



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

February 27, 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Marcus R. Oshiro, Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 1683 – RELATING TO JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN**

Hearing: Monday, February 27, 2012; 3:00 p.m.
Conference Room 308, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of H.B. 1683 is to eliminate junior kindergarten beginning with the 2014-2015 school year.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) has concerns on this bill which would eliminate the pre-kindergarten program but overlooks the need for early learning programs, services, and funding for these displaced late born children.

Eligible families may be able to utilize the child care subsidies issued by the DHS to assist with the cost of tuition for pre-school programs, however, DHS will be without resources to meet the anticipated need.

In analyzing the potential cost to the DHS we estimate that there would be about 3,068 children who would be income eligible for child care subsidies (calculation based on 5,900 late-born five-year olds of which approximately 52% on free/reduced lunch program). If there is funding for a portion of the school day appropriated to this group,

then the families could apply for wrap-around funding. Oahu Head Start charges \$450 for the wrap-around time frame of 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. and noon to 5:00 p.m. Using this figure, the potential cost to DHS may be \$1.3 million per month. If there is no funding appropriated for this group, the families could apply for child care subsidies for their preschool tuition, with the maximum child care subsidy rate for an accredited preschool being \$710, and the potential cost to DHS may be \$2.1 million per month.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this bill.



HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

RE: HB 1683 -- RELATING TO JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN.

MONDAY; FEBRUARY 27, 2012

WIL OKABE, PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Oshiro and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association supports the intent of HB 1683, which eliminates junior kindergarten beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, provided that well-funded alternatives are available for children who would otherwise be enrolled in the junior kindergarten program.

Research on the benefits of quality pre-kindergarten programs indicates that for every dollar invested in such opportunities, society saves four to eight dollars on remedial classes, special education, welfare programs, and criminal justice costs. Moreover, revising the eligibility date of kindergarten enrollment from December 31 to July 31 will bring Hawaii into alignment with national standards. That said, we understand that delaying public school enrollment for late-born five-year-olds could result in an additional financial burden to the Department of Human Services of \$1.3 million to \$2.1 million monthly, depending upon available funding for child care subsidies, and we urge you to consider measures to ease this encumbrance.

From our perspective, a significant percentage of the funds that are currently allocated for junior kindergarten should be redirected toward pre-school and early childhood education programs beginning in 2014, so that all children have the opportunity to become "classroom ready" when they enter formal education. This is especially true in light of the likely institution of merit pay for our state's public school teachers, who will be assessed on the performance of their students. Supporting our keiki through the

provision of early childhood resources is, in effect, a way of supporting our teachers, whose students will be better prepared for classroom instruction if they have received adequate early childhood educational support.

Additionally, we believe that early childhood education programs should, whenever possible, be provided through the public school system. We will continue to support any federal and state programs to fund, develop, and organize the implementation of such programs, as we believe that they should be staffed by personnel trained and licensed in early childhood education and subject to standards set by the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the intent of this bill.

Hawaii State Legislature
House Committee on Finance
Testimony by
Early Learning Council
February 27, 2012
3:00 p.m.
Capitol Room 308
HB 1683 – Relating to Junior Kindergarten

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee and Committee Members:

The Early Learning Council (“ELC”) offers this testimony in support of HB 1683, relating to junior kindergarten

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.

Since its inception, the ELC has completed and received approval for a statewide early childhood system framework, has partnered and provided advice on the development of a State Quality Improvement and Rating System, has supported the drafting of professional competence requirements for early learning practitioners, and most recently completed a Fiscal Mapping study (funded by the Omidyar Foundation) to measure the resources currently available in the State for Early Childhood services (e.g. education, health, nutritional and social services, special education services and family and professional training and development. Finally, the ELC has supported the “Be My Voice” campaign, which is targeted to impact the next biennium.

- **Junior Kindergarten:** We are writing to **support the delay** in eliminating junior kindergarten and we respectfully request an amendment. In addition to the proposed delay, the ELC believes this legislation should authorize the development of an early learning program, funded through a public/private partnership, for all four-year-old children falling within the “gap” period of August 1 – December 31. We believe that this is critically important as a significant number of Hawaii keiki, families and our community may be negatively affected if there were no delay and the junior kindergarten program were to close.

We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively and proactively with the legislature and the broader community. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Robert Peters
Chair, Early Learning Council