



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

March 1, 2017

TO: The Honorable Senator Jill N. Tokuda, Chair  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Pankaj Bhanot, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 1189 SD1 – RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM**

Hearing: Wednesday, March 1, 2017, 9:30 a.m.  
Conference Room 211, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT’S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent, in part, of this measure provided that passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities in the Executive Budget or existing operations, and offers comments.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of SB 1189 SD1 is to clarify the definition of “at-risk children” as it relates to the priority given by the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program to underserved or at risk children who are not eligible to attend public school kindergarten in the calendar year in which they turn 5 years of age because their birth date occurs after the kindergarten eligibility date. The Committees on Human Services and Education amended the measure to reinsert the priority for late-born 5 year old children, regardless if they are underserved or at-risk.

DHS has additional requests for clarification and suggested amendments.

Act 169, Session Laws of Hawaii (SLH) 2013, established the POD program as the statewide school readiness program. The POD program assists low and moderate income families who are least able to afford preschool. POD child care subsidies help families with assistance to pay for the cost of attending licensed group child care centers and group child

care homes (i.e. preschools). Children benefit with the opportunity to attend preschool for up to one year to improve kindergarten readiness.

SB1189 SD1 creates confusion by defining "underserved" or "at-risk children" by referencing the definitions in section 302L-1, HRS. Section 302L-1, HRS, is part of chapter 302L, HRS, which established the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL). Section 302L-1, HRS, definition of "at-risk children" is used for the EOEL public pre-kindergarten program in public preschools and includes children who are eligible for special education services. POD services are not provided to a child who attends a Department of Education (DOE) pre-kindergarten classroom or special education class room as provided by Part B, of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and DOE does not charge families for public pre-kindergarten or special education services. POD was established, in part, to provide children with access to school readiness services at preschools.

DHS asks that the proposed phrase in SB 1189 SD1 "as defined in section 302L-1" be deleted from the measure at page 1, lines 10 and 11. By deleting this phrase, it will be clear that the population to be served will continue to be those children from low- and moderate-income families whose family incomes are at or below two-hundred fifty percent of the federal poverty level, as defined by Chapter 799, Preschool Open Doors Program, §17-799, et seq., Hawaii Administrative Rules (HAR).

Because of the proposed reference to the definition of underserved to the EOEL section, it is unclear if the Legislature also intend to allow four-year olds from families with a higher income limit to be eligible for the POD program, as the EOEL section includes families at or below 300 percent of FPL. If this is also the intent, DHS respectfully suggests that the amendment be reflected in the POD statute, section 346-181 (a), HRS, as follows:

- (a) There is established within the department a school readiness program to be known as the preschool open doors program within the department's child care assistance program. The program shall:
  - (1) Provide access to school readiness services that address children's physical, cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional development;
  - (2) Require each provider to conduct school readiness assessments;

- (3) Give priority to children from low- and moderate-income families whose family incomes are at or below three-hundred per cent of the federal poverty level;
- (4) Prepare children for school through either of the State's two official languages.

Waiting lists for POD subsidies may be a potential impact with expanding those eligible based upon an increased FPL.

For the committee's reference §17-799-2, HAR, provides POD with the definition of "special populations referral" that includes a child that:

- (1) Has a physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional health condition that is outside of the normal range;
- (2) Meets the state department of health criteria for environmental risk as defined in HRS §321-351;
- (3) Resides in a Limited English Proficiency household; or
- (4) Is homeless.

Additionally, income eligibility requirements for the POD program are described in Chapter 799, Preschool Open Doors Program, §17-799, et seq., HAR.

DHS disagrees with the proposal in SB 1189 SD1 to reinsert the priority given to children who are not eligible to attend public school kindergarten in the calendar year in which they turn five years of age because their birth date occurs after the kindergarten eligibility date.<sup>1</sup>

Under SB 1189 SD1, POD services would continue to serve only children in the year prior to their eligibility for kindergarten entry. However, as written, priority services for POD would still be for "late-born" children who are **not** underserved or at-risk in the year prior to their eligibility for kindergarten entry, and then second priority would go to underserved or at-risk children who are not "late-born". Since the 2014-2015 school year, families have been made aware of the age change for kindergarten entry. Also, many preschools have modified their programs to accommodate the kindergarten age change and place the late-born child in the same classroom with other children who will all be eligible for kindergarten in the same year.

