

**Date:** 02/22/2010

**Committee:** Senate Ways and Means

**Department:** Education

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

**Title of Bill:** SB 2068, Proposed SD2 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:** The Department of Education (Department) supports SB 2068, SD 2 which provides that "a child who will be at least five years of age on or before August 1 of the school year may attend a public school kindergarten." By revising the date for determining the eligibility of a child to attend kindergarten from December 31 to August 1, this bill will bring Hawaii in line with other public school systems on the mainland and some private schools in Hawaii.

The Department expresses its support and continuing belief that quality early education is important. The Department also commits to building the foundation for developing the supports for early education and a quality early learning system as set out in the responsibilities of the Early Learning Council when the state economy improves.

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](mailto:lchun@goodbeginnings.org).

*Elisabeth Chun*