

OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
Ke Ke'ena O Ka Hope Kia'aina

TO: Chair Justin Woodson
Vice Chair Lisa Marten
Members of the House Committee on Education

FROM: Sylvia Luke, Lieutenant Governor

RE: Testimony for S.B. 1023 – Relating to Early Learning

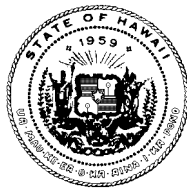
DATE: March 21, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **strong support of S.B. 1023** which appropriates funds for the Preschool Open Doors Program and the Executive Office on Early Learning to expand access to preschool, expands accreditation opportunities, and authorizes the acceptance of federal funds.

Access to preschool is a social justice issue for our state and we know that children who attend high-quality preschool are much better prepared for success. Together with our public, private, and non-profit sector partners, we recently launched the Ready Keiki initiative, the administration's multi-faceted plan to expand high-quality childcare and preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds by 2032. We are focused on ensuring our keiki are ready when they start Kindergarten and creating economic stability for families who are returning to the workforce. Ready Keiki's success is contingent upon a multi-pronged approach which includes building and refurbishing classrooms, creating teaching pathways for educators, and expanding the Preschool Open Doors program for low- and moderate-income families. The amendments proposed in S.B. 1023 are critical to ensuring that we maximize federal funding and opportunities to provide enough classrooms at an affordable price to economically disadvantaged keiki.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of S.B. 1023.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

March 17, 2023

TO: The Honorable Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
House Committee on Education

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 1023 SD1 HD1 – RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING**

HEARING: Tuesday, March 21, 2023, 2:10 p.m.
Conference Room 309 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this bill and provides comments. The executive budget request (HB300) included most of the funds for the expansion and one-time operating expenses to implement the expansion proposed in this measure. However, the executive budget (HB300) does not include the funds to expand contract services. DHS respectfully requests that the funds be appropriated through the executive budget measure.

PURPOSE: The bill appropriates funds for the preschool open doors program and executive office on early learning to expand access to preschool and to implement program changes required by previous acts. Expands the types of entities from which a preschool open doors service provider may obtain accreditation. Authorizes the preschool open doors special fund to accept federal funds. Effective 7/1/2050. (HD1)

The SD1 amended this measure by:

- (1) Changing the effective date to July 1, 2050, to facilitate further discussion on the measure; and

- (2) Making technical nonsubstantive amendments for purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

The HD1 further amended this measure by making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for purposes of clarity, consistency, and style. STAND. COM. REP. NO. 1255 noted the Department's recommendation that the Legislature consider an appropriation amount of \$39,836,000 for fiscal year 2024-2025. The Department further recommends that an appropriation of \$39,336,000 be considered for fiscal year 2025-2026 to avoid disruption to services beyond the fiscal year 2024-2025.

To implement the expanded program, DHS will need time to draft and amend administrative rules and make needed system modifications.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.



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

March 19, 2023

TO: Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Representative Lisa Marten, Vice Chair
House Committee on Education

FROM: Yuuko Arikawa-Cross, Director
Executive Office on Early Learning

SUBJECT: Measure: S.B. No.1023 S.D. 1 H.D. 1 – RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING
Hearing Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023
Time: 2:10 pm
Location: Conference Room 309

EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING'S POSITION: Support

EOEL supports S.B. No. 1023 and defers to the Department of Human Services (DHS) as it pertains to the Preschool Open Doors program.

The EOEL Public Pre-K program currently only serves children in the year prior to entering kindergarten and EOEL supports the effort to expand enrollment to three-year-olds. As such, we respectfully request that section 4 of S.B. No. 1023 S.D. 1 H.D. 1 be amended to include amendments to section (b) subsections (1) and (2) of Chapter 302 L-7 to also reflect the addition of three-year-olds as follows:

“(b) The office shall implement an application process for schools that are interested in participating in the program. The criteria to prioritize applications shall include:

- (1) Community need, including:
 - (A) The percentage of the population in the school or community that meets the definitions of at-risk and underserved children pursuant to section 302L-1; and
 - (B) The availability and capacity of existing early learning programs or services for three and four-year-old children on the school campus and in the surrounding area;
- (2) The availability of a classroom and outdoor play area that meet department of human services requirements for health and safety for three and four-year-old children”

EOEL looks forward to continuing to work with the Legislature to support increasing access to affordable quality early learning programs and services in the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Education
Tuesday, March 21, 2023, at 2:10 p.m.

