

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



JOHN S.S. KIM
CHAIRPERSON

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION
(‘AHA KULA HO‘ĀMANA)

<http://CharterCommission.Hawaii.Gov>
1111 Bishop Street, Suite 516, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Tel: (808) 586-3775 Fax: (808) 586-3776

FOR: HB 1360 HD1 Relating to Early Learning
DATE: February 24, 2021
TIME: 2:00 P.M.
COMMITTEE: Committee on Finance
ROOM: Conference Room 308
FROM: Yvonne Lau, Interim Executive Director
State Public Charter School Commission

Chair Luke, Vice Chair Cullen, and members of the Committee:

The State Public Charter School Commission (“Commission”) appreciates the opportunity to submit this testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT of HB 1360** which establishes an early childhood educator stipend program to be administered by the executive office on early learning to address the shortage of qualified early childhood educators in Hawaii; and requires stipend fund repayments for the early childhood educator stipend program to be deposited into the early learning special fund.

As the recipient of a 2017 U.S. DOE Supplemental Pre-K grant, the Commission utilized much of those funds to foster the development of a strong statewide early childhood educator communities of practice. In 2018, the Commission partnered with the University of Hawai‘i and Chaminade University of Honolulu. This partnership was developed to provide teachers and educational assistants (EAs) currently in the workforce—in public and private settings—with access to free college-level coursework in early childhood education. This was a key strategy to further advance high-quality preschool practices that included building comprehensive, foundational knowledge for EAs, who comprise 50% of the adult to student ratio in our early education classrooms.

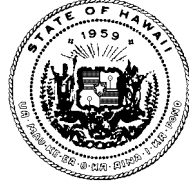
In this one-year pilot project, 174 early learning educators were served. This project provided over \$330,000 in tuition subsidies to support these teachers and EAs, complete college-level early childhood education coursework or coursework that will lead to a degree in early

childhood education. The success of this program illustrates the demand and need for these kinds of educational supports for our early education workforce.

Based on the data and the experience of the participants in the Commission's program, we believe that this bill is a step forward in emphasizing the importance of and Hawaii's commitment to the development of a strong statewide early childhood educator workforce.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

February 23, 2021

TO: The Honorable Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 1360 HD1 – RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING.**

Hearing: Wednesday, February 24, 2021, 2:00 p.m.
Via Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of this measure and provides comments. DHS also respectfully requests that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the executive budget.

The House Committee on Education amended the measure by:

1. Exempting the EOEL from the prohibition of contracting with a collection agency to collect from a debtor a commission;
2. Changing the effective date to be July 1, 2050; and
3. Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purpose of clarity, consistency, and style.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the bill establishes an early childhood educator stipend program to be administered by the executive office on early learning to address the shortage of qualified early childhood educators in Hawaii. Requires stipend fund repayments for the early childhood educator stipend program to be deposited into the early learning special fund. Effective 7/1/2050. (HD1)

This measure could provide increased access to continuing post-secondary education and be a useful incentive to expanding the early care and education workforce. DHS notes that the proposed measure utilizes private sector funds for the establishment of the program, benefits the broader early care and education workforce as set forth under section 302L-2, Hawaii Revised Statutes, including Hawaiian language medium and Hawaiian immersion settings, and includes a two-year work requirement post-completion of the certificate, degree, or licensed program at a University of Hawaii campus.

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

HB-1360-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2021 8:38:59 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
HMS BESSD CCPO	Department of Human Services	Comments	No

Comments:

Testimony submitted by the Department of Human Services. Additional DHS staff will be available to provide clarification and respond to questions. Please send the zoom meeting link.



STATE OF HAWAII
Executive Office on Early Learning
2759 South King Street
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

February 23, 2021

TO: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Ty J.K Cullen, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Lauren Moriguchi, Director
Executive Office on Early Learning

SUBJECT: **Measure:** H.B. No. 1360 H.D. 1 – RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING
Hearing Date: Wednesday February 24, 2021
Time: 2:00 p.m.
Location: Videoconference

Bill Description: Establishes an early childhood educator stipend program to be administered by the executive office on early learning to address the shortage of qualified early childhood educators in Hawaii. Requires stipend fund repayments for the early childhood educator stipend program to be deposited into the early learning special fund. Effective 7/1/2050. (HD1).

EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING'S POSITION: Support

Good afternoon. I am Lauren Moriguchi, Director of the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL). EOEL is in **strong support of H.B. 1360 H.D. 1.**

We thank the Legislature for its recognition of the need to increase access to early care and education through the passage of Act 046, SLH 2020 and appreciate the Legislature's recognition of the critical need for qualified early childhood educators in Hawaii. H.B. No. 1360 H.D. 1 will lay the foundation for expanding access to early care and education programs and services by helping to increase providers in the early care and education workforce. Supporting the early care and education workforce will allow us to move faster in achieving the ambitious goals of Act 046 set forth by the Legislature once funds become more available.

EOEL is statutorily responsible for the development of the State's early childhood system that shall ensure a spectrum of high-quality development and learning opportunities for children throughout the state, from prenatal care until the time they enter kindergarten, with priority given to underserved or at-risk children.

An early learning program that is not high-quality is linked to inappropriate referrals to special education, which will increase, rather than save, State funds. **When young children are placed in programs that are not high-quality, we risk setting them on a negative trajectory –**

opposite of the positive outcomes that research has shown are associated with high-quality early learning programs.

One of the most fundamental components of high-quality early learning is a qualified educator. The Institute of Medicine and the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education recognize that “(t)eachers with at least a bachelor’s degree are more likely to aptly approach instruction – they are more sensitive, less punitive, and more engaged.” This is key because “(t)here is general agreement among experts in the field of child development that the quality of classroom interactions between teacher and child contributes substantially to children’s learning and development” (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001).

This is why one of our nation’s foremost experts on early learning says, “**Expansion of public pre-k is only a worthwhile public investment if children receive a high-quality education**” (W. Steven Barnett, Ph.D., Senior Co-Director, National Institute for Early Education Research). We greatly appreciate this vehicle to incentivize the development of a pool of highly qualified early childhood professionals for the State.

H.B. No. 1360 H.D. 1 offers the following:

- Leverages private source funding to establish and implement the program, rather than include appropriations recognizing the dire economic situation the State is currently facing.
- Is a result of discussions with stakeholders across Hawaii’s early childhood field.
- Has the approval of our governing board, the Early Learning Board, which is composed of members across both the public and private sectors who have expertise and experience in various aspects of the early childhood field.
- Would cover early childhood tuition and fees for each individual, reducing financial barriers many students face when attempting to access higher education coursework.
- Targets individuals already working in the early care and education field in Hawaii, so they are more likely to stay in the field.
- Would provide much-needed support for educators who are an undervalued and under-supported workforce, beyond the EOEL Public Prekindergarten Program.
- Is based on the strong foundation laid by the stipend program administered by the University of Hawaii and funded through the federal Preschool Development Legacy Grant that ended in 2019.
- Includes resources for student support and counseling, proven necessary through UH Manoa College of Education’s experience and which further supports the broader workforce.
- Offers the structure needed to attract early childhood educators, which is based on lessons learned from UH Manoa College of Education’s experience and surveys of early childhood education students.

As we have worked toward the goal of creating an effective early childhood system and increasing access to early learning opportunities for our keiki, we realized the gravity of the need to address the severely limited workforce of qualified early childhood educators. **One of the things we’ve learned from our program, as well as through our collaborative work across private and public partners in the field, is that most, if not all, of us cannot find enough qualified staff to expand quickly. In our work to increase access to high-quality early learning, we have made workforce development one of our highest priorities.**

It is during the earliest years when the environments, supports, and relationships experienced by children have profound effects on their developing brains and their learning and development. Children thrive when they have strong relationships with adults who are knowledgeable and

possess the necessary competencies to guide and facilitate their engagement in learning while responding to their individual progress and their social-cultural background. At the core of this complex and important work with young children is strengthening the workforce to reflect the science of learning and development. Qualified educators are especially needed in working with children who experience adversities that place the learning and development at-risk. A qualified workforce is critical to promoting equity for all children.