DHS proposes that priority for POD services should be for all children who are underserved or at-risk, regardless if they are “late-born” or not.

Also, the DHS is currently moving the state's regulated child care and federal child care subsidy systems into compliance with recent amendments to the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014, Public Law 113-186. The CCDBG provides federally funded support for Hawaii’s statewide child care licensing infrastructure and DHS child care subsidies under Child Care Connection Hawaii. The CCDBG Act made significant changes to health and safety requirements as it re-authorized the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, to provide block grants for child care regulation, quality support services, and child care subsidies. Hawaii receives \$22 million per year from these federal CCDBG grants. To maintain the level of federal funding, complying with federal law changes to increase health and safety of children in child care is the paramount focus.

Regarding current program operations, POD is accepting applications until March 31, 2017 for services in the 2017-2018 POD year. If SB1189 SD1 were to pass as drafted with the Legislature’s expectation of implementation effective FY 2018, given the current program demands and compliance efforts for continued receipt of the federal CCDBG funds, and changes to administrative rules and operations, including modifications to its IT system, which would be required in response to passage of the bill, DHS requests additional time and a delay of the effective date to July 1, 2018 or later.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.

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<sup>1</sup> Act 178, SLH 2012, repealed junior kindergarten programs at the end of the 2013-2014 school year, and beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, required students to be at least five years of age on July 31 of the school year in order to attend kindergarten.



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

February 28, 2017

**TO:** Senator Jill Tokuda, Chair  
Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

**FROM:** Lauren Moriguchi, Director  
Executive Office on Early Learning

**SUBJECT: SB 1189, SD 1 – RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM**

**Hearing Date:** March 1, 2017

**Time:** 9:30 p.m.

**Location:** Conference Room 211

**Purpose of Bill:** Repeals the priority given by the preschool open doors program to children who are not eligible to attend public school kindergarten in the calendar year in which they turn five years of age because their birth date occurs after the kindergarten eligibility date.

**EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING'S POSITION:** The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) **supports** SB 1189, SD 1 with recommendations for amendments.

EOEL respectfully requests that the language in SB 1189, Section 1, lines 3-11 be revised to read, "Subject to the availability of funds, the program shall serve four-year-old children, with priority extended to: (1) Children who are not eligible to attend public school kindergarten in the calendar year in which they turn five years of age because their birth date after the kindergarten eligibility date pursuant to section 302A-411; (2) 4-year-old children; and (3) underserved or at-risk children with priority for those whose family income is below two-hundred and fifty percent of the federal poverty level."

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



February 27, 2017

To: Senator Jill Tokuda, Chair  
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: Karen Worthington, Project Coordinator  
Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: SB1189-SD1 – Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program  
**Hawaii State Capitol, Room 211, March 1, 2017, 9:30 AM**

**Position: Action Strategy is writing to provide comment on SB1189-SD1 Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program**

Dear Senator Tokuda, Senator Dela Cruz and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Hawaii's Early Childhood Action Strategy, a public private collaborative that recognizes the strength of communities and works across sectors to increase the number of young children in Hawaii who are born healthy, developing on track, ready for school when they enter kindergarten, and proficient learners by third grade.

Action Strategy is providing comment on SB1189-SD1 to express its support of the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program, which allows families with low and low-moderate incomes to afford a high quality early learning setting for their children and increases the possibility that parents can work or pursue higher education or training.

Action Strategy respectfully asks this committee to modify the bill to expand eligibility for the Preschool Open Doors program to three-year-old children and to allocate additional funds to allow more families access to this essential support for young children. When Preschool Open Doors started in 1990, this state-funded program served three- and four-year-olds from qualifying low-income families. However, in recent years the program was changed to only serve four-year-old children.