By

Debora Halbert
Vice President for Academic Strategy
University of Hawai'i System

SB 1023 SD1 HD1 – RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Marten, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 1023 SD1 HD1. The University of Hawai'i (UH) supports the Legislature's intent to expand access to affordable and quality early care and education opportunities to three-year-olds across the State.

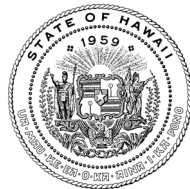
Currently, only four-year-olds and children in the year prior to entering kindergarten are eligible to participate and enroll in EOEL's public pre-kindergarten (PreK) program and Department of Human Services' (DHS) Preschool Open Doors (POD) child care subsidy program. This bill would expand the age-eligibility of EOEL's PreK program and DHS' POD child care subsidy program to include three-year-olds, thus increasing access to these programs and easing the financial burden many families face when accessing early learning opportunities.

UH is working collaboratively with stakeholders, including DHS, EOEL, the School Facilities Authority (SFA), and the Department of Education (DOE) to increase the availability of early care and education programs on a number of UH campuses. And while we are still developing how these facilities and programs can be sustained, we believe that State support of early childhood programs and facilities – wherever they may be located – are valuable to advancing educational development and learning for Hawai'i keiki.

We appreciate the Legislature's intention to provide financial assistance for more families to access affordable and quality early care and education and defer to DHS and EOEL regarding the implementation and provisions of the sections of the bill that are pertinent to the respective offices.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony on this bill.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



LUIS P. SALAVERIA
DIRECTOR

SABRINA NASIR
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
Ka 'Oihana Mālama Mo'ohelu a Kālā
P.O. BOX 150
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT DIVISION
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT

WRITTEN ONLY
TESTIMONY BY LUIS P. SALAVERIA
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
ON
SENATE BILL NO. 1023, S.D. 1, H.D. 1

March 21, 2023
2:10 p.m.
Room 309 and Videoconference

RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

Senate Bill No. 1023, S.D. 1, H.D. 1: 1) amends Section 346-184, HRS, to remove the requirement that Preschool Open Doors (POD) providers accredited through a national early learning accrediting organization not specifically listed in the section be comparable to the organizations listed; 2) amends Section 302L-7, HRS, to expand the Executive Office on Early Learning's pre-kindergarten program to include three-year-old children; 3) amends Section 346-181, HRS, to restore language relating to the service of three-year-olds and POD priority categories; 4) amends Section 346-182, HRS, to allow federal funds to be deposited into the POD Special Fund (PODSF); and 5) amends Act 210, SLH 2021, to remove the sunset date on amendments made to Section 346-181, HRS. The measure also appropriates an undetermined amount of general funds in FY 24 and FY 25 to be deposited into the PODSF and appropriates an undetermined amount of special funds out of the PODSF

in FY 24 and FY 25 for the Department of Human Services to cover POD staff, staff benefits, and system modifications.

B&F does not support the inclusion of language to allow the deposit of federal funds into the PODSF. Federal funds should be kept separate from other types of funds for compliance and reporting purposes. Further, the purpose of a federal grant may not be totally aligned with the statutory uses of the PODSF.

Additionally, B&F notes that the FB 2023-25 Executive Biennium Budget, as amended by the Green Administration, includes providing \$500,000 in general funds in FY 24 to implement POD system modifications and increasing POD funding by \$38,800,000 in general funds in FY 24 and FY 25 to expand program coverage to three-year-olds and increase monthly voucher payments.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.



TO: The Honorable Justin Woodson, Chair
The Honorable Lisa Marten, Vice Chair
House Committee on Education

FROM: Philip Bossert, Executive Director
Hawaii Association of Independent Schools

RE: **SB 1023 SD1 HD1 - Relating to Early Learning
In Strong Support**

DATE: Tuesday, March 21, 2023
2:10 p.m.; Conference Room 309 & Videoconference

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Marten and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Association of Independent Schools (HAIS) and its subsidiary, the Hawaii Council of Private Schools (HCPS), strongly supports SB 1023 SD1 HD1. Funding for the Open Doors program is an important resource for Hawaii families in providing early childhood education opportunities for their children.

