

LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®

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Testimony of the League of Women Voters of Hawaii in regard to HB 853

To: Rep. Karl Rhoads, Chair and Rep. Sharon E. Har, Vice-Chair

From: League of Women Voters-Hawai'i

RE: Comments on HB 853: Proposing an Amendment to Article X, Section 1 of the Hawai'i State Constitution to Permit the Appropriation of Public Funds for Private Early Childhood Education

I am Janet Mason, Vice-President of the League of Women Voters of Hawai'i, and I thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of our members throughout Hawai'i. The League is providing comments only on this bill.

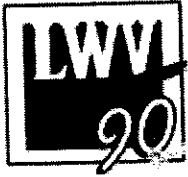
The League of Women Voters-Hawai'i respectfully offers the following input for your consideration with regard to HB853, which proposes an Amendment to Article X, Section 1 of the Hawai'i State Constitution to permit the appropriation of public funds for private early childhood education. The League applauds the state of Hawai'i for working to establish a collaborative public/private four-year old program within an early childhood system that prepares our children prenatal to age five for success in school and life. One of the key components in such a system will be to give the families of children in this system *choice* in providing education opportunities for their children.

HB853, if approved by the citizens of Hawai'i, would fund private schools offering a preschool education. The League has concerns about accountability in a program that funds private schools that have no obligation to the public trust and fulfill no responsibility to the public trust. Thus, we have concerns whether accountability will be achieved in such a system regardless of regulations imposed on participating private schools.

The purpose of the proposed Constitutional Amendment, HB 853, is to provide the pathway for the implementation of HB 864, HD1. And as stated in HB 864, the goal of the early childhood education program is to "align with the state content and performance standards for grades kindergarten to twelve to facilitate a seamless and high-quality educational experience for children" (HB 864, HD1 Section ~3O2L-2 (e)(2).

HB 864, H.D. 1 proposes that children be individually assessed. *Efficiency* is implied in a standards driven policy that includes assessment of young children. Developmentally appropriate programs that include literacy and mathematics may not assess for these skills. By definition, these valuable programs would be excluded and the population of at-risk children to be served by the early childhood education would not be offered these valuable programs. Thus, *choice* of programs is limited to those that assess. Assessments and curricula both need to be developmentally appropriate. We are also concerned about *equity* under a program that assesses young children for literacy and mathematic skills at such a young age. Accountability of public monies is absolutely essential, and ways to ensure 'accountability' include providing a developmentally appropriate curriculum, having qualified early childhood education teachers in every classroom, and providing settings that promote student centered learning.

HB 864, H.D.1 excludes children who are enrolled in or eligible for public elementary education (302L(2)(c)(2). The League has long supported equity, quality and choice in education. As such, we have supported charter schools and



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as such, we support an early childhood education system that includes implementation through the existing charter school system in Hawai'i. The current 'cap' on charter schools should be lifted to allow the establishment of high-quality early childhood education. Including charter schools does not demean the outstanding hard work and accomplishments evident in our state's private and parochial schools and their potential to offer a quality early childhood education for our keiki. Rather this is an issue of fairness and equity and inclusion of a component of our public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

TO: HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
FROM: RENEE ING (Verbal testimony given February 12, 2013)
REGARDING: UNIVERSAL EARLY CHILDHOOD BILLS HB 853 and HB 864



As a private citizen, I am in favor of Universal Early Childhood Education (ECE) in the State of Hawaii. However, as Early Childhood is currently structured, there is the grave concern that simply providing early childhood education (as the studies of the effect of Head Start have shown) just having ECE doesn't bring children from deprived, impoverished environments up to the median achievement of children from more enhanced, middle class environments.

The benefits of ECE to children---especially from deprived environments---HAS BEEN SHOWN TO FADE AFTER THEY ENTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. And if you look at our DOE stats, 40% to 50% of the DOE children come from impoverished families.

We have such a great opportunity in Hawaii to have education that creates an even playing field for children---making it possible for all children to have a brighter future!

To "do it right"---using the SAME teachers, classes, schools that Universal ECE will have--the program called "PK to 3" has shown (in the words of Dr. Edward Ziegler, one of the principle architects of Head Start) , to have unprecedented results. A study of the National Head Start-Public School Early Childhood Demonstration Project from 1991 to 1998 of thousands of children in PK to 3 programs in 450 schools in 30 states were eye popping. It showed, in Dr. Ziegler's words, "The achievement gap was gone. I would challenge anybody to show me some other place where poor kids looked as good as middle-class kids by the end of third grade."

In PK to 3 programs, the children move WITH THEIR CLASSMATES AND TEACHERS from one grade to the next, becoming close with teachers and classmates. PK to 3 curriculum is standards-based, teachers integrating it so that each year, fundamental skills are solidified and are built upon the next year. Parents and families get involved in their children's education. And by the third grade, at age 8 years old, deprived children can read well and do math as well as middle class kids from enhanced environments.

Using the same teachers, classrooms, schools, and spending the same money, we can do this. The Union School District in New Jersey that implemented PK to 3 in 30 poor areas and saw Language Arts improve from 45%(in 1999) to an 87% success rate in 2005. Math capability improved from 48% to 93% in 2005.

We want this for Hawaii. It's possible and would be shameful if we don't create it