We respectfully request that you consider this mechanism for workforce development as key to achieving the Legislature’s goal of increasing access to early learning.

Thank you for your consideration, and for the opportunity to testify on this bill. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



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

Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.

To: Representative Luke, Chair
Representative Cullen, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

Re: **HB 1360 HD1- Relating to early learning**
2:00PM, February 24, 2021

Chair Luke, Vice Chair Cullen, and committee members,

On behalf of HCAN Speaks!, thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support of House bill 1360 HD1**, which seeks to establish an early childhood educator stipend program to be administered by the Executive Office on Early Learning to address the shortage of qualified early childhood educators in Hawai'i.

Last session, amidst a pandemic, the legislature recognized the importance of early learning in a child's life and committed to serving all underserved three- and four-year-olds in a learning program by 2032. Developing a qualified workforce to support the expansion of programs will be critical to the legislation's intended goal. House bill 1362 is a needed piece to helping provide opportunities for those interested to pursue a certificate, degree, or license in early childhood education.

The Hawai'i Early Childhood State Plan states "a supported and supportive early childhood workforce is essential to a healthy future for children, families, and Hawai'i"¹. Educational stipends are an important part to offer workforce development and financial relief for early educators.

This bill makes no appropriations recognizing the dire economic situation our state is in. However, there are private funds committed to establish and implement this early childhood stipend program.

One of the most fundamental components of high-quality early learning is a qualified educator. At the core of this complex and important work with young children is strengthening the workforce to reflect the science of learning and development. House bill 1362 HD1 helps to bridge the gap between the workforce we need and the workforce we have.

For these reasons, HCAN Speaks! respectfully requests that your committee vote to pass this bill.

Kathleen Algire
Director of Early Learning and Health Policy

¹ Hawai'i Early Childhood State Plan, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oDDVuzHYh6KmfC-MReI7Vlo-OMDjDnLz/view>



S E A C
Special Education Advisory Council
1010 Richards Street Honolulu, HI 96813
Phone: 586-8126 Fax: 586-8129
email: spin@doh.hawaii.gov
February 24, 2021

**Special Education
Advisory Council**

Ms. Martha Guinan, *Chair*
Ms. Dale Matsuura, *Vice Chair*
Ms. Ivalee Sinclair, *Vice Chair*

Ms. Andrea Alexander
Ms. Brendelyn Ancheta
Ms. Virginia Beringer
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Ms. Carrie Pisciotto
Ms. Kau'i Rezentos
Ms. Rosie Rowe
Dr. David Royer
Mr. James Street
Mr. Francis Taele
Mr. Steven Vannatta
Ms. Lisa Vegas
Ms. Jasmine Williams
Ms. Susan Wood

Ms. Annie Kalama, *liaison to
the Superintendent*
Dr. Bob Campbell, *liaison to
the military community*

Amanda Kaahanui, Staff
Susan Rocco, Staff

Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Committee on Finance
State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: HB 1360 HD 1 - RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

Dear Chair Luke and Members of the Committee,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC), Hawaii's State Advisory Panel under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), **supports** HB 1360, HD 1 which creates an early childhood educator stipend program to address the shortage of qualified early childhood educators in Hawaii and requires a uniform assessment for public and charter school kindergarten students.


Numerous research studies have shown the long term benefits of quality early childhood education programs, including higher high school graduation rates, lower grade retention and drop out rates, and greater social and emotional maturity. There is also ample evidence that access to quality preschool programming can lessen referrals for special education services by providing prevention and early intervention strategies to meet students' diverse needs.