HAIS also strongly supports the expansion of types of organizations from which Open Doors service providers may obtain accreditation. In particular, we believe that accreditation by HAIS should be recognized by DHS as an authorized accrediting organization for the Open Doors program. HAIS currently serves 114 independent PK-12 schools and over 33,000 students in Hawai'i. More than 50 of these schools include preschool programs.

In 1996, the legislature transferred responsibility for the licensing of private schools to HAIS and its subsidiary, HCPS. This licensing process ensures on an annual basis that every PK-12 private school is in compliance with the health and safety requirements of all federal and state agencies. In addition, for those schools which seek a higher level of educational program verification and recognition, the HAIS accreditation process provides a much more rigorous protocol of compliance and review, one that is recognized and accepted by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). The HAIS accreditation protocol includes a comprehensive self-study process and a three to five day visit to the school by a team of educators from other private schools in Hawaii and California with comparable programs to verify the information provided in the self-study document. We believe that this protocol and process is in line with those of the accrediting agencies already on the approved list.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

To: Representative Woodson, Chair
Representative Marten, Vice Chair
House Committee on Education

Re: SB1023 SD1 HD1, relating to early learning
2:10 p.m., Mar. 21, 2023

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Marten and committee members:

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, mahalo for the opportunity to testify. **HCAN Speaks! supports Senate Bill 1023 SD1 HD1 and respectfully requests amendments.**

According to the Hawai'i KIDS COUNT, there were approximately 82,785 children under the age of 5 in 2021. There are, however, spaces for only 24,906 keiki in regulated child care settings and general education public pre-kindergarten classrooms. The shortage gets more acute the younger the child is.

This shortage of early childhood care and education programs from birth to kindergarten-entry can be tied directly to the unworkable economics of child care. **Early childhood care and education providers operate on razor-thin margins where the workforce is significantly underpaid. Meanwhile, families pay an average of \$13,500 annually to send their 3- and 4-year-old keiki to a licensed child care center.** Families and providers cannot shoulder anymore burden; they need support. **Public investment is necessary.**

Quality early learning opportunities have lifelong positive impacts for children and their families. The work early childhood care and education professionals do sets keiki up for critical social and emotional skills, motor development, math, literacy and critical thinking. Additionally, parents and caregivers are able to work outside the home when they have safe and nurturing environments for their keiki. **All Hawai'i families deserve access to these experiences. They also deserve for this access to be truly meaningful.**

As mentioned above, one of the largest barriers for families is cost. This is why **any effort to build a truly universal system needs to ensure free or very low-cost early childhood care and education programs available to all families.** Preschool Open Doors is one way that the Legislature can provide investments in community-based programs while ensuring families' costs remain low, ensuring meaningful access.

We strongly support the expansion of the Preschool Open Doors to include 3-year-olds. We also **support the amendments to Preschool Open Doors prioritization** that are included in this bill.

We understand that Preschool Open Doors expansion is meant to increase reimbursement for providers as well as eligibility for families. We believe it is prudent the State Legislature set this intent via statute. Additionally, we ask that this committee consider the practical realities of how both early learning providers and families access Preschool Open Doors funds. We want to make sure that the intent of expansion can be practically achieved.

Thus, we respectfully request committee members amend the measure to include the following additional provisions:

