

**To:** Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair  
Representative Jeanne Kapela, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee On Education

**From:** Robert G. Peters, Chair  
Early Learning Board

**Subject:** **Measure:** HR 17/ HCR 19  
**Hearing Date:** Thursday, March 24, 2022  
**Time:** 2:00 PM  
**Location:** Conference Room 309 and videoconference

**Description:** Urging the Department of Education to report to the Legislature regarding the amount of public school space available to be used for preschool classrooms and the number of public school teachers certified to teach early childhood education.

**Early Learning Board Position: Comments**

Aloha. I am Robert G. Peters, Chair of the Early Learning Board (ELB). Thank you for this opportunity to offer comments about HR 17/ HCR 19 on behalf of the ELB.

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. The ELB is composed of 17 representatives from across the early childhood field, in both the public and private sectors.

Act 046, SLH 2020, assigns EOEL the responsibility for expanding access to early learning programs for all 3- and 4-year-olds, which will require expanded facility capacity appropriate for young children. Knowing the amount of space available in public schools for use as pre-K classrooms would prove helpful in planning for expansion as would estimated cost of retrofitting classrooms if they currently do not meet required pre-K specifications.

The ELB has recently engaged an Institutional Analyst to coordinate the implementation of Act 210, as approved by the Legislature in 2021. Data about the workforce will be critically important to move forward with expansion of access to quality early care and learning in our State and in order to be responsive to individual Island needs and circumstances. In addition to knowing how many teachers currently employed by the DOE are certified to teach early childhood education, it is also important to know how many of those certified teachers are available to do so and where across the State they are located.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments with regard to HR 17/ HCR 19.



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

March 23, 2022

**TO:** Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair  
Representative Jeanne Kapela, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Education

**FROM:** Coleen Momohara, Interim Director  
Executive Office on Early Learning

**SUBJECT:** **Measure:** HR 17 / HCR 19  
**Hearing Date:** Thursday, March 24, 2022  
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**Bill Description:** Urging the Department of Education to report to the Legislature regarding the amount of public school space available to be used for preschool classrooms and the number of public school teachers certified to each early childhood education.

**EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING: Comments**

Aloha. I am Coleen Momohara, Interim Director of the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL). EOEL provides comments on HR 17 / HCR 19 and defers to the Department of Education (HIDOE) related to the provisions in and implementation of the resolution.

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. We also administer the EOEL Public Pre-K Program in collaboration with HIDOE. This resolution urges the HIDOE to report to the Legislature amount of public-school space available to be used for preschool classrooms. We would like to emphasize that classrooms also need to be assessed to determine if the space is conducive for young learners. Although space may be available, some classrooms may need to be repurposed or reconstructed to meet the needs of preschool-aged children.

This resolution also urges the HIDOE to include in its report the number of teachers qualified to teach early childhood education. If the intention of this request is to assess workforce capacity, **one of the things we've learned from our Program, as well as 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.** We must be sure this workforce is in place if we want new classrooms and programs to have qualified educators and for successful expansion. In addition, if the request is to determine the number of teachers qualified to teach in the EOEL Public Prekindergarten Program, reference needs to be made to the requirements set forth in Hawaii Revised Statutes Chapter 302 L-7. Furthermore, pursuant to Hawaii Revised Statutes Chapter

302 L-7, both teachers and educational assistants provide direct services to children in the EOEL Public Pre-K classroom.

High-quality early childhood programs help “build the foundations for stronger family lives that result in larger gains for their children” and have “substantial second-generation effects on education, employment, crime, school suspensions, and health” (Heckman, James, and Ganesh Karapukula, 2019). We are committed to increasing access while building the infrastructure needed to make sure the State’s investment reaps the intended returns and should this resolution move forward, we look forward to working with the HIDEOE to provide more pertinent information to the Legislature regarding public preschool expansion.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this resolution.