Additionally, increasing the number of early childhood educators who attend an accredited early childhood teacher preparation program will also benefit preschool students who have been identified as having a disability that requires an individualized education program. These high quality preschool teachers are better prepared to accommodate children with IEPs in inclusive classrooms. By creating a larger pool of these teachers, we are also potentially increasing the availability of inclusive placements for students with disabilities.

Mahalo for the opportunity to lend our support to this valuable legislation.

Respectfully,


Martha Guinan
Chair


Ivalee Sinclair
Legislative Committee

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE

PERSONS TESTIFYING: Kaulanakilohana (members of the consortium of early childhood education higher education faculty in Hawai'i)

DATE: Wednesday, February 24, 2021

TIME: 2:00 PM

LOCATION: State Capitol Conference Room 308

TITLE OF BILL: HB1360 RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

Honorable Chair Luke; Vice Chair, Cullen; and Committee Members, Branco, Eli, Holt, Ilagan, Kobayashi, Marten, Nishimoto, Perruso, Sayama, Tam, Wildberger, Yamashita & McDermott,

We, members of Kaulanakilohana, the early childhood education higher education faculty, **strongly support HB1360.**

HB1360 is an essential component to expanding early learning programs: DHS licensed child care settings, public PreKs, home visiting programs, and Native Hawaiian serving programs such as the Family Child Interactive Learning Programs and Hawaiian language medium early childhood education programs. We need to invest in the early childhood workforce in order to grow and sustain all these programs.

Along with facilities, the greatest barrier to expanding new programs is growing and sustaining a knowledgeable and skilled workforce. **HB1360** has the potential to begin to put in place an infrastructure to grow the practitioners needed to expand the programs and services available for young children and their families.

There is broad consensus that **early childhood education is a specialized field of education** which requires “educators who are prepared to create engaging, inclusive, and developmentally grounded learning environments and who can effectively reach and teach diverse learners” (Gardner, Melnick, Meloy & Barajas, 2020, p. 1). Nationwide, minimum standards to ensure quality in state funded PreK require that teachers possess a baccalaureate degree with specialized coursework in early childhood education and assistant teachers or educational aides, complete entry level preparation consistent with industry recognized certificates (National Institute of Early Education Research, 2018).

Likewise, **federal funding streams for programs serving young children** (Child Care Development Block Grants, Headstart, IDEA Part B and C funding) **increasingly require states to show progress in establishing comprehensive and coherent workforce development systems that bridge across sectors and agencies.** It is no longer adequate to train practitioners to meet minimum care and safety standards. Criteria for continued federal funding asks states to move towards more robust systems that develop a well-prepared workforce consistent

with the recommendations of *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unified Foundation* (Institutes of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015).

Problems sustaining a well-prepared workforce negatively impact children from our most vulnerable families, those living in poverty or Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE) families who have difficulty affording early childhood education settings and must depend on assistance in order to obtain services (Aloha United Way, 2018). The Institutes of Medicine and National Research Council (2015) warn that the failure to support early educators with the preparation they need and seek hurts society by perpetuating systems where “adults who are under informed, underprepared, or subject to chronic stress themselves may contribute to children’s experiences of adversity and stress and undermine their development and learning” (p. 493).

Tuition stipends and other forms of support are essential for early childhood educators who are among the lowest paid workers. A majority of the people currently in the workforce are women, a high percentage are mothers from ethnic groups who are underrepresented in higher education, working long hours in some of the lowest paying jobs in the state. Despite being employed in an early childhood job, they often still depend on some form of government aid (Executive Office of Early Learning, 2019; TEACH, 2010). In Hawai‘i, our workforce, particularly outside of the public PreKs, is composed of a large percentage of Native Hawaiian, Filipino and Pacific Islander women. It is typical for workers in this sector to discover a love for this work after experiencing an early childhood setting through their children. Many want to be employed in their neighborhoods and desire to pursue college, increase their earnings, and sustain a living as an early childhood educator. However, they often come from a student population that differs from the typical K-12 pre-service student and find it difficult to meet criteria such as full-time enrollment, that is required by typical financial assistance or loan forgiveness programs available to other educators. Tuition assistance programs for the early childhood workforce must be designed with the flexibility and support that reflects the diversity of our student-practitioners (TEACH, 2018).

