

March 9th, 2018

To: Senator Kidani, Chair
Senator Kahele, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Education

From: Mandy Finlay, Director of Public Policy
Hawaii Children's Action Network

Re: **H.B. 2507– Relating to Preschools**
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 229, March 12th, 2018, 2:45 PM

On behalf of Hawaii Children's Action Network (HCAN), we are writing in support of H.B. 2507 H.D. 2– Relating to Preschools.

More than ever before we recognize the value and importance of early learning programs: The Center on the Developing Child reports that more than 1 million new neural connections are formed every second during these early years, representing the foundation of later learning. Additionally, we now recognize that the educational needs of preschool and pre-kindergarten students differ dramatically from the needs of k-12 students.

Hawaii is in dire need of a coherent, systemic solution for early learning needs. Seats for quality early learning are both limited and expensive. With no paid family leave system in place and the majority of families headed by working parents, families are left with few options to ensure their children are provided adequate care and education during their most formative years.

The Legislature has recognized this since 2008 and has made their intent clear: The Early Learning Board and the Executive Office on Early Learning should be responsible for administering a statewide preschool/pre-kindergarten system. Previously enacted legislation has committed Hawaii to the following:

- Removing requirements for the Department of Education to develop an early learning plan
- Establishing the Early Learning Board and Executive Office on Early Learning
- Tasking EOEL with establishing a plan to implement an early learning system
- Establishing the public pre-kindergarten program under EOEL
- Transforming the Early Learning Board into a governing board meant to empower said establishment

H.B. 2507 H.D. 2 provides necessary housekeeping amendments that will bring current practice into conformity with previously enacted legislation and stated Legislative intent, align state practice with current research, and provide working families with the opportunity to provide their children with the best possible start to their educational careers.

HCAN respectfully requests that the committee pass this measure which further reaffirms the Legislature's intent that the Early Learning Board and EOEL be responsible for a preschool/pre-kindergarten system.

HCAN is committed to building a unified voice advocating for Hawaii's children by improving their safety, health, and education.

Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair
Senator Kaiali'i Kahele, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Education

Re: Testimony in Support of HB2507 HD2---Relating to Preschool, March 12, 2018, 2:45 pm, Conference Room 229

Dear Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kahele and Members of the Committee:

My name is Robert G. Peters. As the Chair the ELB, I thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB2507 HD2 on behalf of the Early Learning Board (ELB).

This housekeeping bill would clarify and bring statute into conformity with previously enacted legislation that places the responsibility for preschool/pre-kindergarten with what is now the Early Learning Board and the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL); past legislation includes,

Establishment of EOEL to "help the State meet its goal of providing a viable early learning system for the keiki of Hawaii" (Conference Committee Report No. 173 for S.B. No. 2545, enacted as Act 178, Regular Session of 2012), and tasking EOEL with developing a plan for the early learning system (section 302L-1.5, HRS, first enacted in 2012);

Establishment of the EOEL Public Pre-Kindergarten Program to be administered by EOEL (section 302L-7, HRS, first enacted in 2015); and

Changing the Early Learning Advisory Board into a governing board, to "empower the Early Learning Advisory Board to take a more active role in directing consistent early childhood development policy and expand the public pre- kindergarten program", recognizing that "a broad and consistent approach to early childhood development promotes the health and wellbeing of children" (Senate Standing Committee Report No. 1058 for H.B. No. 498, enacted as Act 202, Regular Session of 2017).

HB 2507 HD2 helps to clarify the intent of legislation to charge the Executive Office of Early Learning, under the governing authority of the Early Learning Board, to develop a state-wide early learning system with specific responsibility for a preschool and pre-K years. This bill also clarifies that the EOEL may authorize preschool personnel access to student immunization registry information and requires the DOE to administer special education and Title I funded pre-kindergarten programs.

Thank you again for this opportunity to support HB 2507 HD2.

Sincerely,

Robert G. Peters, Chair

Early Learning Board