

SB 1384

Date: 02/11/2011

Committee: Senate Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Kathryn Matayoshi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB 1384 Relating to Education

Purpose of Bill: Makes attendance in kindergarten mandatory and lowers the compulsory education age from six to five years old. Requires children who are home-schooled or enrolled in alternative school programs for kindergarten to pass a standardized test approved by the Board of Education prior to entering first grade in a public school.

Department's Position: The Department of Education (Department) does not support SB 1384. According to the current statute, all children who turn five-years-old during the calendar year have access to a public kindergarten program. Amending this bill does not change the continued quality early learning opportunities available to all children who turn five-years-old during the calendar year. The Department continues to maintain a two-tier kindergarten program to support the range of developmental abilities of all children and to ready them for school success.

The Department also does not support standardized testing of children who are home-schooled or enrolled in alternative school programs for kindergarten prior to entering first grade in a public school. The National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) general rule for testing young children is as follows: the purpose of testing must be to improve services for children and ensure that children benefit from their educational experiences. Decisions that have a major impact on children, such as enrollment, retention, or assignment to remedial or special

classes, should be based on multiple sources of information and should never be based on a single test score. Standardized testing of children who did not attend kindergarten in a public school will pose fiscal implications for schools and will impact the fiscal priorities set forth in the Department's budget.



SB 1384
RELATING TO EDUCATION
Senate Committee on Education

February 11, 2011

1:15 p.m.

Room 225

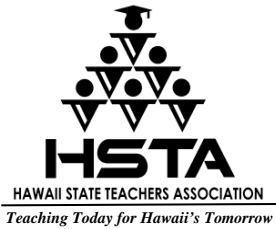
The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS WITH AMENDMENTS** SB 1384. This bill requires children who are not attending a private school or kindergarten and who are at least 5 years of age on August 1 of the school year to attend a public school kindergarten.

Early education is a powerful tool. Citizens who attend kindergarten are more likely to go to college, not be involved in crime, live healthier lives, and be of overall benefit to the community at large. Early education studies indicate that every dollar spent on early education saves seven dollars in future costs.

Our beneficiaries are among those that would benefit most from SB1384. U.S. Census statistics show that large percentages of Native Hawaiian children ages 0-5 live in remote, rural, and impoverished communities. According to the Hawai'i Department of Education's Readiness Study of 2010, fewer children in these areas enter elementary school with the requisite skills to succeed. In Wai'anae, for example, only 41 percent of the children went to preschool (a readiness indicator) compared to 68 percent in East Honolulu. Mandatory kindergarten attendance will ensure that children living in these areas will have access to vital educational opportunities and ready them for success.

OHA recommends amending the bill by deleting §302A-411(d) on page 4, lines 4-14. This section requires standardized testing for kindergarten students who attend home or alternative schools. This will disproportionately affect our beneficiaries and this is not required of students attending other non-Department of Education schools.

OHA urges the committee to PASS SB 1384 taking our recommendations into consideration. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.



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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: SB 1384 – RELATING TO EDUCATION.

February 11, 2011

WIL OKABE, PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Tokuda and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association (HSTA) supports the intent of SB 1384, which makes attendance in kindergarten mandatory. Kindergarteners are taught to develop basic skills and knowledge through creative play and appropriate social interaction.

HSTA believes in mandatory kindergarten for students reaching five years of age. Research shows the importance of full-day kindergarten programs. Many of our young learners begin first grade several steps behind their peers. Full-day kindergarten helps ensure students build the strong base of learning by maximizing their achievement, skills, opportunities and potential, by building upon their strengths and addressing their needs to succeed throughout school and life.

HSTA appreciates the Legislature's recognition of the importance of kindergarten to prepare for the first grade and beyond. However, there is the matter of successfully passing a standardized admission test as a prerequisite to entering grade one to any child who did not attend kindergarten in public or private school.

HSTA believes standardized tests and/or assessments should only be used to improve the quality of education and instruction of students. Furthermore, the Association believes that standardized tests, whether norm-, criterion-, or standards-referenced, can validly assess only a limited range of student learning. Therefore, they should be only an adjunct or supplement to information obtained through school and classroom-based assessment conducted by teachers. The purpose of such information should be to support and strengthen instruction as well as to summarize and evaluate student learning. Assessment techniques should allow for necessary accommodations, modifications, and exemptions and should be bias-free, reliable, and valid.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



HAWAI'I EDUCATIONAL POLICY CENTER

Informing the Education Community

Testimony Presented before the
Senate Committee on Education

February 11, 2011, 1:15 pm, Room 225

by
Donald B. Young, Director
Hawai'i Educational Policy Center

SB 1384: Relating to Teachers

Chair Tokuda, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Senate Committee on Education.

My name is Donald Young. I am providing testimony as Director of the Hawai'i Educational Policy Center (HEPC) in opposition to specific provisions of this bill.