Many states offer targeted financial assistance programs in order to stimulate the expansion of their early learning workforce in order to encourage degree attainment despite the dismally low wages in the field (National Academies of Sciences, 2019).

HB1360 provides the opportunity to put in place a sustained infrastructure based on the successes of a tuition support program already piloted and refined between 2018-2019.

The tuition stipend program proposed in HB1360 is structured to reflect lessons learned from an 18 month, \$330,000 workforce development tuition stipend program funded through a US Preschool Development Legacy Grant (2018-2019). The federally funded pilot was the first coordinated, systemic effort to

disseminate public funds to practitioners statewide who were enrolled as early childhood education students across the UH system and Chaminade University. A key to the program's success was addressing the diverse entry points and educational aspirations of practitioners in the field and intentionally funding certificates and degrees at all levels, from entry level positions, to lead teachers in classrooms, to the instructional positions essential to growing an infrastructure necessary to expand public PreK, child care, and other early learning programs in the state. The stipend program proposed in HB1360 builds on the previous collaborations between the Hawaii Charter School Commission, the Executive Office of Early Learning, the UH System and Chaminade University early childhood teacher preparation programs. Through that grant we demonstrated the ability to:

- Address the absence of dedicated teacher loan forgiveness or other forms of financial assistance programs available to early childhood educators.
- Provide a vehicle to administrate tuition support across all ECE preparation programs and at all levels (entry level aides or educational assistants, lead teachers, leaders)
- Include early childhood students enrolled in preparation programs for both state recognized languages (e.g. English and Hawaiian language medium and Hawaiian culture based early childhood education preparation programs).
- Provide specialized advising and wrap around supports to encourage recruitment, retention and persistence in college courses (90% course completion rate).
- Gather data to evaluate the effectiveness of services in a comprehensive manner across all campuses.

The Executive Office of Early Learning (EOEL) provides leadership in early learning system building efforts across the various agencies and stakeholders. As the administrator of the program, this would enable the Office to coordinate with higher education institutions to ensure a cohesive system to support the development of the workforce.

Furthermore, Hawai'i has a competitive proposal for a national grant, ECE³, to improve the alignment and stacking of degrees and certificates and to increase access for neighbor island and underserved students in the workforce. HB1360 is an opportunity for the Legislature and Governor to take action consistent with their letters of support for the grant. A cohesive system of advising and support, including financial support for students, is a critical next step that will enable us to build a workforce with the knowledge and competencies necessary to support young children and their families. With the passage of HB1360, generous seed money from the private sector will help us to begin to address a key component of an early learning workforce development system. The bill leverages private funds and is a way to support workforce development in early childhood education without requiring appropriations during a time of fiscal restraint.

The COVID-19 pandemic has truly brought attention to the critical human infrastructure that programs for young children provide. A safe, stimulating learning environment for each ohana's young children will be essential to rebuilding our economy. Key to this is knowledgeable and skilled adults who can support the learning of young children in a manner consistent with the research on early learning.

We strongly support HB1360. The stipend program is a critical step towards realizing the Legislature and Governor's aspirations to sustain and build an early learning system for the state.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Kaulanakilohana (Early childhood education higher education faculty in Hawai'i)

Chaminade University - Elizabeth Park, PhD and Yan Yan Imamura, MEd
Hawai'i Community College - Janet Smith, MA; and Brenda Watanabe, MEd
Honolulu Community College - Ann Abeshima, EdD; Elizabeth Hartline, MA; Eva Moravcik; Caroline Soga, PhD; Laurie Ann Takeno, EdM; and Cyndi Uyehara, MEd

Kaua'i Community College - Antonia Fujimoto, MA

University of Hawai'i at Hilo Ka Haka 'Uka O Ke'elikōlani - Noelani Iokepa-Guerrero, PhD

