



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

February 3, 2021

TO: Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Lauren Moriguchi, Director
Executive Office on Early Learning

SUBJECT: **Measure:** S.B. No. 1271 – RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING
Hearing Date: Friday February 5, 2021
Time: 3:00 p.m.
Location: Room 229

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.

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 S.B. 1271**. 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. S.B. No. 1271 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.

S.B. No. 1271 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’ve 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.

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

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

DATE: Friday, February 5, 2021

TIME: 3:00 PM

LOCATION: State Capitol Conference Room 229

TITLE OF BILL: SB 1271 RELATING TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR STIPEND PROGRAM

Honorable Chair, Kidani; Vice Chair, Mercado Kim; and Committee Members, Dela Cruz, Fevella, and Mamo Kanuha,

We, members of Kaulanakilohana, the early childhood education higher education faculty, **strongly support SB 1271.**

SB 1271 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. **SB 1271** 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 for 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 dimly low wages in the field (National Academies of Sciences, 2019). SB1271 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 SB 1271 is structured to reflect lessons learned from an 18 month, \$289,000 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 SB 1271 builds on previous collaborations between the office and UH System and Chaminade University early childhood programs and is designed to:

- Address the absence of dedicated teacher loan forgiveness or other forms of financial assistance programs for 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. SB 1271 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 SB 1271, generous seed money from the Samuel N. and Mary Castle Foundation will help us to begin to address a key component of an early learning workforce development system.

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 the 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 SB 1271. 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

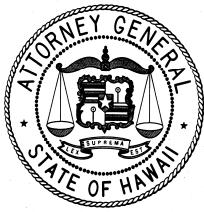
University of Hawai'i at Hilo Ka Haka 'Uka O Ke'elikōlani - Noelani Iokepa-Guerrero, PhD

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



**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
THIRTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE, 2021**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

S.B. NO. 1271, RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING.

BEFORE THE:

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

DATE: Friday, February 5, 2021 **TIME:** 3:00 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Via Videoconference Conference Room 229

TESTIFIER(S): **WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY.**
(For more information, contact Melissa J. Kolonie,
Deputy Attorney General, at 586-1255)

Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments.

The purposes of this bill are to: (1) establish an early childhood educator stipend program to be administered by the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) to address the shortage of qualified early childhood educators in Hawaii; and (2) require stipend fund repayments for the early childhood educator stipend program to be deposited into the early learning special fund.

Subsection (e) of the new section being added to chapter 302L, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), by section 2 of the bill, on page 6, lines 9-16, allows the EOEL to enter into contracts with collection agencies to collect delinquent repayment of stipends owed to EOEL. Subsection (e) also allows the collection agency to collect a fee from the debtor. Under section 443B-9(a), HRS,

A collection agency shall not collect, or attempt to collect, any collection fee or attorney's fee or commission from any debtor; provided that an attorney's fee or commission may be collected after filing of a suit against any debtor and the fee or commission shall not be in excess of twenty-five per cent of the unpaid principal balance. All attorney's fees or commissions collected by a

collection agency shall be remitted to the attorney and no portion of the collection shall be retained by the collection agency.

Section 443B-9(b), HRS, provides exemptions to subsection (a), allowing a collection agency to collect, or attempt to collect, from a debtor, a commission authorized under a contract with the University of Hawaii or with the Department of Taxation. Therefore, we respectfully recommend the Committee amend the bill by amending section 443B-9(b), HRS, to also allow a collection agency that is contracted by EOEL to collect a commission.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide 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 4, 2021

TO: The Honorable Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair
Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 1271 – RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING.**

Hearing: Friday, February 5, 2021, 3:00 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 passage of this measure does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the executive budget.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the bill establishes an early 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.

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.

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
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FOR: SB 1271 Relating to Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program
DATE: February 5, 2021
TIME: 3:00 P.M.
COMMITTEE: Committee on Education
ROOM: Conference Room 229
FROM: Yvonne Lau, Interim Executive Director
State Public Charter School Commission

Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and members of the Committee:

The State Public Charter School Commission (“Commission”) appreciates the opportunity to submit this testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT of SB 1271** which establishes the early childhood educator stipend program to teachers and Educational Assistants (“EAs”) that would help to offset the costs of enrolling in higher education classes.

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 clearly 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.

To: Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee On Education

From: Robert G. Peters, Chair
Early Learning Board

Subject: **Measure:** SB 1271, Relating to Early Learning
Hearing Date: Friday, February 5, 2021
Time: 3:00 PM
Location: Conference Room 229

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.

