



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**Executive Office on Early Learning**  
2759 South King Street, Room C6  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

March 13, 2024

**TO:** Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

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

**SUBJECT:** **Measure:** H.B. No. 1964 H.D. 2 – RELATING TO EARLY CHILD CARE  
**Hearing Date:** Monday, March 18, 2024  
**Time:** 1:00 pm  
**Location:** Conference Room 225

**EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING'S POSITION: Support**

The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) supports H.B. No. 1964 H.D. 2 and defers to the Department of Human Services regarding implementation.

EOEL is committed to working collaboratively with stakeholders to expand access to high quality early learning for all keiki across the State. Professionals stand as a cornerstone of high-quality early learning as we continue to increase access to these opportunities while building the infrastructure needed to ensure the State's investment reaps the intended returns.

Compensation is an effective way to enhance recruitment and retention of a qualified early learning workforce. Despite working in a specialized field with health, safety, and educational requirements and having higher levels of education than the average American worker (Whitebook et al., 1990), many early childhood care and education providers remain at the second or third percentile in the Bureau of Labor and Statistics rankings of occupation, making wages comparable to that of parking lot attendants, bartenders, and laundry service workers. Furthermore, 16 percent of child care workers are living in poverty, compared to the 10 percent of the general population in Hawai'i (Early Childhood Workforce Index, 2020).

Hawai'i's early childhood care and education professionals are some of the most undervalued in our state. EOEL strongly supports the inclusion of those who service our youngest keiki as those are the most likely to be furthest from fair wages.

Executive Office on Early Learning  
H.B. No. 1964 H.D. 2 – Relating to Early Child Care  
March 13, 2024  
Page 2 of 2

We look forward to continuing to work with the Legislature to support increasing access to quality early learning programs and services and the workforce in the State. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.



**HB1964 HD2**  
**RELATING TO EARLY CHILD CARE**  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

March 18, 2024

1:00 p.m.

Conference Room 225

---

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS HB1964 HD2**, which requires the Department of Human Services to establish and implement a child care provider subsidy and bonus program to provide subsidies to retain the existing child care workforce in licensed infant and toddler child care center, group child care centers, and group child care homes and bonuses to registered family child care homes, requires annual reports to the Legislature and appropriates funds.

OHA is in its fourth year of its 15-year strategic plan, Mana i Maui Ola. The development of this strategic plan included gathering community input via surveys and focus groups as well as mana‘o from internal staff. One of the most critical needs that our community repeated was ‘ohana’s ability to provide high-quality keiki and kūpuna care.

HB1964 HD1 will support the state’s ongoing efforts to expand early childhood care and education. One of the greatest barriers for early childhood care and education providers to expand and even remain open is their ability to find adequate staffing. The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment noted that between 2018 and 2020, Hawai‘i’s child care workforce declined by more than 20%. When the University of Hawai‘i Early Childhood Educator Excellence and Equity Project looked into this workforce in their 2022 report, they found that early childhood care and education professionals made on average between \$13 and \$17 per hour, far below what is needed for a living wage. These low wages are impacting child care providers’ ability to stay open and expand. **This in turn impacts families’ abilities to secure quality early childhood care and education, which then can affect an ‘ohana’s economic stability.**

HB1964 will establish a program that has proven impacts in other states and here at in Hawai‘i. North Carolina saw increases in child care worker retention when they instituted their WAGE\$ program. Additionally, it is our understanding that preliminary reports from the Hawai‘i Department of Human Services showed increased retention for



**HB1964 HD2**  
**RELATING TO EARLY CHILD CARE**  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

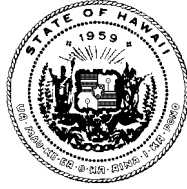
---

staff and providers who received bonuses from pandemic relief monies dedicated to child care.

