

STAND. COM. REP. NO.

198

Honolulu, Hawaii

February 7, 2013

RE: H.B. No. 862

H.D. 1

Honorable Joseph M. Souki  
Speaker, House of Representatives  
Twenty-Seventh State Legislature  
Regular Session of 2013  
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Education, to which was referred H.B. No. 862 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO SCHOOL READINESS,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose of this measure is to more adequately prepare Hawaii's children for success in school by establishing a School Readiness Program as part of the State's Early Learning System.

The Governor, Department of Education, Department of Human Services, Department of the Attorney General, Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu, University of Hawaii, Chaminade University of Honolulu, Education Division of Chaminade University of Honolulu, Hawaii State PTSA, Good Beginnings Alliance, Teacher Education Coordinating Committee, Child & Family Service, Hawaii Association of Independent Schools, Hawaii Baptist Early Education Association, the Community Children's Councils of Hawaii, Special Education Advisory Council, Hawaii Business Roundtable, and numerous concerned individuals supported this bill. The Hawai'i Association for the Education of Young Children supported the intent of this measure. The Institute for Native Pacific Education and Culture and a concerned individual supported this bill with amendments. Several concerned individuals opposed this measure. The Department of Health provided comments.

HB862 HD1 HSCR EDN HMS 2013-1757



Your Committee notes that this measure is one of three bills designed to implement the Early Learning System established in Chapter 302L, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS). A comprehensive Early Education Program encompassing social-emotional and intellectual development that is tied to educational outcomes for all eligible preschool-aged children is the ultimate aim of the State's Early Learning System. However, the implementation of such a system is dependent upon the formation of public-private partnerships that require a voter-approved change to the Hawaii State Constitution. In the interim, the elimination of junior kindergarten and the change in the entry age for kindergarten, which will take effect in 2014 pursuant to Act 178, Session Laws of Hawaii 2012, necessitates a more immediate solution to accommodate the approximately 5,000 late-born students who will require a developmentally appropriate early learning program.

Your Committee finds that the junior kindergarten program, while designed to serve preschoolers in the year prior to kindergarten, has never fully been implemented and is not readily able to accommodate varying levels of enrollment. Independent junior kindergarten classrooms have only been developed at approximately one-third of Department of Education schools. Public schools with too few eligible students have either not accommodated those students at all, or have included them in kindergarten classrooms, which limits the amount of time and material dedicated specifically to the junior kindergarten level.

Conversely, this measure proposes a School Readiness Program that lays the foundation for a comprehensive early education program and addresses the needs, not only of those late-born students affected by the elimination of junior kindergarten but also of all preschool-aged children in the State, by preparing them to enter kindergarten with the socialization skills necessary to take full advantage of their public school education.

Your Committee finds that early learning experiences prepare students to flourish once they enter the public school system, ensuring that teachers spend less time rectifying deficiencies and more time guiding their students toward greater educational achievement.

It is your Committee on Education's intention that this measure be inclusive of the expanse of early learning approaches, service deliveries, and settings available to preschool-aged children and their families. However, your Committee recognizes that this will require continued dialogue between the Legislature



and the early learning community as this measure evolves through the legislative process.

Accordingly, your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Requiring the School Readiness Program to prioritize low- and moderate-income families;
- (2) Including providers exempt from licensure by the Department of Human Services under section 346-152, HRS, as eligible providers of school readiness services;
- (3) Requiring, rather than authorizing, the Executive Office on Early Learning to adopt rules and requiring those rules to be adopted in accordance with Chapter 91, HRS; and
- (4) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for clarity, consistency, and style.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Education that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of H.B. No. 862, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as H.B. No. 862, H.D. 1, and be referred to the Committee on Finance.

Respectfully submitted on  
behalf of the members of the  
Committee on Education,



---

ROY M. TAKUMI, Chair



