

SB2595

Measure Title: RELATING TO THE PUBLIC PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM.

Report Title: Early Learning Public Prekindergarten Program; Availability; Appropriation (\$)

Description: Requires the executive office on early learning to make the public prekindergarten program available to all eligible children no later than the 2020-2021 school year, and appropriates funds for the program.

Companion:

Package: None

Current Referral: EDU, WAM

Introducer(s): KIDANI, HARIMOTO, SHIMABUKURO, Dela Cruz, Galuteria



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 02/10/2016
Time: 01:15 PM
Location: 229
Committee: Senate Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Kathryn S. Matayoshi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB 2586 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Requires the department of education to provide public school students with a whole child education curriculum, air conditioning in certain classrooms, and decrease class size. Requires sufficient allocation of special education teachers and provides special education teachers with additional preparation time and funding. Establishes the student loan subsidy program and special fund. Expands vocational, technical, and career pathway programs. Amends weighted student formula factors to be considered by the committee on weights. Limits participation in standardized tests, prohibits the use of standardized test scores for evaluation purposes, authorizes standardized testing exemptions, and requires the board of education to provide notice of the right to opt-out of standardized testing. Requires all eligible children to attend preschool by the 2020-2021 school year. Amends evaluation program for teachers and educational officers. Increases the general excise tax. Makes appropriations.

Department's Position:

The Department of Education offers COMMENTS on S.B. No. 2586, S.B. No. 2587, S.B. No. 2588, S.B. No. 2589, S.B. No. 2590, S.B. No. 2591, S.B. No. 2592, S.B. No. 2593, S.B. No. 2594, S.B. No. 2595, S.B. No. 2596, S.B. No. 2597, S.B. No. 2598, and S.B. No. 2599.

Overall Comments

The Department of Education's (Department) vision is that our students are educated, healthy, and joyful lifelong learners who contribute positively to our community and global society. To achieve this goal, our schools and educators need the proper tools and resources.

We support initiatives aimed at improving working conditions for teachers and educational opportunities for students. In 2004, the Legislature established the "Reinventing Education Act," allowing schools the autonomy and responsibility to allocate school-based budgets to support school-identified programs and priorities, whether it be hiring more staff or purchasing supplies and materials. And, it empowered schools to make the best decisions to fit the needs of its students and communities.

Over the last decade school funding levels have not kept up with our education costs. Nevertheless, our public schools have made significant strides that have not gone unnoticed by the U.S. Department of Education and other national organizations. Attendance has improved, students are progressing and achieving more, and more students are going to college. This is a testament to the dedication of our educators and students, as well as other community leaders and partners.

The measures before you address many important aspects of education – curriculum, assessments, staffing, facilities, class size, funding, etc. However, respectfully, the Department is concerned that the crafted language, such as providing specific types of teachers for schools or a one-size-fits-all approach to instructional time or class size, detracts from school-level decision making and also circumvents the appropriate participants and venues for these conversations. Such a proposal would hinder the progress made by school leadership teams or School Community Councils, the collective bargaining process, the Board of Education which sets the policy direction for the Department, and principals and teachers in collaboration with Department leadership.

We welcome continued support from HSTA and the Legislature for additional resources for public education as well as the Department's budget priorities, as set out in the Executive Budget request. Adequate funding for our students helps to ensure a quality education that they deserve, and need, to prepare to be contributing members in our community and global society. Teachers have the most impact in ensuring a quality education. It's important that they have the support, the right tools, and the best facilities to thrive in their profession.

We look forward to working with the Committee and other stakeholders to address the issues raised in these measures.

Specific comments to the parts of the bill are itemized below.

Part II. WHOLE CHILD EDUCATION (S.B. No. 2587)

The Department recognizes the importance of promoting creative thinking, self-directed learning, and cultural understanding, as well as the impact it has upon children's future outcomes and the state's economic growth.

Since 1999, the Department has provided "whole child education" through its K-12 standards-based system which includes the General Learner Outcomes (GLOs). GLOs are the overarching goals and content standards in nine areas including fine arts, social studies, Hawaiian studies, world languages, and physical education. Complex areas and schools have the flexibility to design class offerings that are best suited to their

community.

