



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

January 31, 2017

**TO:** Michelle Kidani, Chair  
Kaiali'i Kahele, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Education

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

**SUBJECT: SB 687 – Relating to Early Learning**  
**Hearing Date:** February 1, 2017  
**Time:** 2:45 p.m.  
**Location:** Conference Room 229

**Purpose of Bill:** Broadens the scope of the early learning program to include early childhood development. Expands the function of the early learning advisory board beyond an advisory capacity and amends the composition and powers of some board members. Allows the board to appoint the director of the executive office on early learning.

**EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING'S POSITION:** The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) **supports** SB 687.

In addition to transforming the Early Learning Advisory Board (ELAB) into a governing board, this legislation will redefine the definition of "at risk" to include children whose family income is no more than "three hundred fifty percent of the federal poverty level." This will allow EOEL to extend the Public Pre-Kindergarten Program to working class families who may not otherwise be able to afford a high-quality pre-kindergarten program for their child.

Nobel prize winning economist, James Heckman found that the earlier we invest in high quality early learning programs, the greater the return on our investment. On the converse, if programs are not of high quality, studies have shown that they can be detrimental to the development of our young children. As we expand access to more pre-kindergarten opportunities across the state, we must ensure that the programs are of high-quality. This legislation supports implementation and maintenance of quality through the requirement that school teams participate in an early learning induction program prior to opening an EOEL Pre-Kindergarten classroom. This will provide school teams with the foundation required in order to implement and support a high-quality early learning program on an elementary school campus.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

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

Re: Testimony in Support of SB 687, Relating to Early Learning -- Hearing  
February 2, 2017, 2:45 PM, Conference Room 229

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

My name is Robert G. Peters and over the past 10 years, I have served as a Chair of the Early Learning Task Force, the Early Learning Council and currently as Chair of the Early Learning Advisory Board (ELAB). Thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony on behalf of the ELAB in support of SB 687, relating to early learning, which broadens the scope of the early learning program to include early childhood development, expands the function of the Early Learning Advisory Board, and allows the Board to appoint and evaluate the Executive Director of Early Learning.

Act 178 established the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) as an office of the Governor, created the ELAB and provided for the EOEL to become an attached agency to the Department of Education for administrative purposes beginning in 2015. The ELAB's function has been strictly an advisory one and the EOEL has lacked an oversight board. This legislation seeks to change the ELAB's role by giving it authority to appoint and evaluate the director of the Executive Office on Early Learning, set the Director's salary and the power, in accordance with the law, to formulate statewide policy relating to early learning.

The EOEL is charged with the development and administration of a high quality early learning system for Hawai'i's children from birth until they enter kindergarten. This legislation would provide the oversight and authority of a board to guide the strategic direction of that system development while supporting and holding the EOEL accountable for designing a high quality cohesive, comprehensive and sustainable system. It retains the diverse public/private membership to assist these efforts but reduces the number of voting members. In the end, this bill will address the one missing link in governance for the P-20 continuum, a board for early learning to complement the BOE and the Board of Regents.

The ELAB also wishes to emphasize the importance of amending the "at risk" definition to include children whose family income is no more than "three hundred fifty per cent of the federal poverty level" rather than current statute designation of "two hundred fifty percent." This change will expand opportunities for families currently excluded to gain access to early learning programs. And, we know that all children benefit from quality early learning experiences which improve school and life success.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the ELAB which strongly encourages the passage of this bill.

Sincerely,  
Robert G. Peters, EdD  
Early Learning Advisory Board, Chair



January 31, 2017

To: Senator Michelle Kidani, Chair  
Senator Kaiali'i Kahele, Vice Chair  
Committee on Education

From: Karen Worthington, Project Coordinator  
Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: SB687 – Relating to Early Learning  
**Hawaii State Capitol, Room 229, February 2, 2017, 2:45 PM**

**Position: Action Strategy supports SB687 Relating to Early Learning**

Dear Senator Kidani, Senator Kahele, 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 supports the passage of SB687 because the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) and the Early Learning Advisory Board (ELAB) are critical components of an early childhood system in Hawaii that can lead to more children born healthy, developing on track and successful in school.

Action Strategy supports SB687 which seeks to change the role of ELAB by giving it the authority to appoint and evaluate the director of the Executive Office on Early Learning; allowing it to set the Director's salary; and providing it the power, in accordance with the law, to formulate statewide

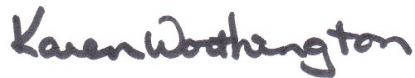
Action Strategy Testimony on SB687  
January 31, 2017  
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policy relating to early learning. The bill provides that ELAB retains its diverse public-private membership that is essential to developing a high-quality, comprehensive, cohesive early childhood system while also keeping the membership number manageable for a board with this scope of responsibilities.

