



Testimony presented before the
Senate Committee on Education
January 29, 2014 at 1:30 pm
By Karen C. Lee, Ed.D.
Executive Director, Hawaii P-20 Partnerships for Education

SB 2768: Relating to Kindergarten.

Chair Tokuda, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

SB 2768 makes kindergarten mandatory for a child who will be at least five years of age on July 31 of the school year. It also requires the Hawaii Department of Education, in collaboration with the Executive Office on Early Learning, to establish an individualized kindergarten readiness assessment system and makes an appropriation for the system to the Hawaii Department of Education.

Hawaii P-20 supports this bill. As an organization that works in partnership with the Executive Office on Early Learning, the Hawaii Department of Education and the University of Hawaii, Hawaii P-20 works to improve the educational pipeline and facilitates seamless educational experiences across systems. Full-day kindergarten is essential to create the educational, socio-emotional and physical building blocks to success in latter years in the K-12 education system and beyond.

In particular, Hawaii P-20 strongly supports the creation of an appropriate individualized kindergarten readiness assessment system. Currently, schools create or adopt their own assessments in order to survey incoming students' readiness for school. Many of these tools are not developmentally appropriate, cumbersome to administer, and expensive. Moreover, they do not provide any uniform data to the Hawaii Department of Education about children's readiness or consistent feedback to early learning programs about their preparation of children or feedback to parents and families about their child's learning and development. It is absolutely essential that the state begin to collect data about individual child readiness for kindergarten in order to improve the preparedness of children, aid teachers in providing differentiated learning techniques, and for longitudinal studies about education outcomes.

Furthermore, we strongly support the request for the funding of an appropriate assessment tool, as well as the ongoing training necessary on the chosen tool. The Hawaii Department of Education cannot be expected to implement a new statewide assessment system without adequate funding. In addition to the proposed appropriation, we humbly request that an additional \$420,000 be added to the appropriation request in order that substitute teachers can be hired during the assessment training periods. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Hawai'i P-20

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January 29, 2014

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Senator Jill Tokuda, Chair
Senate Committee on Education
State Capitol
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RE: SB 2768 - RELATING TO KINDERGARTEN

Dear Chair Tokuda and Members of the Committee,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC), Hawaii's State Advisory Panel under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), **supports with a recommended amendment** SB 2826 that makes kindergarten mandatory for a child who will be at least five years of age on July 31 of the school year.

Language drafted in 1996 in the existing statute appears to exclude some students with disabilities. Section 302A-1132 lists exceptions to compulsory attendance including the following case: "(1) Where the child is physically or mentally unable to attend school (deafness and blindness excepted), of which fact the certificate of a duly licensed physician shall be sufficient evidence..."

SEAC recommends that this passage be stricken. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act guarantees a free appropriate public education to a child with a disability aged 3-22 whose disability impacts their ability to benefit from education, regardless of the severity of the disability. The continuum of placements available to the student, based on his or her individualized needs, includes home and hospital based services where appropriate. All Kindergarten aged students, with or without a disability, should be covered by this legislation, regardless of where they receive their educational services.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. If you have any questions, I will be happy to answer them.

Respectfully,

Ivalee Sinclair, Chair