Additional funding would support increased opportunities and more diverse offerings for students.

Given that a Board of Education policy for whole child education is already in place, the Department respectfully finds S.B. No. 2587 to be unnecessary.

Part III. SPECIAL EDUCATION (S.B. No. 2588)

The Department appreciates the intent of S.B. No. 2588 to provide each teacher with \$1,690 of discretionary funds for instructional materials and equipment and to add additional preparation time for special education (SPED) teachers. This additional preparation time, during which teachers would "not be required to interact with students", would be to complete individualized education programs (IEPs), which are required for each SPED student.

Teachers' preparation time is subject to collective bargaining. Article VI of the current HSTA contract and Department regulations include provisions for preparation periods and that address providing SPED teachers with additional non-student time to work on IEPs and other related SPED duties.

If this measure is adopted, additional funds would be required to either pay SPED teachers for the additional 40 plus hours of additional preparation time, or alternatively, schools would need to establish and hire additional SPED teachers or substitute teachers to cover the instructional time for SPED teachers during the extra preparation period. Because Hawaii's SPED teaching positions are "hard-to-fill," as they are nationwide, creating more positions in order to hire more SPED teachers will not, in the near term, be a solution.

The Department is not opposed to the Legislature appropriating funding for \$1,690 for every SPED teacher to purchase additional instructional materials and equipment, provided that it does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in budget approved by the Board of Education (Board).

Given that teacher preparation time is included in the collective bargaining agreement, the Department respectfully does not support S.B. No. 2588.

Part IV. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION (S.B. No. 2589)

The Department supports the intent of S.B. No. 2589 to expand vocational, technical, and career pathways programs and welcomes additional funding to support career and technical programs, provided that it does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in budget approved by the Board.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs (formally known as Vocational and Technical Education) are currently offered in 46 public high schools. In school year 2014-2015, 29,356 students were registered in at least one CTE course and 4,453 seniors had completed a CTE program of study. Also, the Department awards Honors

Recognition Certificates for graduates earning Career and Technical Education Honors or Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Honors.

CTE programs are organized under six Career Pathways: Arts and Communication, Business, Health Services, Industrial and Engineering Technology, Natural Resources, and Public and Human Services. The Department currently offers 41 programs of study within the six career pathways framework. Current Board Policy No. 2103 defines Career and Technical Education.

The Department is committed to improving CTE opportunities for students throughout the state. The Department respectfully finds the provisions of S.B. No. 2589 to be unnecessary, as the intent of this bill is currently being implemented.

Part V. FACILITIES (S.B. No. 2590)

The Department welcomes additional funding for heat abatement and energy efficiency measures. The Department's Ka Hei program is a comprehensive energy and sustainability program designed to provide comfortable learning environments for our students and teachers. One of the key objectives of the program is to reduce costs and energy consumption at all 256 public schools. The Department has made significant progress in working toward the goals of Ka Hei and appreciates the support of the Legislature to further these efforts.

In addition, the Governor announced his plan to air condition 1,000 classrooms by the end of 2016, and is making available GEMS financing. We appreciate his initiative and are moving rapidly to execute his proposal.

Part IV. WEIGHTED STUDENT FORMULA (S.B. No. 2591)

The Department offers the following comments:

This bill states: "Principals, in consultation with teachers and school community councils, shall expend moneys provided to the principals' school." Section 302A-1124, HRS, currently defines the role of the school community council and mandates a composition that includes teachers.

The new language related to a "superintendent's reserve" states both that the reserve is "to address needs at unique and remote schools," and that "the committee on weights shall make recommendations...for how the reserve should be used." Stating that the reserve is for "unique and remote schools" would be unnecessary if the intent is to allow the committee on weights to determine the criteria for the reserve's use.

The Weighted Student Formula (WSF) reserve was established in school year 2012-2013 based on a committee on weights recommendation that was approved by the Board. A portion of WSF funds are set aside in this reserve to provide supplemental funds to schools that demonstrate a need as combination school (e.g., K-8, 7-12), geographically isolated, has very low enrollment, or is experiencing an extraordinary circumstance. The distribution of these funds is made based on committee on weights-recommended guidelines.