SB 1384 is problematic for a number of reasons. As drafted, it is potentially discriminatory in requiring that some children pass a standardized test prior to entering grade 1. This approach promotes sorting and retention at an early age, which is known to lead to students dropping out of school at later grades. What if a child does not pass the standardized test? Will the parents be burdened with the expense of private school until the child passes the test?

Further, the case can be made that HIDEOE would also have to give the standardized test for first grade entrance to the children who had entered the HIDEOE Kindergarten at age five. Presumably, some of the children in the HIDEOE Kindergarten would be retained if entrance to first grade were based on passing a standardized test. Such policy will likely lead to Kindergarten teachers teaching to the test, something that on the surface does not seem appropriate for very young children.

Assessment of students, especially in early childhood, should be made often and in many areas by qualified teachers who have had education and experience in early childhood. It should not rest on a standardized test. Standardized tests by design provide for some test takers to do well, and others to not do well. A standardized test alone should not determine the right of a child to go to public school, especially with the uncertainties of testing very young children.

In 1987, the National Association of Young Children (NAEYC) adopted a policy opposing testing Kindergarten through second-grade children. The NAEYC position statement pointed out "Young children are not good test takers. The younger the child, the more inappropriate paper-and-pencil, large group test administrations become." The end results are 'developmentally inappropriate practices' with a narrowing of the curriculum with a concentration on skills most amenable to testing.

The new National Early Literacy Panel paper reports that there is no certainty that pre-literacy skills are predictive or connected to later achievement in literacy (National Institute for Literacy, 2010). Other studies have found discrepancies between the format for learning at the early childhood level and the format for measuring learning (Pardo & Russell, 1989). In 2000, NAEYC conducted a meta-analysis of existing studies on standardized testing of young children. They found that standardized tests were often used to sort children into homogenous groups and amounted to “subtle forms of retention.” Not only is there no academic benefit from retention in its many forms, but there also appear to be threats to the social-emotional development of the child subjected to such practices (NAEYC, 2000).

Further, no task force is qualified to prepare a standardized test. Test design and preparation are highly skilled tasks requiring in-depth expertise and a lengthy development process to establish test validity and reliability. Mandating such an ill-advised policy, resulting in a less than accurate test, would potentially prevent children and families from access and opportunity to learn.

SB 1384 as drafted does not account for what is known about the development of young children across the early years (ages 5-8 years) and focuses instead on an age-grade level limited philosophy of institutional organization based only on chronological age. Not all children develop at the same rate. Developmental changes can come quickly; i.e., sometimes within months and is uneven across domains (social, emotional, intellectual, physical). ‘Readiness’ is a social construct rather than a specific demarcation of required achievement. ‘Readiness’ should not be constrained by time, limiting opportunities to move forward from where every child is at a given time.

Our research shows that in Hawai‘i more than half of the HODOE Kindergarten teachers are not qualified for early childhood classroom teaching. Many have never had education preparation in early childhood development, and often limited, if any, experience teaching in developmentally appropriate ways.

There is a rich array of national research that addresses the use of the expertise of qualified early childhood teachers with degrees and experience in early childhood education and their positive impact on student learning and development. Since young children develop at differing rates, measuring progress in school must take into consideration the relationship between development and achievement.

This bill seems to be putting the cart before the horse. If all HODOE Kindergartens had fully qualified early-childhood teachers and we had an adequate pipeline of qualified early childhood teachers, we might consider pursuing the requirements of SB 1384. But implementing mandatory Kindergarten attendance with a teacher who has limited knowledge and expertise in how to teach that age level is not going to achieve the intended outcome of higher student achievement.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The Twenty-Sixth Legislature, State of Hawaii
Hawaii State Senate
Senate Committee on Education
Testimony by
Early Learning Council
February 11, 2011
S.B. 1384 – Relating to Education

Chair Tokuda and Committee Members:

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 was chartered 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.

The Early Learning Council (“ELC”) offers the following comments on S.B. 1384, which proposes to amend HRS § 302A-411(c) to require enrollment in kindergarten:

Mandatory Kindergarten:

Today, less than 5% of children eligible to attend kindergarten are not attending. Because so few children would be effected by making Kindergarten mandatory, the Early Learning Council respects voluntary Kindergarten and the principle of parental choice.

Furthermore, the ELC believes that the effort and resources that would be spent on making Kindergarten mandatory would be better spent on educating parents and families on the importance of early education. Children who receive developmentally appropriate care and education in their early years are more likely to have greater success in kindergarten and into adulthood. It is clear from the research available that brains are “built from the bottom up” and that a strong and stable foundation is critical for continued, successful development. Early experiences impact the brain and it is well documented that the relationships and interactions between children and their parents, caregivers and early teachers are critical in establishing stable brain architecture. The more quality early learning experiences a child has, the more complex his or her “brain web” will be, with the promise of stronger and more solid learning. By age five, personality and social skills, along with the foundation for learning, are already in place and that 85% of who a child is, and will be, is already established.

