

**SB 926**



## KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS

The Twenty-Sixth Legislature, State of Hawaii  
Hawaii State Senate

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Testimony by

Dee Jay Mailer, CEO of Kamehameha Schools & Vice Chair of the Early Learning Council

February 25, 2011

SB 926 – Relating to Children

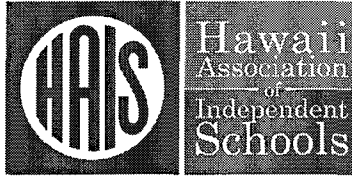
Chair Ige and Committee Members:

I am a member of the Early Learning Council (“ELC”) and I offer this testimony in support of SB 926.

Established under Act 14, First Special Session 2008, the Early Learning Council is entrusted with the development and administration of the state’s early learning system. The ELC seeks to establish a cohesive, comprehensive, and sustainable early learning system that ensures a spectrum of quality early learning opportunities for young children from their prenatal period until the time they enter kindergarten. As such, the ELC focuses upon four essential areas: Early Education and Care; Health; Parent Education and Family Support; and Workforce and Professional Development.

SB 926, which funds programs designed to address school readiness and early childhood development, relates directly to the ELC’s focus areas of Early Education and Care; Health; and Parent Education and Family Support, and represents a significant step in establishing a comprehensive array of services that will foster a bright future for Hawaii’s children. The Early Learning Council strongly supports this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



February 25, 2011  
9:00 a.m.  
Conference Room 211

TESTIMONY TO  
THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

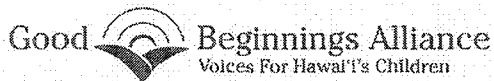
RE: SB 926 – Relating to Children

Dear Chair Ige, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Robert Witt, executive director of the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools, which represents approximately 100 member schools and educates over 30,000 elementary and secondary school students statewide.

We support Senate Bill 926, which appropriates funds for programs in the State that address early childhood development and school readiness. SB 926 is in line with the mission of the Early Learning Council to ensure quality learning opportunities for our young children from birth through kindergarten. This bill will aid in establishing programs that will positively impact the children of Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



Hearing date:  
**Friday, Feb 25,  
2011; 9:00 a.m.**  
Senate Committee  
on Ways and  
Means  
Room 211

To: Senator David Ige, Chair  
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

From: Elisabeth Chun, Executive Director  
Good Beginnings Alliance

Date: Friday, February 25, 2011, 9:00 a.m.  
Conference Room 211

Subject: **SB 926: Appropriates funds for various early childhood and school readiness programs.**

The Good Beginnings Alliance is a 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. Good Beginnings is also a member of One Voice for Hawaii's Children ([www.onevoiceforchildren.net](http://www.onevoiceforchildren.net)), an alliance of organizations and individuals committed to the development of an effective and equitably funded early childhood system that gives all young children the opportunity to arrive at kindergarten safe, healthy and ready to succeed. The following information is provided to help you in your decision-making process.

Addressing the needs of our at-risk young children and families in the early years is foundational to our early learning system. The programs named in this bill are part of the safety net for our keiki and foundational to school readiness when they start kindergarten.

We are seeing the results of the significant cuts to our state's comprehensive early childhood system in the Departments of Education, Health, and Human Services over the last two years--including the Healthy Start Program, child care subsidies, and Preschool Open Doors (POD).

The Healthy Start Program was pioneered in Hawaii and championed by leaders such as Governor Abercrombie when he served in the Legislature. Since then, this vital program has been improved upon considerably and addresses the needs of our most at-risk babies and families at the very beginning years. This is foundational to our early learning system as it addresses child abuse prevention, focusing on parental engagement and training. However, it was cut by \$9 million and sorely needs more funding to provide services statewide. .

The cuts in child care subsidies and Preschool Open Doors (POD) have resulted in large decreases in preschool enrollments. The POD program was established in 1993 to contribute to the school readiness of children four years old, and three years old with special needs. Unfortunately, budget cuts to POD have resulted in a drop from 1300+ in School Year 2008-2009 to 465 at the present time.

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It is little wonder that we have also seen a decrease in the number of public school kindergarten students who previously attended preschool: 61 percent in School Year 2008-2009, 60 percent in School Year 2009-2010, and 59 percent in SY 2010-2011. We believe this number will drop even more when we obtain the results of the Hawaii State School Readiness Assessment for the next public school kindergarten cohort in School Year 2011-2012.

We note that numerous longitudinal studies have shown the huge benefits derived from children participating in quality early learning programs. Conversely, when we fail to invest in quality early learning, our keiki suffer and are not ready to succeed when they start school. According to the Hawaii State School Readiness Assessment for this school year, less than 1 out of 4 public school kindergarten classes had most of their students consistently exhibiting the necessary pre-literacy and pre-math skills in the first month of school. When our children start school at a disadvantage, it becomes much harder for them to succeed. Our keiki truly need our help so they can start school safe, healthy, and ready to succeed.

Mahalo for your consideration. For more information contact: Good Beginnings Alliance;  
phone: 531-5502; [lchun@goodbeginnings.org](mailto:lchun@goodbeginnings.org)

The Twenty-Sixth Legislature, State of Hawaii  
Hawaii State Senate  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
Testimony by  
Early Learning Council  
February 25, 2011  
S.B. 926 – Relating to Children

Chair Ige and Committee Members:

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S.B. 926, which funds programs designed to address school readiness and early childhood development, relates directly to the ELC’s focus areas of Early Education and Care; Health; and Parent Education and Family Support, and represents a significant step in establishing a comprehensive array of services that will foster a bright future for Hawai’i’s children. The Early Learning Council strongly supports this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Robert Peters  
Chair, Early Learning Council