Part VII. STANDARDIZED TESTING (S.B. No. 2592)

Statewide standardized tests provide one valuable source of information on student learning for students, parents, teachers, and educational administrators, but also informs educators and policy-makers about the progress of the education system. Standardized testing is an efficient method for reliably and objectively measuring the academic performance of the over 90,000 students in tested grades and 275 public schools (Department and charter) across the state. Standardized test scores provide one consistent measure, although incomplete, of school and student performance. Thus, all of the Department's accountability systems – for schools, educators, and students - use multiple measures.

Many provisions in this are bill related to testing conflict with federal requirements which are a condition of receiving federal educational support including Title I funds. Despite the elimination of No Child Left Behind, its successor, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), still requires states to administer a statewide student test and use those test scores to "meaningfully differentiate" schools and identify the lowest-performing. Federal requirements for minimum participation of 95% of students continue under ESSA. And students who have individual needs may receive accommodations on a test based on their IEP, which is informed by their teachers' assessment of their needs. The Department also administers an alternative assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities and an exemption for the English Language Arts state assessment for students with limited English proficiency who are in their first year in a U.S. school.

The Department understands that instructional time is incredibly valuable for teaching and learning. The Department is continuously reviewing the tests that are required for all students to ensure that they are necessary and valuable. Over the last two years, we have reduced the number of tests that are required. Currently, the number of standardized tests required by the state is at the federal minimum with the exception of grade 11 which is being reviewed.

The Department remains cognizant to minimize the burden on students while balancing the need to support students through measuring achievement and complying with federal requirements. As such, the Department respectfully suggests that S.B. No. 2592 is unnecessary.

Part VIII. CLASSROOM SUPPLIES (S.B. No. 2593)

The Department supports providing teachers with the resources necessary to help our students thrive in the classroom. The Department estimates the fiscal impact to be approximately \$11,900,000 per year using the calculation of \$1,000 per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions at schools which total approximately the Department's workforce of 11,100 classroom teachers, 200 libraries, and 600 counselors.

Additionally, there may be some administrative issues that need to be addressed before

implementing such a program through a debit card system, as described in the bill. These administrative considerations include processing, procurement, reconciliation, and workload issues at the school and vendor payment levels.

Part IX. TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION (S.B. No. 2594)

The Department supports the intent of S.B. No. 2594. Loan subsidies can encourage prospective teachers to contemplate careers in special education, vocational education, technical education, and career pathways.

However, the Department believes the bill may not be necessary. Federal loan forgiveness is already available for teachers in areas the Department has designated as “teacher shortage,” including special education, technical, and vocational education.

Furthermore, the program proposed for teacher recruitment and retention is complex and would be, as a result, administratively burdensome given the Department’s current systems and staffing. The Department anticipates the establishment and maintenance of the program would require substantial resources to fund the incentives and administer the program.

Part X. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (S.B. No. 2595)

The Department supports efforts to provide opportunities for early childhood education for all of Hawaii’s keiki as it is critical that they enter kindergarten ready to learn. Children deserve the best possible foundation upon which to build success and early childhood education is integral to this foundation. Children are most successful when they enter the public school system prepared with the socio-emotional and pre-academic skills that make them kindergarten-ready.

Part XI. EVALUATIONS (S.B. No. 2596)

The Department offers the following comments on S.B. 2596:

The Department recommends maintaining the existing 302A-638, HRS, which was established in 1996 and preceded the current evaluation systems which were negotiated between the State and its unions. The proposed changes should be bargained, as HSTA has previously testified in response to prior year’s efforts to legislate aspects of teachers’ evaluations.

The Department supports the intent of the portion of paragraph (a), which requires the Department to consult with the unions in establishing an evaluation program for teachers and educational officers (EOs), but notes that proposed language is redundant with existing statute and practice. A consultation process is already codified in section 89-9(c), HRS, and in the past, the Department has consulted, and at times negotiated, with Hawaii State Teachers Association (HSTA) and Hawaii Government Employees Association (HGEA) regarding evaluation programs for teachers and EOs.