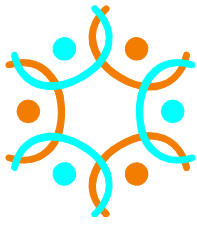
SB 687 also amends the statutory definition of “at risk children” to include children whose family income is no more than “three hundred fifty per cent of the federal poverty level” rather than the current statutory designation of “two hundred fifty percent.” This change will expand opportunities for many children to benefit from early learning programs.

Action Strategy is committed to ensuring Hawaii’s young children are healthy, safe and ready to learn and SB687 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



Hawaii  
**Children's Action Network**  
Building a unified voice for Hawaii's children

January 31, 2017

To: Senator Michelle Kidani, Chair  
Senator Kaialii Kahele, Vice Chair  
Committee on Education

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

Re: **SB 687 – Relating to Early Learning**  
**Hawaii State Capitol, Room 229, February 2, 2017, 2:45 PM**

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**On behalf of Hawaii Children's Action Network (HCAN), we are writing to support SB 687 – Relating to Early Learning.**

This bill will widen the scope of the early learning program to include early childhood development, expand the function of the Early Learning Advisory Board (ELAB), and allow the ELAB to appoint and evaluate the Executive Director of Early Learning.

The Executive Office on Early Learning's (EOEL) mission is to develop and administer a high-quality early learning system for Hawaii's children from birth until they enter kindergarten. In 2015, the EOEL shifted from being an office of the Governor to become an attached agency to the Department of Education. The same act that established EOEL also created the ELAB, whose role has been strictly advisory. **SB 687** seeks to change the ELAB's role by giving it the authority to appoint and evaluate the director of the Executive Office on Early Learning; allowing it to set the Director's salary; and providing it the power, in accordance with the law, to formulate statewide policy relating to early learning.

**SB 687** would provide the oversight and authority of a board to guide the strategic direction of the system development while supporting and holding the EOEL accountable for developing a high-quality, cohesive, comprehensive, and sustainable system. The ELAB would retain the diverse public/private membership but reduces the number of voting members. In the end, this bill will add a key aspect needed in governance for the P-20 continuum, a board for early learning to compliment the Board of Education and the Board of Regents.

Another important facet of **SB 687** is the amendment of the “at risk” definition to include children whose family income is no more than “three hundred fifty per cent of the federal poverty level” rather than current statute designation of “two hundred fifty percent.” This change will expand opportunities for families currently excluded to gain access to early learning programs. Providing many more children the opportunity to benefit from quality early learning experiences leading to school and life success.

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 Hawai’i Children’s Policy Agenda, which can be accessed at <http://www.hawaii-can.org/2017policyagenda>.

**For these reasons, HCAN respectfully requests that the committee pass this bill.**

## TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

PERSON TESTIFYING: Robyn S. B. Chun

DATE: Thursday, February 1, 2017

TIME: 2:45 PM

LOCATION: State Capitol Conference Room 229

TITLE OF BILL: SB 687 RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

Honorable Chair, Michelle Kidani and Committee Members

**I strongly support SB 687 Relating to Early Learning.** I appreciate the forward thinking of our state lawmakers. Supporting early learning is a long-term investment in the well-being of our state.

SB 687 makes needed amendments to Sec. 302L-1 of the Hawaii Revised Statutes that defines the scope of the Executive Office of Early Learning (EOEL) so that it is consistent with the focus of programs and services provided for young children (pre-natal-kindergarten) and their families. Early learning programs are concerned about health and well-being and support learning across all developmental domains so that each child can reach his or her developmental potential.

Revisions to the statute provide clarity about the role and responsibilities of the board as well as the Board's relationship to the Executive Office of Early Learning. They provide constancy in the Director's position that will enable smooth functioning of the Office when there are changes in Administration. Redefining "underserved children" to include families with no more than 350% of the federal poverty level, increases the number of families eligible for services in places where programs are scarce.

Additionally, the requirement for principals and key personnel to participate in an induction program prior to opening public prekindergarten classrooms increases the likelihood that elementary schools are better informed about the developmental needs of preschoolers and are better prepared to select staff with coursework and qualifications in early childhood education and implement the programmatic differences necessary to support the learning and development of preschoolers. This is especially important since coursework or training in child development and early childhood education falls outside of the scope of teacher preparation programs for principals and a majority of the K-6 personnel.

I would suggest one revision, to p. 4, line 7-8. I believe it is imperative that the Director of the Executive Office of Early Learning has professional training that includes major coursework in early childhood education and child development, preferably a degree in the field. The Director needs a solid grounding in the early childhood education in order to serve as a bridge-builder across programs that touch the lives of children (pre-natal through 8 years), multiple agencies (DOH, DHS, DOE, and Headstart), and diverse non-profit service providers.