Early Learning Board Position: Support

I am Robert G. Peters, Chair of the Early Learning Board (ELB). Thank you for this opportunity to offer comments on this bill, HB No. 2094, H.D. 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 and supporting the early care and education workforce will allow us to move faster in 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 SB 1271:

- 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.
- 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 SB 1271.



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: Senator Kidani, Chair
Senator Kim, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Education

Re: **SB 1271- Relating to early learning**
3:00PM, February 5, 2021

Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and committee members,

On behalf of HCAN Speaks!, thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support of Senate bill 1271**, 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. Senate bill 1271 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. Senate bill 1271 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>

Date: February 4, 2021

To: Senate Committee on Education
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: Support for SB1271, Relating to Early Learning

Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS) is a statewide public-private collaborative designed to improve the system of care for Hawai'i's youngest children and their families. ECAS partners are working 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 SB1271, 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. 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).

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.

60% of preschoolers in Hawai'i (64,172 children) live in families where all parents and caregivers are working. Yet many communities lack an effective, well-trained early childhood workforce.

SB1271 responds to these concerns by encouraging and supporting young adults to consider careers in early childhood care and learning.

We thank you for your consideration of this measure.

SB-1271

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 12:05:41 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/5/2021 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
cheryl B.	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

SUPPORT.

As an early child educator, fully in support.

Early Childhood Services: Promoting Positive Outcomes for Young Children

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) supports effective early childhood education and intervention as a means of promoting positive outcomes for all young children (Pianta, Barnett, Justice, & Sheridan, 2012). NASP believes that school psychology services should be provided for young children with and without identified disabilities and risk factors from birth to age 8. NASP advocates for services that are coordinated, prevention-oriented, developmentally appropriate, and grounded in evidence-based practice. Furthermore, NASP recognizes that children develop in the context of families, communities, and culture, and therefore, services must be sensitive and relevant to the cultural and linguistic diversity of young children and their families. NASP supports active roles for school psychologists in early childhood education and intervention that result in innovative approaches to collaboration, assessment and evaluation, and instruction and intervention across multiple settings, including schools, primary practice settings, and early childhood centers. Effective practices across these environments support behavioral and social–emotional development, school readiness, transition to school, and early school success for all young children.

COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Young children must be valued within the context of their families, cultures, communities, and society (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2015). School psychologists form collaborative relationships with families, early educators, and communities to best understand young children and meet their needs. Collaborative relationships with families demonstrate value of the role of parents' engagement in early learning, and such relationships support young children in the transition from early education to kindergarten and later school experiences (McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, Reed, & Wildenger, 2010). School psychologists develop relationships with families of young children that are consistent with family needs and build on family strengths (Coffee, Ray-Subramaian, Schanding, & Feeney-Kettler, 2013). School psychologists collaborate with families in assessment and intervention practices to ensure that practices result in meaningful outcomes that increase children's participation in their daily environments.

Collaborative relationships with community partners—such as physicians, preschool teachers, child care providers, parent support groups, early childhood educators, and related service providers (e.g., occupational and physical therapists, speech-language pathologists and mental health service providers)—facilitate comprehensive and thorough Child Find¹ activities and ensure access to services across a wide spectrum of supports. Collaboration with early childhood professionals promotes high-quality experiences for children that foster early learning and social–emotional competencies linked to continued school success (Pierce & Bruns, 2013). These collaborations also provide a connection between settings to support children's transition to elementary school (McGoey, Rispoli, Schneider, Clark, & Novak, 2013). Alignment of learning goals, linked systems of assessment, coordination of

¹ Child Find is a component of special education that involves evaluation of children's developmental progress to identify children at risk for disabilities.

services, communication, and planning facilitate transition and promote adaptation to the next environment.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

NASP believes that effective assessment and evaluation practices are likely to result in improved outcomes for all young children. To promote accurate and meaningful assessment for young children, school psychologists encourage families' active engagement in assessment efforts and ensure that practices are responsive to the cultural, linguistic, and diverse needs of young children and their families (Ortiz, 2008). Collaborative relationships with families and early educators facilitate the identification of important goals for learning and development, methods of formative assessment, carefully planned instruction, and program evaluation. Additionally, consideration of the purpose and utility of screening and assessment data, criteria for data-based decision making, and the technical adequacy of the tools selected is paramount in early education. Assessment and evaluation efforts emphasize multimethod, multi-informant approaches that incorporate observations in natural environments that contextualize data, and that provide a more comprehensive understanding of the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of young children in classrooms and early education settings.