Many provisions of this measure are currently governed by agreements with HSTA and HGEA.

Part XII. CLASS SIZE (S.B. No. 2597)

The Department supports the intent of S.B. No. 2597 but respectfully opposes the measure for the reasons identified below.

Class size is a subject of collective bargaining and is addressed in the Department's contract with HSTA. Article VI, Teaching Conditions and Hours, Section A. 6., of the current contract states that the employer agrees to maintain the "average statewide class size ratio of 26.15 to 1."

Moreover, class size is product of school-level decisions by the principal and School Community Council in budgeting of school funds. Thus, schools are empowered to select its number of teachers based on its allocation of its student population-based budget toward personnel. Rather than class size limitations determined by the Legislature, class size is better addressed by providing additional funding for the Weighted Student Formula, which would allow schools to allocate additional resources towards personnel and thus reduce class size.

The current HSTA contract also provides a process to follow should there be issues in connection with the class size of individual classrooms. For example, a class size committee is required, with the authority to hear and investigate class size complaints and make recommendations to the Superintendent for change. If there is no majority vote on a decision of the committee, the HSTA may have the matter submitted to arbitration.

Finally, any change to the class size requirements, including a change from average statewide ratio to individual classroom maximum, would have significant cost implications due to the need for more teachers and additional facilities to house additional classrooms. The Department believes there are other, often less costly, means to provide students with quality education and to address working conditions for teachers.

Part XIII. FUNDING (S.B. No. 2599)

The Department has no position on this measure and defers to the Administration with regard to the generation of revenues to fund public programs.

Part XIV. MISCELLANEOUS (S.B. No. 2598)

The Department supports the intent of S.B. No. 2598. The additional funds would provide the Department with additional teaching positions to support the programs and needs of our schools and students. However, this bill is prescribes the subject area of

teachers to be funded, and the Department supports schools' using their autonomy to determine the types of positions for necessary for their school program and community.



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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION

RE: SB 2595 - RELATING TO THE PUBLIC PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2016

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **strongly supports SB 2595**, relating to the public prekindergarten program.

As noted by an MIT working group on the topic, investments in early childhood education pay dividends for the formal preparation of children as learners and future citizens, while also benefiting taxpayers and boosting economic vitality. Research on the benefits of quality pre-kindergarten programs indicates that for every dollar invested in such opportunities, society saves four to eight dollars on remedial classes, special education, welfare programs, and criminal justice costs. Roughly 85 percent of a child's brain develops from birth to age five, according to modern neuroscience, emphasizing the importance of providing a quality learning environment during these formative years. Preschool brings an approximately \$4.20 return on investment for every dollar spent on quality early childhood services, especially in terms of longterm life skills. At the national level, every dollar spent on early childhood education saves taxpayers up to \$13.00 in future costs, including lowered healthcare costs, reduced rates of educational remediation and prison incarceration, and higher productivity. Access to quality pre-kindergarten programs not only helps working parents fulfill their responsibilities, but is essential for building a 21st century labor force.

Early childhood education is especially important for at-risk students. According to the High Scopes/Perry Preschool longitudinal study, at-risk children with access to



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quality early learning programs were 20 percent more likely to graduate from high school, 14 percent more likely to be employed, and 24 percent less likely to have been incarcerated by age 40 than peers without such access. As the Department of education continues to streamline educational accountability, particularly through the possible institution of merit pay and high-stakes evaluations for teachers and educational officers, it is imperative that we do all we can to ensure our children are “classroom ready,” meaning that they are prepared to receive basic instruction and effectively socialize with peers upon entering elementary school, placing both our keiki and their teachers on the path to success.

Utilizing public school resources for the provision of early learning will place our children's futures in the hands of the state's most qualified education professionals, namely our certificated and licensed public school teachers. Additionally, public early learning programs will not set a nefarious precedent for the future adoption of school voucher programs at the elementary and secondary school level. Finally, this proposal does not violate the U.S. Constitution's and Hawaii State Constitution's Establishment Clauses, which bar preferential governmental treatment for religious institutions, ensuring that the state will not become ensnared in costly litigation because of a misappropriation of funds to a program that promotes a specific religious viewpoint. Public early learning will, instead, include research-based, developmentally appropriate, secular practices that are associated with better educational outcomes for children. During the budget process we urge you to request \$125 million for our state's public preschool program, guaranteeing statewide access to as many children as possible.