Junior Kindergarten:

Act 183, Regular Session 2010, tasked the Department of Education and the Early Learning Council with assessing public junior kindergarten programs and providing for early childhood educational opportunities for the children who would have otherwise been eligible for junior kindergarten or kindergarten. We encourage the reading of the joint ELC/DOE Legislative Report on Act 183 (SB2068, SD2, HD1, CD1).

By establishing the cutoff birth date for mandatory kindergarten attendance as December 31, S.B. 1384 effectively eliminates the the two-tiered junior kindergarten and kindergarten program established in Act 219, Session Laws of Hawaii 2004. This system was based upon studies that indicated substantial differences between “older” students and “younger students” within a grade, particularly boys born between July and December, were at greatest risk for retention and school adjustment problems.

The Early Learning Council supports the age appropriate instruction that junior kindergarten can provide. Children who receive developmentally appropriate care and education in their early years are more likely to have greater success when in kindergarten. Standards established for early learning programs and services are based on current knowledge of child development and reflect ‘best practices’ in early childhood pedagogy (curriculum, environment, and instructional strategies) and professional development. Quality early learning highlights the critical importance of providing the conditions that will promise the development of capable children. Without capable children, we shall not be able to create the foundation critical to a prosperous and sustainable community.

In order to attain age appropriate instruction infused with quality standards, the ELC advocates for the creation of a hybrid system that coordinates private and public partnerships. Such a system would partner private child care providers with public schools to offer quality programs to the student cohort with five-year old birth dates between August 2 and December 31. Each school community or complex area would have the opportunity to partner with community programs to provide early learning opportunities for the student cohort. The partnerships could include private preschools and public schools combining their effort to provide early learning programs to meet the community needs. All providers would follow standards for early learning programs and services as recommended in the report created

pursuant to Act 256, Regular Session 2006.

Public/Private Partnerships in Practice

In the recent Race To The Top award, the Department of Education is utilizing this very model of public/private partnerships in the “Zones of Innovation” in the Waianae Coast, and the Kau-Keaau-Pahoa complex. In this model, public funds would be directed through the DOE to private providers who will provide increased capacity in quality settings. If private providers capacity are not available, public programs will need to be developed or expanded.

Standardized Admission Test for Grade One

The Early Learning Council believes that student assessments such as the proposed standardized admissions test that exempted students must take as a prerequisite to entering grade one in a public school are inappropriate for students at such a young age. The ELC agrees with the Department of Education’s testimony before this committee:

The National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) general rule for testing young children is as follows: the purpose of testing must be to improve services for children and ensure that children benefit from their educational experiences. Decisions that have a major impact on children, such as enrollment, retention, or assignment to remedial or special classes, should be based on multiple sources of information and should never be based on a single test score.

Conclusion

The Early Learning Council believes that:

- Voluntary Kindergarten supports parent choice.
- The effort and resources that would be spent on making Kindergarten mandatory would be better spent on educating parents on the importance of early education;
- Age appropriate instruction, infused with quality standards, is best for late born 5-Year-Olds and achieved through a quality junior kindergarten program;
- Public/Private partnerships are the best way to achieve age appropriate instruction infused with quality standards; and
- Public/Private partnerships is an effective method for achieving age appropriate instruction infused with quality standards.

- Student assessments such as the proposed standardized admissions test that exempted students must take as a prerequisite to entering grade one in a public school are inappropriate and by itself an inaccurate measure of students at such a young age.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Robert Peters
Chair, Early Learning Council



Hearing date:
Friday, Feb 11,
2011; 1:15 p.m.
Senate Committee
Education
Room 225

To: Senator Jill Tokuda, Chair
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

From: Elisabeth Chun, Executive Director
Good Beginnings Alliance

Date: Friday, February 11, 2011, 1:15 p.m.
Conference Room 225

Subject: **SB 1384: Makes attendance in kindergarten mandatory and lowers the compulsory education age from six to five years old. Requires children who are home-schooled or enrolled in alternative school programs for kindergarten to pass a standardized test approved by the Board of Education prior to entering first grade in a public school.**

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), 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.

Approximately 98% of all 5-year olds attend public or private school kindergarten, and we do not believe it is necessary to mandate kindergarten for all 5-year olds. Parents of late-born children (e.g., turning 5 years old Aug 1- Dec 31) should have the option to instead put their child in another year of preschool.

With the pending elimination of the Junior Kindergarten Program effective School Year 2013-2014, we believe that a public-private partnership should be created with the Department of Education contracting with private early childhood providers to educate this group of late born children. Additionally, the same law that eliminates the Junior Kindergarten Program tasked the Early Learning Council and the Department of Education to propose a plan that will provide for early childhood educational opportunities for the children who would have otherwise been eligible for junior kindergarten or kindergarten, and they are proceeding with this task.

Finally, public school attendance is an entitlement, and entry into the first grade for those who did not attend public school kindergarten should not be based on a standardized test. This decision on first grade readiness should instead be based on the developmental readiness of the child and the collective triumvirate judgment of the teacher, administrator, and family.

Good Beginnings Testimony – SB1384 (page 2)

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