The expansion of this program to include three-year-old children is critical to supporting Hawaii's families with young children. The average cost of child care in Hawaii is approximately \$8,040 per

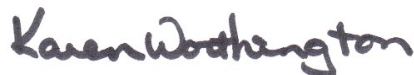
year. For most families, child care is their second highest expense after paying for housing. Access to stimulating, safe preschool or child care is not possible for many low and low-moderate income families without POD subsidies.

High Quality Early Learning Programs are a critical component of Hawaii's early childhood system because high quality early learning programs:

- support parents and families in nurturing their children
- help track children's development and recommend when screening should occur for developmental delays or developmental differences
- help parents and children benefit from interventions that follow developmental screenings
- help families identify needed community resources
- allow parents to work or pursue their education
- promote the social and emotional development of young children
- prepare children to enter school as kindergarteners.

Action Strategy is committed to ensuring Hawaii's young children are healthy, safe and ready to learn and expanding POD to reach more families and children younger supports that vision. Please feel free to contact me for additional information. I can be reached at 808-214-9336 or [karen@clnhawaii.org](mailto:karen@clnhawaii.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Worthington". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Karen Worthington, JD



**TO:** Chair Tokuda, Vice Chair Cullen, and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
**FROM:** Ryan Kusumoto, President & CEO of Parents And Children Together (PACT)  
**DATE/LOCATION:** March 1, 2017; 9:30 a.m., Conference Room 211

**RE: TESTIMONY TO PROVIDE COMMENTS FOR SB 1189 SD 1– RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM**

**We wanted to provide comments to the bill: SB 1189 SD 1 – Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program.** We believe that the intent of this bill is to expand the access to the Preschool Open Doors Program to serve more underserved or at-risk children. There are other bills that address the expansion of the age eligibility being heard in this year’s legislature. We do express some concern regarding the removal of the priority given to those keiki who are not eligible to attend kindergarten in the calendar in which they turn five years of age. Participation in early learning and development programs for school readiness have immediate and long-term benefits that include higher levels of educational achievement, reduced homelessness, reduced crime, reduced substance abuse, improved health, and overall better social and economic well being. The first 5 years of a child’s life lays the foundation for future development. Access to programs at an early age, especially the year prior to kindergarten, will help prepare the child for future success.

There are approximately 8,000 keiki in Hawaii between the ages of 3-5 living in poverty. The majority of these keiki do not have the financial means to support opportunities that Preschool Open Doors would fund.

There are important secondary impacts with Preschool Open Doors. For example, these funds allow parents to have the time to find work and earn wages to support their family. It is a key component to our war on intergenerational poverty.

Founded in 1968, Parents And Children Together (PACT) is one of Hawaii’s not-for-profit organizations providing a wide array of innovative and educational social services to families in need. Assisting more than 18,000 people across the state annually, PACT helps families identify, address and successfully resolve challenges through its 16 programs. Among its services are: early education programs, domestic violence prevention and intervention programs, child abuse prevention and intervention programs, child and adolescent behavioral health programs, and community building programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify **with comments for SB 1189 SD 1**, please contact me at (808) 847-3285 or [rkusumoto@pacthawaii.org](mailto:rkusumoto@pacthawaii.org) if you have any questions.





## KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS®

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Date: March 1, 2017

Where: Conference Room 211

### TESTIMONY

By Ka'ano'i Walk  
Kamehameha Schools

To: Chair Tokuda, Vice Chair Dela Cruz, and Members of the Committees

RE: **SB 1189 SD1 Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program**

E ka Luna Ho'omalua Tokuda, ka Hope Luna Ho'omalua Dela Cruz a me nā Lālā o ke Kōmike o nā Loa'a a me nā Ho'olilo o ka 'Aha Kenekoa, aloha! My name is Ka'ano'i Walk and I serve as the Senior Policy Analyst of the Kūamahi Community Education Group of Kamehameha Schools.