- Currently DHS reimburses providers at a rate set in 2013. We need reimbursements reviewed regularly, like is standard for Child Care Connection Hawaii. We request this committee add the following requirement to section 346-181, Hawaii Revised Statutes so that reimbursement rates can keep up with the market and inflation: The department shall adjust reimbursement rates for providers a minimum of once every two years based on either a true cost of care or cost estimation model;
- Providers balance setting a tuition rate as high as they can to cover fixed costs and wages with what families can afford out of pocket. If the reimbursement rate is set at a rate higher than the tuition rate for non-subsidy families can, providers—as a practical reality—would not be able to access the additional monies. Any hope that providers would be able to increase wages through higher reimbursement rates would go unrealized without explicit clarification. To alleviate this problem, we request that the committee add the following requirement to section 346-181, Hawaii Revised Statutes: The department shall provide reimbursement irrespective of a provider's tuition rate for a child;
- As stated above, we believe nearly all of Hawai'i's families deserve access to low- or no-cost programs. We recognize that providing supports via Preschool Open Doors will be costly. We recommend this committee add a reporting requirement section to the bill so that it can make informed decisions on the future about expanding funding for Preschool Open Doors to reach even more families: The department shall report the budget impacts as well as impacts to overall family and provider economic self-sufficiency that increasing eligibility levels to include middle income families would have. The department may contract a third party to conduct this study in accordance with chapter 103D of the Hawaii Revised Statute;
- We understand that DHS is recommending accreditation be voluntary for Preschool Open Doors. If this committee decides to make the accreditation requirement voluntary, we believe it should amend the bill to still provide incentives for providers to be accredited. Thus, we request the committee amend the current section 346-184, Hawaii Revised Statutes as follows: (a) Each service provider of the preschool open doors program ~~shall~~ **may** be accredited. **The department shall establish tiered reimbursement rates for those providers who are accredited.** ~~or shall obtain~~

~~accreditation within seven calendar years of first receiving any funds from the preschool open doors program; provided that any existing service provider unaccredited on July 1, 2022, shall commence the accreditation process no later than July 1, 2024, and obtain accreditation by July 1, 2029; provided further that the director may grant to any service provider one or more extensions to obtain accreditation on a case-by-case basis.~~ (b) **Higher reimbursement shall be provided for accreditation** Accreditation under this section shall be obtained **from one or more of the following national early learning accrediting organizations:**“; and

- Any increase to subsidies should be accompanied by increased appropriations for the administration of Preschool Open Doors so that staff can administer a program that is easy to navigate for families.

Additionally, we believe that **to achieve truly meaningful access** for the families not served in public school settings, the legislature would need to appropriate **approximately \$240 million annually** to Preschool Open Doors. This would support nearly 20,000 3- and 4-year-olds.

This level of funding would provide meaningful financial assistance for most local families with young children ages 3 and 4. It will also ensure early childhood care and education providers are adequately reimbursed so that we can both maintain the current stock of classrooms and incentivize expansion.

We would also like to provide comments on the amendments to HRS 302L-7. HCAN Speaks! appreciates the interest in providing additional opportunities for both 3- and 4-year-olds in public school settings.

Any efforts to expand the EOEL Public Prekindergarten Program to include 3-year-olds must include the dedicated budget and positions to ensure the program is developmentally appropriate.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide extensive comments on SB1023 SD1 HD1. We are encouraged by the support universal preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds has garnered. **We urge committee members to support this measure with amendments to ensure expansion of early learning opportunities provides truly meaningful access while investing in the educators and programs that serve our youngest keiki.**

Mahalo,
Ke'ōpū Reelitz
Director of Early Learning and Health Policy

TO: Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Representative Lisa Marten, Vice Chair
House Committee on Education

FROM: Robert G. Peters, Chair
Early Learning Board

SUBJECT: Measure: S.B. No.1023 S.D. 1 H.D. 1 – RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

Hearing Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023
Time: 2:10 pm
Location: Conference Room 309 & Videoconference

EARLY LEARNING BOARD POSITION: Support

The Early Learning Board supports S.B. No.1023 S.D. 1 H.D. 1 and defers to the Executive Office on Early Learning and the Department of Human Services (DHS) as pertains to pertinent sections of the bill.

This bill aligns with two of the Board's policy priorities for this legislative session:

- Expand access and opportunity to quality early learning and care ...in both public and private sectors; and,
- Provide child care financial assistance for families/providers.

The ELB supports EOEL's commitment to increasing access to affordable and high-quality early learning opportunities. The EOEL Public Pre-Kindergarten Program currently provides free public pre-kindergarten options in 37 classrooms across 34 Department of Education (HIDOE) campuses to 4-year-olds. ELB supports expanding the EOEL Public Pre-K program to 3-year-olds.