Because early childhood education is beneficial to lifetime learning, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.



STATE OF HAWAII
Executive Office on Early Learning
1390 Miller Street, Room 303
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

February 9, 2016

TO: Michelle Kidani, Chair
Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Lauren Moriguchi, Director

SUBJECT: SB 2595 – RELATING TO THE PUBLIC PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM
Hearing Date: Wednesday, February 10, 2016
Time: 1:15 p.m.
Location: Conference Room 229

Purpose of Bill: Requires the executive office on early learning to make the public prekindergarten program available to all eligible children no later than the 2020-2021 school year, and appropriates funds for the program.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING'S POSITION: The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) acknowledges the intent of SB 2595 to expand access to high quality early learning experiences to students in the year prior to kindergarten eligibility. However, we are concerned that an aggressive expansion of the public Pre-Kindergarten Program will come at the expense of quality, without first building a solid foundation and infrastructure. EOEL respectfully offers comments for consideration.

There are currently 17,500 four year old students in the state of Hawai'i. In order to make the program available to all four year old children in the year prior to kindergarten eligibility, EOEL would be required to open 875 Pre-Kindergarten classrooms over a five year period which would cost approximately \$131 million, excluding the cost of building facilities. This would require a commitment of establishing 175 preschool classrooms, as well as hiring 175 preschool teacher and educational assistant positions per school year.

In Hawai'i we currently have three institutions of higher education who offer teacher licensing and preparation programs in the area of Early Childhood Education (ECE). These programs are offered through University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, University of Hawaii West O'ahu, and Chaminade University. Between 2010 – 2014, these three programs combined, have produced an average of 30 teachers (on island) with bachelors degrees in the area of ECE per year. These graduates supply the workforce for both public and private programs in grades pre-k through 3, and are currently unable to meet the need for highly qualified ECE providers across the state.

Research and evidence from established programs continually prove that investing in high quality early learning programs, is an investment in society that pays high dividends. The quality and the availability of pre-school teachers is a key factor to achieving success. While the Department of Education (DOE) requires that all teachers have a bachelor's degree, 80% of the educators

currently teaching in the EOEL Pre-Kindergarten Program and 90% of special educators of preschool students in the DOE do not have ECE credentials.

In the EOEL Pre-Kindergarten Program, 6 Early Learning Resource Teachers (RT) provide support to each of the schools in the form of professional development opportunities, professional learning communities, coaching, and mentoring. Teachers who are less experienced in ECE, have the opportunity to receive in-person support on a weekly basis. Although 80% of teachers in the program do not have ECE credentials, coaching and mentoring support provided through the Early Learning RTs resulted in 96.7% of students showing readiness for kindergarten at the end of the program. Expanding the program to 875 classrooms would require additional Early Learning (RT) positions.

Additionally, the DOE is currently conducting an assessment of its facilities. The result of this assessment will provide information on the number of existing classrooms which can be utilized for pre-school aged children. Until this information is available for consideration, it would be premature to mandate that the program be available to all children in the year before they attend kindergarten.

Prior to investing in an aggressive expansion of the Pre-Kindergarten Program, EOEL respectfully suggests first considering the results of the DOE's facilities assessment as well as an investment in developing the workforce of ECE providers throughout the state in order to commit to the implementation of high quality early learning programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

Testimony In Support of Senate Bill 2595
Senate Committee on Education
Wednesday, February 10, 2016