We are writing to **support SB 1189 SD1**, relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program, which clarifies the definition of “at-risk children” as it relates to the priority given by the preschool open doors program to undeserved or at-risk children who are not eligible to attend public school kindergarten in the calendar year in which they turn five years of age because their birth date occurs after the kindergarten eligibility date.

Since its inception more than 20 years ago, the Kamehameha Schools Early Childhood Education Division has provided more than 11,000 keiki with their first preschool experience. Early childhood education and parental support is the cornerstone of our Education Strategic Plan adopted in 2005, which seeks to foster long-term intergenerational change in the way Native Hawaiian families approach learning. Research demonstrates that early education is a key factor in lifelong success for all children, and we strongly urge the legislature to promote, enhance and support the efforts of the State of Hawai'i to appropriately address the needs of Hawai'i's pre-kindergarten children.

Founded in 1887, Kamehameha Schools is an organization striving to advance a thriving Lāhui where all Native Hawaiians are successful, grounded in traditional values, and leading in the local and global communities. We believe that community success is individual success, Hawaiian culture-based education leads to academic success and local leadership drives global leadership.

‘A‘ohe hana nui ke alu ‘ia. No task is too large when we all work together! Mahalo nui.

February 26, 2017

**LATE**

To: Senator Jill Tokuda, Chair  
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Vice Chair  
Committee on Ways and Means

From: Deborah Zysman, Executive Director  
Hawaii Children's Action Network

Re: **SB1189 SD1 – Relating to Preschool Open Doors Program**  
**Hawaii State Capitol, Room 211, March 1, 2017, 9:30 AM**

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**On behalf of Hawaii Children's Action Network (HCAN), we are writing to provide comments on SB1189 SD1– Relating to Preschool Open Doors Program**

HCAN strongly supports the intention to expand the Preschool Open Doors program to at-risk and underserved children by expanding the definition. **We respectfully request that the committee amend this bill to expand the scope of children served to include at-risk 3 AND 4 year olds and increase the appropriation for this critical program for families.**

When Preschool Open Doors started in 1990, this state-funded program served 3 & 4 year olds from qualifying low-income families. However, the program was significantly reduced in 2012 and 2013. Although services and funding for the program increased in the last year, the program has not been restored to the needed service levels.

Hawaii ranks second to last out of the most affordable states in the nation. Childcare is generally the second largest expense in family budgets after housing cost, averaging about \$8,040 per year. For children under two years that cost is generally much higher. The average POD subsidy was \$540/month to families with a median annual income of \$33,000 in 2015.

As of February 1, 2016, 2,213 applications were received for the Preschool Open Doors program, which provides subsidies for tuition assistance for families earning up to 142% over poverty line. As of the same date, only 1,156 children were being served. This is an opportunity to improve the chances for Hawaii's children to succeed by increasing the reach of the program.

By expanding the definition of at-risk and underserved, it will provide more low- to moderate-income parents, especially single parents, the opportunity to pursue higher education, training, or work as well as better prepare students to succeed in school. Preschool Open Doors

promotes cognitive, social, and emotional development of young children and school readiness in our state, where only 14.5% of children display comprehensive readiness for kindergarten.

**For these reasons, HCAN respectfully requests that the committee vote to pass this bill with amendments.**

HCAN is committed to building a unified voice advocating for Hawaii's children by improving their safety, health, and education. Last fall, HCAN convened input in person and online from more than 50 organizations and individuals that came forward to support or express interest for a number of issues affecting children and families in our state that resulted in the compilation of 2017 Hawaii Children's Policy Agenda, which can be accessed at <http://www.hawaii-can.org/2017policyagenda>.

**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, February 27, 2017 4:25 PM  
**To:** WAM Testimony  
**Cc:** mendezj@hawaii.edu  
**Subject:** \*Submitted testimony for SB1189 on Mar 1, 2017 09:30AM\*

**SB1189**

Submitted on: 2/27/2017

Testimony for WAM on Mar 1, 2017 09:30AM in Conference Room 211

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Javier Mendez-Alvarez	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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