OHA defers to the Department of Human Services on costs and implementation. We believe that addressing a vital component of early childhood care and education expansion—supporting the workforce—is a worthy investment that will have positive impacts on Native Hawaiian families. However, we recognize the constraints of our state budget given the costs borne from the Maui fires.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB1964 HD2. **We urge the committee to pass this measure.**

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  
Office of the Director  
P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

March 15, 2024

To: The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 1964 HD2 – RELATING TO EARLY CHILD CARE.**

Hearing: Monday, March 18, 2024, 1:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 225, State Capitol & Video Conference

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of the bill, requests an amendment, and provides comments. DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation in this measure not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the executive budget.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this bill is to establish and implement a child care provider subsidy and bonus program to provide subsidies to retain the existing child care workforce in licensed infant and toddler child care centers, group child care centers, and group child care homes and bonuses to registered family child care homes. Requires annual reports to the Legislature. Appropriate funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD2)

The House Committee on Human Services (HD1) amended the measure by:

- (1) Including licensed group child care homes as one of the licensed child care providers eligible to participate in the Child Care Provider Subsidy and Bonus Program;
- (2) Amending the types of proof each applicant must provide to the Department of Human Services regarding each covered child care worker or family child care home;

- (3) Clarifying that applicants and covered child care workers are prohibited from using state funds for any other unauthorized uses prohibited by law or as determined by the Department of Human Services;
- (4) Specifying that the University of Hawaii and any entity of the University are ineligible to receive subsidies or bonuses under the Child Care Provider Subsidy and Bonus Program;
- (5) Authorizing the Department of Human Services or its designee to review applicants for subsidies and bonuses;
- (6) Changing the means of financing for the Child Care Provider Subsidy and Bonus Program from a general fund appropriation to an appropriation into and out of the Child Care Grant Program Special Fund;
- (7) Inserting an unspecified appropriation from general revenues for one full-time equivalent Program Specialist position to carry out the implementation and monitoring of the Child Care Provider Subsidy and Bonus Program;
- (8) Changing the effective date to July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion; and
- (9) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

The House Committee on Finance (HD2) amended the measure by:

- (1) Changing the minimum hourly subsidy rate for child care workers to an unspecified amount;
- (2) Changing the minimum annual bonus for family child care homes to an unspecified amount; and
- (3) Changing the number of full-time equivalent positions established by this measure to an unspecified number.

DHS respectfully requests an amendment to remove and delete "exempt providers approved by the department" as part of the child care provider subsidy and bonus program since the purpose of this measure is to retain the child care workforce in *licensed* infant and toddler child care centers, group child care centers, group child care homes, and *registered* family child care homes. DHS recommends the following **amendment**:

- Section 2, page 3, at lines 12-13, "(A) Is an employee of a licensed or registered child care provider, ~~or is an exempt provider approved by the department;~~"

The Department estimates that to increase wages by \$2 an hour for four thousand three hundred (4,300) workers in licensed infant and toddler centers, group child care centers, and group child care homes, plus \$6,000 each for two hundred forty-seven (247) registered family

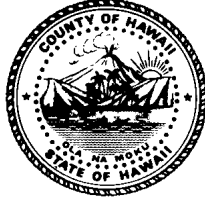
child care homes, the subsidy and bonus program budget would need to be nearly \$19,300,000. DHS may not use federal child care block grant funds for provider grants, so the appropriation would need to be 100% state general funds or non-federal funds. Additionally, the Department will require an appropriation of \$100,000 for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) program specialist to carry out the implementation and monitoring of the child care provider subsidy and bonus program.

DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation not replace or reduce budget priorities identified in the Executive Budget.

Lastly, if the measure passes, DHS requests an extended effective date of January 31, 2025, or later since DHS has begun its implementation of the supplemental grant program to providers and would need time to develop administrative rules, standards, policies, an application form, and procedures to administer the child care provider subsidy and bonus program.

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

Mitchell D. Roth  
Mayor



Douglass S. Adams  
Director

Frecia Cevallos  
Deputy Director

## County of Hawai'i

### DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

25 Aupuni Street, Room 1301 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720-4252  
(808) 961-8366 • Fax (808) 935-1205  
E-mail: chresdev@co.hawaii.hi.us

March 13, 2024

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino  
Committee on Health and Human Services

RE: HB 1964, Relating to Early Child Care

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aguino, the Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

I am writing in **strong support** of HB 1964.

For years, child care providers have been subsidizing the tuition of families in their care through the acceptance of low wages. While affordable child care is imperative to families with young children, so is paying a living wage to those providing that care. It is an intricate balance and time we began to stabilize the field that nurtures, cares for and educates the youngest members of our society.

