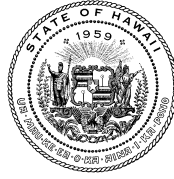


SB2068



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
HONOLULU

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR

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

Before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION & HOUSING

Wednesday, February 3, 2010, 1:15 PM
State Capitol, Room 225

S.B. 2068 RELATING TO EARLY EDUCATION

Chair Sakamoto, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Committee:

The Administration **opposes** this bill which would require the Department of Education to establish a pilot project to create mandatory junior kindergarten and kindergarten programs in one school complex on every island.

This bill would increase the duties of the Department of Education (DOE) at a point in time in which its staff and fiscal resources should be dedicated to its primary mission of educating students in kindergarten through the twelfth grades. While the early education programs proposed in this bill would increase learning opportunities for children, it would ultimately be ineffectual if the DOE's core education programs that children would later matriculate into are not first improved.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns regarding this measure.

Date: 02/03/2010

Committee: Senate Education and Housing

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Kathryn S. Matayoshi, Interim Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB 2068 Relating to Early Education

Purpose of Bill: Establishes a pilot program making junior kindergarten and kindergarten attendance mandatory in one public school complex on each island.
Requires DOE to report to legislature. Sunsets 5/31/2013.

Department's Position: While the Department of Education (Department) supports junior kindergarten and kindergarten programs, the Department does not support S.B. 2068 as written due to the fiscal impact it will present to the current Board of Education's budget priorities.

The Department recognizes that developmentally appropriate practices, balanced with quality early learning experiences, prepare students with readiness skills necessary for success. The Department also recognizes that creating the right opportunities for early childhood development is more effective and minimizes social costs at a later age, especially for vulnerable children.

Mandating junior kindergarten and kindergarten attendance as a prerequisite for any child who will be at least four years of age after August 1 and before January 1 will impact the priorities set forth in the Executive Biennium Budget for Fiscal year 2010-2011. For example, the employment of teacher aides or educational assistants and the development of curriculum and resources in the junior kindergarten classrooms are critical. This will require additional fiscal expenditures to successfully implement the provisions in this bill.

Currently, the Early Learning Council has provided the Department with a venue to work closely with the early childhood community to address school readiness for young children aged birth to five. The Department acknowledges that our collaborative work will help to define and enhance the two-tiered kindergarten program and appreciates the continued opportunity to work with the Early Learning Council on enhancing Hawaii's comprehensive early learning plan.

Hearing date:
Wednesday,
February 3,
2010, 1:15 p.m.
Senate Education
& Housing
Committee
Room 225

To: Senator Norman Sakamoto, Chair
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION & HOUSING

From: Elisabeth Chun, Executive Director
Good Beginnings Alliance

Date: Wednesday, February 3, 2010
Conference Room 225

Subject: **SB2068:** Establishes a pilot program making junior kindergarten and kindergarten attendance mandatory in one public school complex on each island. Requires DOE to report to legislature. Sunsets 5/31/2013.

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 support the intent of this bill to facilitate quality early learning and improve kindergarten school readiness. However, we wish to make the following comments:

1. The determination of mandatory kindergarten for Hawaii should be considered on its merit for the entire state. Currently almost 98% of five year old children attend kindergarten prior to the entry into first grade. This figure needs to be tracked. If kindergarten attendance prior to first grade entry decreases substantially, then such a measure should be considered.
2. As to Junior Kindergarten, Act 194 of 2009 Legislature mandated that the Early Learning Council develop a plan to ensure the needs of junior kindergarteners are addressed. As the Early Learning Council is developing its proposal for a comprehensive early learning program, to include a pilot program, we believe the junior kindergarten program should best be considered by the Early Learning Council in the spectrum of early learning for Hawaii's children birth to 5-years-old.
3. It should be noted that until specific funding is dedicated to the implementation of a separate Junior Kindergarten program such a program should not be implemented. The components of a separate program would include teachers with early childhood education degree; and, a developmentally appropriate curriculum specifically designed for four year old children. Partnerships with private community-based early childhood programs may be for future consideration.

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

Elisabeth Chun