Dear Honorable Chair Kidani and committee members,

The first five years in a child's life are essential to lay a foundation for future learning. Children who have access to quality Early Childhood Education (ECE) meaningfully enhance their social, academic, and cognitive skill set.[1] Students who have access to quality preschool are given a chance to hone those skills at the most critical time, a process which supports their development and learning in later elementary years. Longitudinal studies have shown that high-quality programs not only improve academics, but also improve long-term personal outcomes for children and reduce social costs from crime and welfare.[2] Students who have had access to quality pre-kindergarten early childhood education demonstrate improved school performance, better mastery of language and math, longer attention spans, reduced special education placement, and lower school dropout rates.[3] Socially and emotionally, students are advantaged by having improved interactions with peers, decreased behavioral concerns, and easier adjustments to the high demands of later elementary school.[4]

International research has demonstrated the "well-designed [Early Childhood Care and Education] ECCE policies present policy makers with an opportunity to increase economic growth and at the same time reduce inequality" and that public investment in ECCE is an important component of a larger economic strategy that "produces more balanced and, therefore, more sustainable growth." [5] Other studies have shown that economic state investment in quality Pre-K programs provides substantial economic benefit by contributing to the development of a better-educated workforce and higher tax base.[6] Additionally, a report entitled "Economics of Early Childhood Investments" published in 2014 by the White House reveals that such investment decreases long-term social and economic costs of prisons, welfare, and other social programs. Early childhood education, by improving cognitive and socio-emotional development, can lower involvement with the criminal justice system. Lower crime translates into benefits to society from increased safety and security as well as lower costs to the criminal justice system and incarceration. Early childhood interventions can also reduce the need for remedial education. This research shows that benefits in children's development may also reduce the need for special education placements and remedial education, thereby lowering public school expenditures.[7]

Research by the bipartisan National Council for State Legislatures has additionally found continuing positive long-term social and economic effects of high-quality early childhood care and education on low-income 3- and 4-year-olds. Overall, the study recently documented a "return to society of more than \$17 for every dollar invested in the early care and education program, primarily because of the large continuing effect on the reduction of male crime." [8] These figures show a dramatic increase in long-term returns and are supported by additional findings that a much high percentage of the group who received high-quality early education than the non-program group were employed at age 40 (76% vs. 62%), that more of the group who received high-quality early education graduated from high school than the non-program group, and

that the group who received high-quality early education had significantly fewer arrests than the non-program group (36% vs. 55% were arrested five times or more).[9]

This scholarship has begun to inform education policy at multiple levels, and its implications have not escaped the Obama administration: “In states that make it a priority to educate our youngest children...studies show students grow up more likely to read and do math at grade level, graduate high school, hold a job, [and] form more stable families of their own.”[10] Currently, the Hawai‘i pre-kindergarten pilot program, funded in Hawai‘i through a federal grant, has a very limited reach, expanding to only twenty sites in the state’s lowest performing and highest poverty elementary schools. Act 109 of 2015 established the Executive Office on Early Learning Public Pre-Kindergarten Program to be administered by the Executive Office on Early Learning and provided through Department of Education public schools and public charter schools.[11] The next necessary step will be to appropriate additional funds for the Executive Office on Early Learning Public Pre-Kindergarten Program and mandate universal preschool for all eligible children by the 2020-2021 school year. We believe that preschool should serve children in the year prior to the year of kindergarten eligibility, with priority extended to underserved or at-risk children, extending to all children no later than 2020-2021. Schools must hire qualified, properly compensated teachers, have appropriate class sizes, and have access to resources necessary for young children.[12]

Education policies in Hawai‘i should reflect a comprehensive approach to providing equitable access to high-quality early learning, with a particular focus on children living in poverty, multilingual children, children of color, and children with disabilities. It is critical that these programs be accessible to all families, particularly those in which children are the most vulnerable and have the least access to social services and social support. Access to early learning remains out of reach for many families.[13] Private programs outside of Hawaii’s K-12 public education have the greatest difficulty in meeting the criteria of consistently good quality, equitable compensation, and affordable access.[14] Currently, most early childhood care and education services in Hawai‘i operate in a very price-sensitive market financed primarily by fees from families and supplemented by private contributions, a system which is inherently unstable, uncertain, and not subject to adequate public oversight.[15]

A public program for early childhood education that is connected to the existing K-12 public education structure in Hawaii, with a relatively stable if inadequate funding base, can provide the critical social and institutional stability necessary for continuity and real social and economic gains over time if properly financed. As the experiences of other states demonstrate, a universal early childhood program increases the benefits for the entire system of public education, as all students arrive at kindergarten better prepared to learn, and early elementary teachers can more easily support their students to meet higher expectations. Connecting early learning to the existing K-12 public education not only makes possible stronger alignment of early childhood education with early elementary programming but also creates a shared structure for teacher professional development and enhanced learning environments.[16] Continuity and stability in this kind of initiative are critical, as the full benefits of strong early childhood programs, those with small class sizes, well-crafted learning environments, and extensive family engagement take years to become fully visible.