During the pandemic, child care providers were seen as essential employees – critical to our economy. And while that is true, their more important role is to provide a quality environment that supports positive brain development in young children.

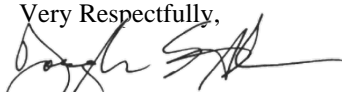
As more tuition dollars become available to those wishing to enter the field, once they become qualified at the teacher level, many leave for higher paying positions, usually with Kamehameha Schools or the DOE. It has become a revolving door that we must stop in order to keep growing the capacity and quality of programming available for our youngest children.

In the recent release of our state's Kindergarten Entrance Assessment (KEA) scores, it was shown that only 29.6% of our kindergarteners are actually ready to start school. Additionally, only 50% of our third graders are reading at grade level. This data proves that we need to better support our youngest children in the early years by supporting their preparation for entering our education system.

Please pass this bill out of your committee and support its passage through the legislative process. Not only will it support our current providers in center based and family child care, but it will also help to recruit and attract more young professionals to the rewarding field of early childhood.

Please support this measure.

Very Respectfully,



Douglass Adams  
DIRECTOR





Committee on Health and Human Services  
Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair

March 18, 2024

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

We support HB 1964 HD2, which requires the Department of Human Services to establish and implement a child care provider subsidy and bonus program to provide subsidies to retain the existing child care workforce in licensed infant and toddler child care center, group child care centers, and group child care homes and bonuses to registered family child care homes.

We believe that children who have a strong foundation in early learning will be better prepared to enter our K-12 system. Access to quality early learning opportunities is key to building this foundation.

The number of early childhood care and education professionals in Hawai'i has been decreasing over the last 5 years. A recent survey conducted by the Hawai'i Association for the Education of Young Children found that while many early learning providers would like to expand, the biggest hurdle continues to be recruiting and retaining qualified staff. The child care provider subsidy and bonus program will help support our early learning workforce.

Hui for Excellence in Education, or "HE'E," promotes a child-centered and strength-based public education system in which families, communities and schools are valued and empowered to help every student succeed. HE'E works to bring diverse stakeholders together to harness collective energy, share resources, and identify opportunities for progressive action in education.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Our support for this measure represents at least a 75% consensus of our voting membership.

Sincerely,

Cheri Nakamura  
HE'E Coalition Director



Coalition Members and Participants

Academy 21

Alliance for Place Based Learning

American Civil Liberties Union

Atherton YMCA

Education Institute of Hawai'i

\*Faith Action for Community Equity

Fresh Leadership LLC

Girl Scouts Hawai'i

\*HawaiiKidsCAN

\*Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance

\*Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and  
Economic Justice

\*Hawai'i Association of School Psychologists

Hawai'i Athletic League of Scholars

\*Hawai'i Children's Action Network

Hawai'i Education Association

Hawai'i Nutrition and Physical Activity Coalition

\* Hawai'i State PTSA

Hawai'i State Student Council

Hawai'i State Teachers Association

Head Start Collaboration Office

It's All About Kids

\*INPEACE

Joint Venture Education Forum

Junior Achievement of Hawaii

Kamehameha Schools

Kanu Hawai'i

Kaua'i Ho'okele Council

Keiki to Career Kaua'i

Kupu A'e

\*Leaders for the Next Generation

Learning First

McREL's Pacific Center for Changing the Odds

Native Hawaiian Education Council

Our Public School

\*Pacific Resources for Education and Learning

\*Parents and Children Together

\*Parents for Public Schools Hawai'i

Special Education Provider Alliance

\*Teach for America

The Learning Coalition

US PACOM

University of Hawai'i College of Education

\* Youth Service Hawai'i

*Voting Members (\*) Voting member  
organizations vote on action items while  
individual and non-voting participants may  
collaborate on all efforts within the*

To: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

**Re: HB 1964 HD 2 – Relating to Early Child Care**

Hawaii State Capitol, Conference Room 225 and Videoconference

Monday, March 16, 2024; 1:00PM

Aloha e Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **STRONG SUPPORT of House Bill 1964 HD 2 Relating to Early Child Care.**

The professionals who cultivate the nurturing environment where our youngest keiki can grow, learn, and thrive are at the heart of every early childhood care and education program. Families will tell you that when they make their choices about child care, one of the biggest priorities is the professionals doing the work of early care and education.

