



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

April 5, 2022

TO: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

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

SUBJECT: **Measure:** SCR 13 / SR 7
Hearing Date: Tuesday, April 5, 2022
Time: 10:40 a.m
Location: Videoconference & conference room 211

Bill Description: Requesting the Legislative Reference Bureau to conduct a study on the feasibility of the state establishing a universal, no-cost pre-kindergarten program.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING'S POSITION: Comments

Aloha. I am Coleen Momohara, Interim Director of the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL). EOEL provides comments on SCR 13 / SR 7 and defers to the Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB) regarding implementation and funding needs.

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.

Efforts are currently underway, within EOEL and across various departments, to achieve the provisions set forth in Act 046, SLH 2020, which aims to increase access of early learning programs for all 3- and 4-year-olds across the early learning system. The act includes provisions that would support expansion of the mixed delivery system, which includes private and public sector programs.

Similarly, the Universal Pre-K and Child Care Entitlement provisions that were included in the Build Back Better federal legislation recognized that efforts to achieve universal prekindergarten must include a mixed delivery system. To meet the needs of our young children in Hawaii, collaboration within and across both sectors will be necessary.

To meaningfully assess feasibility, there are critical factors that should be considered, including:

- Current capacity and potential areas of expansion;
- Impact of implementation of a universal, no-cost pre-k system to current capacity;
- Parent/family needs;
- Workforce supports, including compensation and other recruitment and retention efforts;
- Effective governance structures;
- Quality standards that promote successful child outcomes; and
- Long-term and sustainable financing mechanisms and sources.

There are many entities, individuals, and stakeholders that can help inform this study should this resolution pass. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

Date: April 3, 2022

To: Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: **Comments on SCR13/SR7, Relating to a Study on Universal No-Cost Pre-Kindergarten**

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 appreciates the intent of **SCR13/SR7**, which request the Legislative Reference Bureau to conduct a study on the feasibility of the state establishing a universal, no-cost pre-kindergarten program, and offers the following comments:

- The state has previously researched and developed plans for preschool expansion. If a Universal Pre-Kindergarten feasibility study were to move forward, efforts should **build from existing research**, including the Hawai'i Early Childhood State Plan, the Hawai'i Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five Early Childhood Comprehensive Needs Assessment, and the soon-to-be released Hawai'i Early Childhood Educator Excellence and Equity (ECE3) Project.
- The Early Learning Educational Task Force Report (Act 259, 2006), identified workforce as the major barrier for expanding preschool services to four-year-olds. Since that time, workforce conditions have only worsened, particularly as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Any new Universal Pre-Kindergarten feasibility study should place **workforce concerns** and proposed strategies for addressing recruitment, retention, compensation and professional development needs at the center.
- A **mixed-delivery system**, which administers funds across licensed center- and family-based child care programs, Head Start, Early Head Start, public schools, and community-based organizations, has been identified as the most cost-effective and sustainable solution for delivering affordable high-quality early care and education to all children. New research into the feasibility of Universal Pre-Kindergarten in Hawai'i should specifically explore utilization of a mixed-delivery system in its approach to universal prekindergarten.
- Limited private-participation or public-only delivery systems for prekindergarten can have significant negative consequences on families and the early care and learning system, particularly in relation to child care for **infants and toddlers**. In addition to an examination of a mixed-delivery system approach to universal prekindergarten, any new research should include a review of impacts of other universal prek approaches on infant/toddler care and measures for mitigating potential negative consequences on the availability, cost and quality of child care and early learning services for infants and toddlers.

- Finally, any recommendations emerging from a Universal Pre-Kindergarten feasibility study should be in-line with the **Executive Office on Early Learning's** nationally recognized public preschool program and be inclusive of the **State Public Charter School Commission's** early learning/preschool programs.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on these resolutions.