Sincerely,

Amy Perruso, Ph.D
Mililani High School

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EDUtestimony@capitol.hawaii.gov

Heading: Testimony in support of SB2595

Testimony for: Committee on Education Hearing on Wednesday, February 10, 2016 1:15pm

Honorable Chair Kidani and committee members,

My name is Debbie Anderson. As a teacher of over 25 years in Hawai'i, I am writing in support of SB2595 PUBLIC PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM, SB2586 The Schools Our Keiki Deserve Act subcomponent Part X, which "Requires the executive office on early learning to make the public prekindergarten program available to all eligible children no later than the 2020-2021 school year, and appropriates funds for the program." I am also a parent on the island of Hawaii. For me to be able to work, I had to locate community childcare for a couple of years until my child reached an age of eligibility for formal programming. I have enrolled my child privately in Montessori, Na Hale O Na Keiki, Kamehameha Schools before the age of qualifying for Junior Kindergarten. Not all communities support private facilities, and families may not access enough income to offset funding costs. We need to ensure equitable access to the Early Childhood Education every keiki deserves.

Early Childhood Education Matters

The first five years in a child's life are essential to lay a foundation for future learning. Children who have access to quality Early Childhood Education (ECE) meaningfully enhance their social, academic, and cognitive skill set.[1] Students who have access to quality preschool are given a chance to hone those skills at the most critical time, a process which supports their development and learning in later elementary years. Longitudinal studies have shown that high-quality programs not only improve academics, but also improve long-term personal outcomes for children and reduce social costs from crime and welfare.[2] Students who have had access to quality pre-kindergarten early childhood education demonstrate improved school performance, better mastery of language and math, longer attention spans, reduced special education placement, and lower school dropout rates.[3] Socially and emotionally, students are advantaged by having improved interactions with peers, decreased behavioral concerns, and easier adjustments to the high demands of later elementary school.[4]

Socio-Economic Impact of Early Childhood Education

International research has demonstrated the "well-designed [Early Childhood Care and Education] ECCE policies present policy makers with an opportunity to increase economic growth and at the same time reduce inequality" and that public investment in ECCE is an important component of a larger economic strategy that "produces more balanced and, therefore, more sustainable growth." [5] Other studies have shown that economic state investment in quality Pre-K programs provides substantial economic benefit by contributing to the development of a better-educated workforce and higher tax base.[6] Research by the bipartisan National Council for State Legislatures has additionally found continuing positive long-term social and economic effects of high-quality early childhood care and education on low-income 3- and 4-year-olds. These figures show a dramatic increase in long-term returns and are supported by additional findings that a much high percentage of the group who received high-quality early education than the non-program group were employed at age 40 (76% vs. 62%), that more of the group who received high-quality early education graduated from high school than the non-program group, and that the group who received high-quality early education had significantly fewer arrests than the non-program group (36% vs. 55% were arrested five times or more).[7]

Additionally, a report entitled “Economics of Early Childhood Investments” published in 2014 by the White House reveals that such investment decreases long-term social and economic costs of prisons, welfare, and other social programs. Early childhood education, by improving cognitive and socio-emotional development, can lower involvement with the criminal justice system. Overall, the study recently documented a “return to society of more than \$17 for every dollar invested in the early care and education program, primarily because of the large continuing effect on the reduction of male crime.”[8] Lower crime translates into benefits to society from increased safety and security as well as lower costs to the criminal justice system and incarceration. As a volunteer with Hawaii *Youth At Risk*, we see how critical a difference can be made by early intervention into family dynamics.