We also appreciate the Legislature's intention to provide financial assistance to more families to support access to affordable high-quality early learning opportunities and defer to the Department of Human Services regarding the Preschool Open Doors program.

The ELB continues to support the efforts of EOEL working with its partners, such as the School Facilities Authority, DHS, the HIDOE, and other early learning stakeholders to bring the goals pursuant to Act 046, SLH 2020, to fruition. We look forward to continuing to work with the Legislature to support increasing access to affordable quality early learning programs and services in the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. No.1023 S.D. 1 H.D. 1.

SB-1023-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/19/2023 10:00:40 AM

Testimony for EDN on 3/21/2023 2:10:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Golojuch Jr	Stonewall Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Representatives,

The Stonewall Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai‘i; Hawai‘i’s oldest and largest policy and political LGBTQIA+ focused organization fully supports SB 1023 SD 1 HD 1.

We hope you all will support this important piece of legislation.

Mahalo nui loa,

Michael Golojuch, Jr.
Chair and SCC Representative
Stonewall Caucus for the DPH

Date: March 19, 2023

To: House Committee on Education
Rep. Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Rep. Lisa Marten, Vice Chair

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: Support for **SB1023 SD1, HD1**, 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 SB1023 SD1, HD1, which would appropriate funding for the Preschool Open Doors Program (POD) and Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) to expand access to preschool and to implement program changes to facilitate this expansion.

There are over 35,000 preschool-age children 3-4 years old in Hawaii. Unfortunately, limited availability and capacity of programs, high costs and unaffordable rates, and insufficient financial supports significantly restrict families' access to preschool opportunities for their keiki. Presently, POD provides key financial assistance to enable about 1,400 4-year-olds to attend preschool. Expanded POD funding and adjusted age-eligibility for the program to include 3-year-olds is critical to enabling additional children to attend preschool and benefit from the quality early learning experiences that will prepare them for kindergarten and later success in school and life.

Expansion of POD, in particular, supports a strong element of family choice into public preschool expansion efforts. POD provides families with access to a diversity of community-based preschool programs that meet a wide range of potential child and family needs and preferences, such as the need for full-day, full-year services that support working families. We hope you will support a combined approach to building out publicly-funded access to preschool through a **healthy expansion of the POD program**.

To successfully support increased access to preschool through POD, we note the following changes to POD requirements and administrative rules will also be crucial:

- **change of POD quality accreditation requirements to be voluntary**, until child care programs and workforce capacity are more stable, **or extension of the timeframes** by which programs must become accredited
- **increase of POD provider reimbursement rates**, based on local cost-estimation studies/modelling, so they more accurately support the true expenses associated with quality, accredited preschool care
- **change to the POD reimbursement policy such that POD providers may receive the full rate**, regardless of their tuition rates for non-POD families, which are often suppressed based on what families can afford
- **increase of POD income-eligibility caps** to be more inclusive of middle-income families, who also face significant financial barriers to accessing preschool for their children, and **reduction of the co-payment burden** on all families

These changes could be accomplished through additional provisions to this bill or through an expedited rule-change process, to be completed by the start of implementation.

With regards to the potential expansion of eligibility for **EOEL's public prekindergarten** program to 3-year-olds, we emphasize the importance of developmentally-appropriate standards and differentiated services for this younger age group and respectfully request consideration for the additional supports and resources that may be required by EOEL to adapt and expand services and implement mixed-age classrooms appropriately.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony **in support of SB1023 SD1, HD1**.

SB-1023-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2023 10:09:54 PM

Testimony for EDN on 3/21/2023 2:10:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Rainbow Family 808	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Rainbow Family 808 supports SB1023. Please pass this bill.

Mike Golojuch, Sr., Secretary/Board Member



March 21, 2023

TO: Representative Justin Woodson, Chair
Representative Lisa Marten, Vice Chair
and Members of the House Committee on Education

FROM: Kerrie Urosevich, Co-Chair
Commit to Keiki

RE: S.B. 1023 SD1 HD1 Relating to Early Learning

Commit to Keiki strongly supports Senate Bill 1023 SD1 HD1, Relating to Early Learning. SB 1023 appropriates an unspecified amount of general funds for the Department of Human Services' Preschool Open Doors (POD) program to expand POD to serve 3 year olds. ^[P]_[SEP]

Presently, POD provides critical financial assistance to enable about 1,400 4 year olds to attend preschool. Expanding POD to 3 year olds will enable additional children to attend preschool so that they will be better prepared for kindergarten and lifelong learning.

