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January 27, 2017

To: Senator Josh Green, Chair
Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair
Committee on Human Services

From: Cheryl R. Cudiamat, Director & Owner
Keiki Care Center of Hawaii, Inc.

Re: **SB 181 – Relating to Education**
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 016, January 27, 2017, 2:45 PM

On behalf of Keiki Care Center of Hawaii, Inc. (KCCOH), I am writing to support SB 181 – Relating to Child Care Facilities

Almost every day I receive inquiries about our preschool, and get to meet in person many families that would like to send their child or children to preschool, but lack the financial means to do so. I understand that normally it is those families that are considered low- to moderate-income parents that receive subsidy assistance, but please be aware that it is families who are also living paycheck-to-paycheck that could also really use the assistance. And it makes sense to “invest” in this demographic of “middle-income” families as well, since it is more likely that this demographic that will definitely attend a college or university, and thus become positive, contributing members of society. Bottom line, I would just like to make the State aware that it is families of also the middle-income group that are not able to send their children to preschool and we need to find a way to help them. I do not know the statistics today of Hawaii children who are eligible that actually attend preschool, but from my own observation and speaking with various Kindergarten teachers of differing schools, that it seems that there is still only about half of the children entering Kindergarten that have attended preschool, which makes the job quite difficult for our Kindergarten teachers who have only one year to get all of their children prepared for the next level. And for those children who have not been to preschool, it is not only the academics that are of concern, it’s the social and emotional development that is lacking also, which is more challenging than getting the children academically up to speed.

Overall, specifically for this current bill, by expanding the age range, 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. Think of Preschool Open Doors as an investment for the future, which it really is for. You are enhancing the lives of these families today...which will in turn pave their path in the right direction towards betterment of themselves and others. But by not investing in them today, then you are promoting the opposite to occur, such as more social services in the future, possibly more crime, etc. Most importantly, it normally takes more than one year to prepare a child not only for Kindergarten, but lifelong learning. As the saying goes, the earlier, the better....

For these reasons, KCCOH respectfully requests that the committee vote to pass this bill.