University of Hawai'i at West O'ahu – Susan Adler, PhD

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa – Christopher Au, PhD, Robyn Chun, MEd; Richard Johnson, EdD; Theresa Lock, EdD; Leah Muccio, PhD

University of Hawai'i Maui College – Julie Powers, MA; Gemma Medina MEd

To: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Ty J.K. Cullen, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee On Finance

From: Robert G. Peters, Chair
Early Learning Board

Subject: **Measure:** HB 1360, HD 1, Relating to Early Learning
Hearing Date: Thursday, February 24, 2021
Time: 2:00 PM
Location: **Via Video Conference**, Conference Room 308

Description: Establishes an early childhood educator stipend program to be administered by the executive office on early learning to address the shortage of qualified early childhood educators in Hawaii. Requires stipend fund repayments for the early childhood educator stipend program to be deposited into the early learning special fund. Effective 7/1/2050

Early Learning Board Position: Support

I am Robert G. Peters, Chair of the Early Learning Board (ELB). Thank you for this opportunity to offer written testimony on this bill, HB 1360, HD 1, on behalf of the Early Learning Board.

Through Act 202, Session Laws of Hawaii 2017, ELB transitioned from an advisory to a governing board for the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) and is charged with formulating statewide policy relating to early learning. We are composed of members from across the early childhood field, in both the public and private sectors.

ELB's mission is to support children's academic and lifelong well-being by directing and supporting the EOEL for an effective, coordinated, high-quality early learning system from prenatal to kindergarten entry. We support efforts that promote the development of this system for our keiki and families.

The ELB has made workforce development one of its highest priorities in order to expand access to high-quality early learning for our keiki. The Board appreciates the Legislature's passage of Act 046, SLH 2020. Supporting the early care and education workforce will allow us to move faster toward achieving the ambitious goals of Act 046 once funds become more available. It is increasingly critical now as we face the impact of COVID-19 on our keiki and their families. We know that women, the primary providers of early care and learning, have been most seriously challenged by the fall-out from the pandemic. Private providers tell us they are grappling with a limited workforce of qualified early childhood educators. And even within the EOEL Public Pre-K Program, now with just over 40 classrooms across the state, recruitment and retention are serious barriers to expansion and access.

The Early Learning Board seeks to work with the Legislature and the broader community to identify and implement plans to expand the workforce to increase access to Hawaii's keiki and their families. It appreciates this bill's potential to build the preschool workforce by incentivizing many who can contribute to the profession and the achievement of the goals of expansion of preschool opportunities.

The ELB respectfully requests your consideration of the following benefits of HB 1360:

- Leverages private source funding to establish and implement the program, rather than include appropriations recognizing the dire economic situation the State currently faces .

- Is a result of discussions with stakeholders across Hawaii's early childhood field.
- Would cover early childhood tuition and fees for each individual, reducing financial barriers many students face when attempting to access higher education course work.
- Targets individuals already working in the early care and education field in Hawaii, so they are more likely to stay in the field.
- Would provide much - needed support for educators who are an undervalued and under - supported workforce, beyond the EOEL Public Prekindergarten Program.
- Is based on the strong foundation laid by the stipend program administered by the University of Hawaii and funded through the federal Preschool Development Legacy Grant that ended in 2019.
- Includes resources for student support and counseling, proven necessary through UH Manoa College of Education's experience and which further supports the broader workforce.
- Offers the structure needed to attract early childhood educators, which is based on lessons learned from UH Manoa College of Education's experience and surveys of early childhood education students.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 1360, HD 1.

Date: February 22, 2021

To: House Committee on Finance
Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Ty J.K. Cullen, Vice Chair

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: Support for HB1360, Relating to Early Learning

Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS) is a statewide cross-sector collaborative designed to improve the system of care for Hawai'i's youngest children and their families. ECAS partners work to align priorities for children prenatal to age eight, streamline services, maximize resources, and improve programs to support our youngest keiki.