Early childhood interventions can also reduce the need for remedial education. This research shows that benefits in children’s development may also reduce the need for special education placements and remedial education, thereby lowering public school expenditures.[9]

Public Policy

This scholarship has begun to inform education policy at multiple levels, and its implications have not escaped our current Obama administration: “In states that make it a priority to educate our youngest children...studies show students grow up more likely to read and do math at grade level, graduate high school, hold a job, [and] form more stable families of their own.”[10] Currently, the Hawai‘i prekindergarten pilot program, funded in Hawai‘i through a federal grant, has a very limited reach, expanding to only twenty sites in the state’s lowest performing and highest poverty elementary schools. Act 109 of 2015 established the Executive Office on Early Learning Public Pre-Kindergarten Program to be administered by the Executive Office on Early Learning and provided through Department of Education public schools and public charter schools.[11] The next necessary step will be to appropriate additional funds for the Executive Office on Early Learning Public Pre-Kindergarten Program and mandate universal preschool for all eligible children by the 2020-2021 school year. We believe that preschool should serve children in the year prior to the year of kindergarten eligibility, with priority extended to underserved or at-risk children, extending to all children no later than 2020-2021. Schools must hire qualified, properly compensated teachers, have appropriate class sizes, and have access to resources necessary for young children.[12]

Universal Public Preschools

Education policies in Hawai‘i should reflect a comprehensive approach to providing equitable access to high-quality early learning, with a particular focus on children living in poverty, multilingual children, children of color, and children with disabilities. It is critical that these programs be accessible to all families, particularly those in which children are the most vulnerable and have the least access to social services and social support. Access to early learning remains out of reach for many families.[13]

Private programs outside of Hawai‘i’s K-12 public education have the greatest difficulty in meeting the criteria of consistently good quality, equitable compensation, and affordable access.[14] Currently, most early childhood care and education services in Hawai‘i operate in a very price-sensitive market financed primarily by fees from families and supplemented by private contributions, a system which is inherently unstable, uncertain, and not subject to adequate public oversight.[15]

A public program for early childhood education that is connected to the existing K-12 public education structure in Hawaii, with a relatively stable if inadequate funding base, can provide the critical social and institutional stability necessary for continuity and real social and economic gains over time if financed properly. As the experiences of other states demonstrate, a universal early childhood program increases the benefits for the entire system of public education, as all students arrive at kindergarten better prepared to learn, and early elementary teachers can support more easily their students to meet higher expectations. Connecting early learning to the existing K-12 public education not only makes possible stronger alignment of early childhood education with early elementary programming but also creates a shared structure for teacher professional development and enhanced learning environments.[16] Continuity and stability in this kind of initiative are critical, as the full benefits of strong early childhood programs, those with small class sizes, well-crafted learning environments, and extensive family engagement take years to become fully visible.

Together, we can invest in a strong foundation for a better future.

Thank you for your time and support of Education on this Committee,
Debbie Anderson, NBCT

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Testimony for: Support of SB2595

Committee on Education Hearing

Wednesday, February 10, 2016 1:15pm

Honorable Chair Kidani and committee members,

We are freshman from Mililani High School and we are supportive of the “Schools our Keiki Deserve” Senate Bill. We are for this Act because it will give schools more funding and will provide air conditioning in certain classrooms which is what everyone wants. It will also save money for the schools because they won’t have to spend a lot of money on ACs for every room, giving more money to learning instead. It will also decrease class sizes making classes more controllable and this will help the class learn more quickly, it will give the teachers to focus on the students more clearly with a decrease class size. It’s also a good bill because all preschool children will go to public preschool, and this is good because children who go to preschool gets more learning experiences with other kids their age instead of being nervous when they don’t go preschool.

We also support this bill because with the passage of the bill the school’s will have more funding for special education teachers. It also amends the evaluation program for teachers and education officers. This way we have teachers that will help students learn better. This will also make standardized testing not an evaluation process, which will be good because kids won’t be judged on how smart they are just by taking a test. This bill sounds like an excellent idea, which would help make better education making smarter students, which would make a better community and nation.

Sincerely,
Elijah Banks and Drake Nun