Thank you for allowing Commit to Keiki to provide testimony on this important measure.

Commit to Keiki, a project of the Early Childhood Action Strategy, is a public-private collaborative to ensure that Hawai'i's youngest children (birth to 5 years old) and their families have a brighter start. Early Childhood Action Strategy is a project under Collaborative Support Services, Inc. Led by a diverse Steering Committee, with representatives from Hawai'i business, education, early intervention, nonprofit and philanthropic organizations, Commit to Keiki serves as a trusted partner and reliable resource for information on issues related to Hawai'i's youngest keiki and families.



Kamehameha Schools®

House Committee on Education

Time: 2:10 p.m.

Date: March 21, 2023

Where: Conference Room 309

TESTIMONY

By Dr. Wai‘ale‘ale Sarsona
Kamehameha Schools

RE: **SB 1023, SD1, HD1, Relating to Early Learning**

E ka Luna Ho‘omalū Woodson, ka Hope Luna Ho‘omalū Marten, a me nā lālā o ke Kōmike Ho‘ona‘auao o ka Hale o nā Lunamaka‘āinana, aloha kākou! My name is Dr. Wai‘ale‘ale Sarsona, Vice President of Hi‘ialo at Kamehameha Schools.

Kamehameha Schools **supports** SB 1023, SD1, HD1, which appropriates moneys for the Preschool Open Doors Program and Executive Office on Early Learning to expand access to preschool and to implement program changes required by previous acts. This measure also expands the types of entities from which a Preschool Open Doors service provider may obtain accreditation, authorizes the preschool open doors special fund to accept federal funds, and appropriates moneys.

The enactment of Act 46 (2020) launched Hawai‘i on a path forward to ensure that every three- and four-year-old has access to early learning by year 2032. We are still recovering from the negative impacts of the pandemic on this sector, which resulted in the statewide decrease in capacity to provide childcare by 12%, including 2,850 fewer preschool seats. Our keiki cannot afford to lose any more.

The cost of full-time childcare remains a top three expense for so many ‘ohana across Hawai‘i. The average annual cost of childcare in Hawai‘i for a 4-year-old is \$8,937, or \$745 each month. Expanding access to the Preschool Open Doors program (POD), increasing funding to POD, and making necessary changes to the law will ensure that more three- and four-year-old keiki in need will have access to quality early learning. **Please advance this measure.**

Founded in 1887, Kamehameha Schools is an educational organization striving to restore our people through education and advance a thriving Lāhui where all Native Hawaiians are successful, grounded in traditional values, and leading in the local and global communities. We believe that community success is individual success, Hawaiian culture-based education leads to academic success and local leadership drives global leadership. Hānai i ke keiki; ola ka lāhui.

‘A‘ohe ‘ulu e loa‘a i ka pōkole o ka lou. There is no success without preparation.



THE
SAMUEL N.
AND
MARY CASTLE
FOUNDATION

and the
HENRY & DOROTHY CASTLE
MEMORIAL FUND

733 BISHOP STREET, SUITE 1275
HONOLULU, HI 96813
(808) 522-1101
(808) 522-1103 (FAX)
EMAIL: snandmarycastle@hawaii.rr.com

ALFRED L. CASTLE
Executive Director and Treasurer

March 20, 2023

Representative Justin Woodson, Chair
Representative Lisa Marten, Vice Chair
and Members of the House Committee on Education

From: Alfred L. Castle, CEO, Samuel N. & Mary Castle Foundation
Re: S.B. 1023 SD1 HD1 Relating to Early Learning

The Samuel N. and Mary Castle Foundation supports Senate Bill 1023 SD1 HD1, Relating to Early Learning. SB 1023 appropriates an unspecified amount of general funds for the Department of Human Services' Preschool Open Doors (POD) program to expand POD to serve 3 year olds.

