified. They are simply too young for their grade level.3) Our school system is part of a national education system in which a standard minimum level

of aptitude is required for each grade level. Attainment of such aptitude is ascertained by national standardized aptitude tests. These tests largely determine the student's college and career opportunities. Now these tests will also judge each school's performance with consequent sanctions and high financial costs for failure. Nationally, most states' entrance cutoff date for kindergarten is September 1st. About half of our students in Hawaii start kindergarten at least 4 months younger than those in the mainland. This difference in maturity handicaps them from the very start, rendering them not quite able to meet the tasks required of them; and they never catch up in the later years as shown from the SAT results through Gr. 10.

Respectfully submitted: Dean R. Liskum, Ph.D.

berg1-Matthew

From: Vern_Dahl/KAMALII/HIDOE@notes.k12.hi.us
Sent: Thursday, March 04, 2010 2:26 PM
To: EDNtestimony
Subject: SB2068

When I started working as a school counselor in Maui, the two things I felt needed to be changed in the state educational system were the lack of a yearly incremental pay increase, and the kindergarten cutoff date. Finally the cutoff date was changed to August 1, but the last 5 month born 4 year old children were allowed to come to school as "Jr. K" students. Unfortunately, no firm guidelines were established as to assessment, placement, curriculum, or advancement the following year in school. When schools are left on their own to change, usually it means no change, which is exactly what happened.

We started assessing all K students in 1998, and placed students in three levels, according to degree of readiness for the K curriculum. The difference in readiness between highly ready and not ready children is remarkable. Some students know all their numbers, letters, and sounds, or even can read, while at the other end, many do not know any letter names or numbers. In general, the early born are the most ready, and the late born are the least ready. Placing the least ready 4 year old students in the same classroom with the more highly ready older students is not an attractive option, thereby the creation of our 3 tier system. The Jr. K students were likely to spend an extra year in either K or 1st grade, which meant between 20 or 30 retained students per year moving through the system. That program has reduced our SPED students from 16% to about 7% per year ever since the impact of the program was fully realized. Other beneficial factors were better self esteem and fewer discipline problems over the years.

Our program was necessary in light of the 5 months of 4 year old students, but firming up the Aug. 1 cutoff date would give similar results to schools unwilling or unable to implement such a program as ours. At present, 37 states have a firm cutoff date of Oct. 16 or earlier, with most in September. 5 states leave it up to individual school districts. Many parents of 4 year old students moving here between August and December find out their children are eligible for kindergarten here and put them in school, even though they may have missed months of school in addition to being young and not ready.

I urge the House to move this bill through for the many reasons I cite above.

Thank you,

Vern Dahl
School Counselor
Kamalii Elementary School
808-298-9641

March 8, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

Hearing on March 9, 2010

2:30 P.M.

Conference room 309

In support of SB 2068

I am in support of SB 2068 because it will place our kindergarten children in line with the standard kindergarten curriculum and on par with many of their peers at a national level. Currently, children in Hawaii are enrolled in kindergarten as long as they turn 5 years old within the calendar year. This allows for the age range in a typical classroom to be 4 years 5 months to 5 years 7 months. One might argue that the average age of the children is still 5 years old but for children at this young age, this age range represents a huge difference in physical maturity, social, emotional and intellectual abilities. In addition the National Education Association (NEA) in a resolution created in 2002 recognized the need for standardization of readiness for kindergarten children. Their resolution said: "The Association supports regulations requiring children starting kindergarten to have reached age five at the beginning of a kindergarten program. "

As students progress through the school system, the younger child does not always "catch up" to grade level standards. There is data to suggest that those students born during the latter half of the year are statistically significantly and educationally different from those born earlier in the year. Our school system is part of a national education system in which a standard minimum level of aptitude is required for each grade level. Attainment of such aptitude is ascertained by national standardized aptitude tests. These tests largely determine the student's college and career opportunities. Nationally, most states' entrance cutoff date for kindergarten is September 1st. About half of our students in Hawaii start kindergarten at least 4 months younger than those in the mainland. This difference in maturity handicaps them from the very start, rendering them not quite able to meet the tasks required of them; and they never catch up in the later years

Thank you for allowing me to testify in support of SB 2068.

Respectfully,

Nancy N. Matsukawa

Principal

Kealakehe Elementary School

berg1-Matthew

From: tammy holt [tammy8707@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, March 08, 2010 8:45 PM
To: EDNtestimony
Subject: Testimony

To: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair

Representative John Mizuno, Chair

SENATE & HOUSE COMMITTEES ON HUMAN SERVICES

From

: Mrs. Tammy Holt

L&B F.C.H.

Phone

: 554-2462

E-Mail

: tammy8707@gmail.com

Date

: Monday, March 8, 2010

Subject

: SB2068 Proposal to Eliminate Junior Kindergarten

Aloha Chair Chun Oakland, Chair Mizuno, and members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Tammy Holt, and I am a Hawaii State Licensed Family Child Care provider.

I am opposed to SB2068 which proposes to eliminate Junior Kindergarten

Junior Kindergarten is a necessary entry point for children who do not meet the current Kindergarten entry age.

Without a public Junior Kindergarten program many of Hawaii's at-risk and MIDDLE CLASS families will be forced to make some very hard choices.

For example, families whose children attend my daycare will pay between \$4,800-\$7,200 in tuition annually. Some families qualify for subsidies, most do not. Naturally, my message is clear - having a public Junior

Kindergarten program would save families from having to pay an extra year of tuition. Further, and most importantly, children would benefit by being able to attend a formal Kindergarten preparation program.

There has been significant research done that favors mixed age learning. By combining Pre-K aged children with Kindergarten aged children, a multitude of scientifically researched learning dynamics occur. Apparently, the current classroom situations utilized by the HIDOE is not producing favorable results. If this is the case, the program should be reevaluated, not terminated.

I understand the need to find revenue. I also understand the need to address programs that may not be “working”, but as a child care provider, and a mother, I understand the needs of children, and the challenges faced by their families. Please reevaluate your existing Pre- Kindergarten program, do not cut it.

Thank You for allowing me to testify.

Sincerely,

Tammy Holt

berg1-Matthew

From: Jennifer Wilbur on behalf of Rep. Lyla B. Berg
Sent: Tuesday, March 09, 2010 10:38 AM
To: berg1-Matthew
Subject: FW: YES to SB2068

From: Kris_Kosa-Correia/WAIKOLOA/HIDOE@notes.k12.hi.us [mailto:Kris_Kosa-Correia/WAIKOLOA/HIDOE@notes.k12.hi.us]
Sent: Monday, March 08, 2010 3:49 PM
To: reptakumi@hawaii.gov; Rep. Lyla B. Berg
Subject: YES to SB2068

I am a Principal on the big island of Hawaii, and I am asking for your support in voting FOR SB2068. This is the one way we can finally have an even playing field when it comes to comparing scores with our mainland counterparts. YES, parents will have to pay for another year of pre-school and they won't like that, but we need to take a stand to put us on par with the mainland when federal dollars will be tied to improvement in scores. WE WILL see our scores improve if we get those young 4 year olds out of our data. Give them another year to grow and mature at home, then bring them back when they are 5. Please be strong enough to take a stand and support this positive change for education in the state of Hawaii. Mahalo, Kris Kosa-Correia

Kris Kosa-Correia

Principal
Waikoloa Elementary and Middle School
883-6808 ext.223