A multitiered system of services (MTSS) delivery framework for assessment and instruction and intervention to meet the diverse needs of young children is likely to be the most effective (Coffee et al., 2013). Multitiered services include successively more intensive assessment and instruction for children based on their needs. At the universal level (i.e., Tier 1), school psychologists promote universal screening practices that facilitate identification of young children who may benefit from additional intervention to support the development of adaptive early learning and social-emotional competencies (Kettler & Feeney-Kettler, 2011). School psychologists support universal screening by working toward the inclusion of all children in evaluation and accountability efforts and by implementing screening practices at regular intervals using technically adequate indicators of growth and learning in key domains. Finally, school psychologists support universal screening by analyzing screening results in the context of an MTSS, using data to develop criteria for determining when children are at risk for not acquiring necessary foundational skills. With regard to instruction, at the universal level, school psychologists collaborate with early educators to identify positive classroom practices for all children that increase opportunities for learning in key domains.

Early childhood education should be guided by formative assessment approaches that are grounded in developmental science and are developmentally appropriate. For young children participating in early childhood services, effective progress monitoring of early learning and social-emotional skills promotes formative data-based decision making (Greenwood, Carta, & McConnell, 2011). School psychologists collect data in naturalistic settings across a range of targets, including observations of child performance and behavior as well as contextual variables that support early learning and social interactions. Collectively, these data are used to guide effective intervention and evaluation of intervention efforts. Such data also can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of early intervention programs and inform any necessary changes (Greenwood et al., 2011). At the targeted level (i.e., Tier 2), school psychologists assist educators, related service providers, and families in developing supplementary instructional strategies for children who may benefit from additional support, which may include additional supplemental practice of a behavioral, social-emotional, and/or academic skill delivered through small group instruction.

At the intensive level (i.e., Tier 3), school psychologists integrate assessment data with other sources to identify appropriate supports for children, promoting flexibility in defining outcomes so individual child progress is meaningful and functional. School psychologists also guide educators and families in identifying targets for skill development, developing individualized appropriate interventions, and evaluating interventions to determine effectiveness (Conroy, Sutherland, Vo, Carr, & Ogston, 2014).

At all levels, school psychologists support effective implementation of assessment practices and instruction and intervention by monitoring the integrity of procedures and the meaningfulness of outcomes. School psychologists consult with families, teachers, physicians, and educational personnel, providing professional development, support, and technical assistance in data-based decision making (e.g., methods of data collection, creating and interpreting graphs, and linking data to program changes) to plan and evaluate instruction to accommodate all young learners in early education and as they enter kindergarten (Sheridan, Clarke, Knoche, & Edwards, 2006).

EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION AND INTERVENTION

NASP believes there are core features of effective early childhood educational environments, regardless of the service delivery system used. Through intentional and strategic experiences, children develop learning-related skills that allow them to participate in classroom activities and routines; gain social and emotional skills that facilitate positive interpersonal relationships; and acquire fundamental skills related to communication, literacy, mathematics, and critical thinking. Effective early childhood instruction includes specific learning goals across domains of development (e.g., social and emotional, motor, language and communication, cognitive, and early academics) to promote interactions, instruction, and interventions that are focused and intentional (Hemmeter, Ostrosky, & Fox, 2006). Teaching practices incorporate appropriate learning goals for all children with a focus on functional skills that increase children's participation in their daily environments (Hojnoski & Missal, 2010; McGoey et al., 2013) as well as attention to maintenance and generalization of skills across settings and time. Teacher-directed instruction is balanced with strategic and thoughtful learning experiences that allow children to play, explore, and discover independently. All instructional approaches are authentic, culturally responsive, and contextually appropriate. Consideration is given to ecological congruence, sustainability over time, and acceptability to families and teachers.

ROLE OF THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

To promote high-quality early education practices, school psychologists partner with early educators and families to create rich learning experiences that will provide children with the skills for school success. Through collaboration with early educators, they identify classroom strengths and instructional needs to create effective learning environments. By promoting research-based instructional strategies that support children's learning, and by using a scientific framework in developing instruction and intervention, school psychologists collaborate with families and early educators to create home-school connections that support children's learning (Sheridan et al., 2006). They support ongoing evaluation of instruction and intervention at the program, classroom, and individual child levels to ensure that children are making adequate progress towards meaningful outcomes.

SUMMARY

NASP advocates for school psychologists as active partners in early childhood education. School psychologists can serve to link early childhood settings with K–12 systems to promote a more seamless

continuum of services. The NASP domains of training and practice are highly relevant to the provision of effective services for young children with and without identified disabilities and risk factors, from birth to age 8. Collaborative relationships, responsive assessment, evaluation and accountability efforts, and effective developmentally appropriate instruction and interventions are all elements of practice consistent with NASP's vision and mission. NASP advocates for school psychologists to have active roles in early education and intervention to prevent later school problems and support optimal outcomes for all young children.

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