Presently, POD provides critical financial assistance to enable about 1,400 4 year olds to attend preschool. Expanding POD to 3 year olds will enable additional children to attend preschool so that they will be better prepared for kindergarten and lifelong learning.

90% of our state's keiki are in private daycare or preschool settings. Although public settings are expanding, it will be many years before we have equity.

The public-private early education setting requires an accessible private sector and POD makes that possible for many families.

Your consideration is greatly appreciated.

Alfred L. Castle



**Parents And
Children Together**

**BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIPS
THAT MATTER MOST**

ParentsAndChildrenTogether.org

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 1023 HD1

TO: Chair Woodson, Vice-Chair Marten, & Members,
House Committee on Education
FROM: Ryan Kusumoto, President & CEO
DATE: March 21, 2023 at 2:10 PM

Parents and Children Together (PACT) supports SB 1023 HD1 Relating to Early Learning, which appropriates funds to the Department of Human Services for the preschool open doors program to expand access to preschool and to implement program changes required by previous acts. Given the legislature's and community's continued priority of creating access to high-quality early care and learning programs, we must continue to ensure that families can afford care. We believe that it is critically important for every child to have access to safe, high-quality care and the Preschool Open Doors (POD) subsidy program provides an important avenue for that to happen.

Founded in 1968, PACT is a statewide community-based organization providing a wide array of innovative and educational social services to families in need. Assisting more than 15,000 people across the state annually, we help identify, address, and successfully resolve challenges through our 20 programs. Among our 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.

As a provider of Early Head Start and Head Start classrooms on Oahu and Hawaii Island, we see firsthand the importance of POD subsidies for parents and caregivers. These subsidies often help families to enroll their children in and cover the cost of full-day (8hr) and/or extended day (10hr) programs, which allows parents/caregivers to be able to work full-time jobs. Many of our families benefit from the POD subsidy program and express their gratitude for the existence of the program.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact me at (808) 847-3285 or rkusumoto@pacthawaii.org if you have any questions.

SB-1023-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/21/2023 2:13:35 AM

Testimony for EDN on 3/21/2023 2:10:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Linda Elento	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Rep. Woodson, Chair, Rep. Marten, Vice Chair, and Members of the House Committee on Education,

Our keiki, families, childcare providers and preschools need less regulations, less paperwork, not more. **Oppose SB1023 SD1 HD1.**

I believe some standards of a "national early learning accreditation", such as NAEYC, specified in our statutes, may directly conflict with a provider's and child's religious freedom and First Amendment rights. Families need fair access to faith-based providers holding the Association of Christian Schools Internationalo (ACSI) accreditation.

Requiring a service provider to seek accreditation from a "national early learning accrediting organization" would disqualify some private schools and childcare providers solely because they are religious, as there may be an accreditation standard in conflict with their faith or religion. Refer to the US Supreme Court's decision issued on June 21, 2022, in Carson v. Makin: https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/21pdf/20-1088_dbfi.pdf.

The director of human services is limited to approving a "national early learning accrediting organization", a decision that is subjective and could change, an unfair provision. If ACSI is not considered a "national early learning accrediting organization", then the director is not able to approve ACSI as this statute is written.

I do not believe DHS recognizes ACSI as a "national early learning accrediting organization" because schools without NAEYC (or an accreditation listed in statute) do not qualify for the 100% highest-level scale for subsidy payments but only for about 75% maximum. The providers with only ACSI (WASC, HAIS) accreditation should also be at the 100% level, not 75%, effective immediately, and the providers not be subject to losing all eligibilty for Preschool Open Doors and childcare subsidies on a deadline set for years ahead.

This bill should add ACSI to the list of accreditations for pre-K, as the statutes include ACSI in defining private schools for K-12 only. Other testimonies are seeking later implementation dates; providers need assurance now that their accreditation that meets or exceeds the named national learning accreditations, not next year; planning and uncertainty are additionally stressing.

Delete the accreditation mandate instead or add ACSI.

We want Kindergarten entry to be an option at 5-year olds with "late" August birthdays again. Children can be ready for Kindergarten in August after the current July 31 cut-off date, especially after having attended two full years at an accredited preschool (such as by ACSI).

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **Opposition of SB1023 SD1 HD1.**