ECAS strongly supports passage of HB1360, which would establish an early childhood educator stipend program in order to address the growing and critical shortage of qualified early childhood educators in Hawai'i.

High-quality early care and education programs are fundamental to thriving children, flourishing families, and a robust economy; And an effective, well-trained, early childhood workforce is the backbone of these programs. According to the 2020 National Early Childhood Workforce Index (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment) there are an estimated 3,410 members of the early childhood teaching workforce providing services to Hawai'i's children. Yet many more well-trained professionals are needed to support and sustain the expansion of Hawai'i's early care and education system to meet the child-development, school-readiness, child care, employment, and economic needs of the state.

The stipends proposed by HB1360 are a critical measure designed to aid in the recruitment, education, and retention of early childhood professionals. Stipends, along with bonuses, are a key financial relief strategy for a workforce that suffers from chronically low wages and turnover. National estimates suggest that more than one in four early childhood professionals changed jobs in 2019 and half of them left the profession in the last three years (c.f.: Colorado's Early Childhood Workforce 2020 Plan). Hawaii is currently one of only 14 states that do not offer a statewide supplement or bonus program to support their early care and education workforce (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment). HB1360 would take a helpful step towards redressing the lack of support and resources for professionals in the field.

Recognizing the dire economic situation in which our state finds itself, HB1360 makes no appropriations. Instead, the bill leverages private-source funding committed to establishing and implementing this early childhood stipend program.



In order for Hawai'i to build back better from the pandemic and continue to thrive and attract new businesses and professionals, the state must prioritize strategies to attract, retain and support a strong early childhood workforce –both for the state's growing economy and for the state's population of families with young children.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.



TO: Chair Luke, Vice Chair Cullen, and Members of the House Committee on Finance

FROM: Ryan Kusumoto, President & CEO of Parents And Children Together (PACT)

DATE/LOCATION: February 24, 2021; 2:00 p.m., Conference Room 308/Video Conference

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1360 HD1 – RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

We ask you to support HB 1360 HD 1 which seeks to establish an early childhood educator stipend program to be administered by the executive office on early learning to address the shortage of qualified early childhood educators in Hawaii.

We thank the legislature for its passage of Act 046, SLH 2020 to increase access to early care and education in Hawaii. Given the legislature's and community's current priority of expanding access to high-quality early care and learning programs, we must also continue to expand the number of qualified educators in the field. We believe that it is critically important to make early learning an attractive career and to support our early learning workforce so that we can continue to build an interested, dedicated and highly qualified pipeline of educators. The teacher stipend program is an important piece of the increasing access to early learning puzzle and we hope that state policy will work towards putting all the critical pieces together for effective systems change and the long-term benefit of our keiki and community.

As a provider of Head Start and Early Head Start programs on Oahu and Hawaii Island we understand the importance of having teachers who are grounded in educational best practices and specifically early childhood. We have also experienced the difficulty in filling our early learning staff vacancies on both islands due to a lack of qualified and/or interested/available applicants. Data shows that high-quality care and education during the earliest stages of a child's development provides a critical foundation for later educational and life success. Early childhood is a particularly critical time in a child's development and focused efforts need to be placed on building a strong pipeline of teachers who can deliver age-appropriate curriculum, structures and strategies that address the needs of our youngest learners. The early educator stipend program would encourage those interested in or already in the field to pursue a certificate, degree, or license in early childhood education and fill the critical need for qualified educators across the early learning system in our state.

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 15,000 people across the state annually, PACT helps families

identify, address and successfully resolve challenges through its 18 programs. Among its services are: early education programs, domestic violence prevention and intervention programs, child abuse prevention and intervention programs, childhood sexual abuse supportive group services, child and adolescent behavioral health programs, sex trafficking intervention, poverty prevention and community building programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support of HB 1360 HD 1**, please contact me at (808) 847-3285 or rkusumoto@pacthawaii.org if you have any questions.