

LATE
TESTIMONY

SB2778

HTH Committee Hearing 2/01/2012

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NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



LORETTA J. FUDDY, A.C.S.W., M.P.H.
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In reply, please refer to:
File:

Senate Committee on Health

**S.B. 2778, MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD
HEALTH**

**Testimony of Loretta J. Fuddy, A.C.S.W., M.P.H.
Director of Health
February 1, 2012**

- 1 **Department's Position:** The Department of Health strongly supports this Governor's administrative
2 measure.
- 3 **Fiscal Implications:** An unspecified appropriation under Section 2 of this measure for fiscal year 2012-
4 2013 to collect and analyze Hawaii-specific early childhood overweight and obesity data, increase
5 awareness of the health implications of early childhood obesity, promote best practices through
6 community based initiatives, and establish a task force to develop and recommend legislation related to
7 the prevention of childhood obesity.
- 8 **Purpose and Justification:** Recent research shows that the "tipping point" in obesity often occurs
9 before two years of age. Nationally, approximately one in five children is overweight or obese by their
10 sixth birthday. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) reports that "almost 10 percent of infants and toddlers
11 carry excess weight for their length, and slightly more than 20 percent of children between the ages of
12 two and five are already overweight or obese. The IOM report further recommends that because early
13 obesity can track to adulthood, efforts to prevent obesity should begin long before a child enters school.

1 In Hawaii, the Women Infants and Children (WIC) program served approximately 43 percent of
2 children under 5 years of age in 2009. Of these children served by WIC, over one in five of the 2-4 year
3 olds were at risk of being overweight. For those entering kindergarten in 2002, over one in four or
4 28.5% were at risk for being overweight or obese. Childhood obesity is a serious public health problem
5 requiring urgent attention with prevalence in Hawaii going in the wrong direction each year. Young
6 children ages 0-8 are dependent on responsible adults to provide healthy and nutritious meals and to
7 instill regular physical activity and healthy eating behaviors. More emphasis on starting early to develop
8 healthy food and physical activity habits in children will lead to better health outcomes. The
9 Department recognizes the importance of preventing early childhood obesity and diabetes and the need
10 to work with parents, the medical and early childhood community to address this issue together. The
11 Department will use the funds to collect and analyze Hawaii-specific early childhood overweight and
12 obesity data to identify children at risk. We will also work with partners to increase the awareness of the
13 health implications of early childhood obesity and implement initiatives to prevent early childhood
14 obesity such as promotion of breastfeeding and enhancing of the role of child care settings in obesity
15 prevention. Additionally, the Department will establish and staff a task force to develop and
16 recommend legislation related to the prevention of childhood obesity.

17 Investing in our youngest children now will reduce the human and financial cost down the road
18 of heart disease, cancer, stroke and diabetes – Hawaii's leading causes of death.

19 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

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Good  Beginnings Alliance
Voices For Hawai'i's Children

Hearing date:
Wednesday,
February 1,
2012; 2:45pm
Senate Health
Committee
Room 229

To: Senator Josh Green, Chair
Senator Clarence K. Nishihara, Vice Chair

From: Elisabeth Chun, Executive Director
Good Beginnings Alliance

Date: Wednesday, February 1, 2012, 2:45 pm
Conference Room 229

Subject: **SB 2778: Health; Early Childhood**

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. The following information is provided to help you in your decision-making process:

- According to the Center for Disease Control in a report entitled, "Too Fat to Fight: A Brief on Hawaii," by Mission: Readiness Military Leaders for Kids, 42 percent of Hawaii's young adults ages 17-24 are overweight or obese increasing from 33 percent over a 13-year period (<http://missionreadiness.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/HI-Too-Fat-To-Fight-Brief.pdf>).
- The lifestyle habits of our young adults clearly start in their early childhood years and the ability to collect and analyze Hawaii-specific early childhood overweight and obesity data will be very valuable in tackling this significant problem

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