Too often, these critical professionals do not make a living wage. In 2020, a study found that 1 in 3 childcare workers faced food insecurity. A 2022 study completed by the University of Hawai'i Early Childhood Educator Excellence and Equity Project showed that on average, early childhood care and education professionals earned between \$13 and \$17 per hour. This is significantly below what's needed for a living wage.

Early childhood care and education professionals provide a public good that deserves public investment. They help children build critical skills they'll rely on their entire lives. A child's most rapid brain development happens between birth and three years old. This is when they develop vital skills that lay the foundation for lifelong education – social-emotional skills, math, motor skills, and literacy.

In addition to helping develop the next generations of curious and engaged citizens, infant and toddler childcare professionals enable parents, caregivers, and other family members to go to work. They are the workforce behind so many other workforces.

Even as critical as these professionals are, we are losing them in droves. According to the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, **Hawai'i lost 20% of its early childhood care and education workforce between 2018 and 2020.** Even more left the field during the pandemic. Nationally, more than 7% of the workforce has not returned. This means that we have likely lost a quarter of the early childhood care and education workforce over the last five years.

We need to retain dedicated professionals in the workforce and attract the next generation of childcare workers and early childhood educators. These efforts must start with raising their wages. Below are cost projections for what will be needed to support our childcare providers.

This bill is a crucial step forward. HB 1964 HD 2 requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) to establish and implement a childcare provider subsidy and bonus program to provide subsidies to retain the existing childcare workforce in licensed infant and toddler child care centers and group child care centers and bonuses to registered family child care homes.

As the state continues to expand early childhood care and education options for families, we must focus on expanding the workforce. **Please support HB 1964 HD 2.**

Mahalo,

Deborah Zysman, MPH  
Executive Director

### Projections for Childcare Workers Wages

Mahalo for considering the proposal to increase childcare workers' wages. **HB1964 HD 1** aims to address this need by establishing a childcare provider subsidy and bonus program. This initiative ensures access to safe and reliable childcare options for Hawai'i's families.

Currently, childcare workers' wages are supplemented with an additional \$12.8 million through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which will expire this year. With this supplement, childcare workers' wages were increased by \$1.43 per hour for an average yearly salary of **\$31,574.40 before taxes.**

<b>ARPA Funds - Expires 2024</b>	
<b>Supplemental Wage Per Hour</b>	\$1.43
<b>Number of Active Caregivers</b>	4300
<b>Average Yearly Salary</b>	\$31,574.40
<b>Supplemental Grant Total</b>	<b>\$12,800,000.00</b>

When the ARPA funds expire this year, some childcare workers will earn Hawai'i's minimum wage of \$14.00 per hour, which equates to a yearly salary of **\$29,120.00 before taxes,** and the average childcare worker earns \$15.18, which equates to a yearly salary of **\$31,574.40 before taxes.**

<b>Minimum Wage</b>	
<b>Minimum Wage Per Hour</b>	\$14.00
<b>Yearly Salary</b>	<b>\$29,120.00</b>

<b>Average HI Child Care Worker Wage</b>	
<b>Average Wage Per Hour</b>	\$15.18
<b>Average Yearly Salary</b>	<b>\$31,574.40</b>

Cost projections have been generated for what we need to support our existing childcare workers, which is estimated to be around 4,300 registered with the Department of Human Services and 247 Family Child Care providers (home-based child care), and the cost of increasing wages by \$2.00, \$3.00, \$5.00, and \$8.00 per hour.

Meeting an \$8.00-an-hour wage increase for our childcare workforce would require an investment of \$71.56 million a year. This increase would raise the average childcare worker’s hourly wage to \$23.18 per hour for an average yearly salary of **\$48,214 before taxes**.

Current Caregiver Workforce			
<b>Supplemental Wage Per Hour:</b>	\$2.00	\$5.00	\$8.00
<b>Number of Active Caregivers</b>	4300	4300	4300
<b>Grant Per Worker</b>	\$4,160.00	\$10,400.00	\$16,640.00
<b>Supplemental Wage Per Year for Family Child Care Providers:</b>	\$6,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$24,000
<b>Number of Family Child Care Providers</b>	247	247	247
<b>Supplemental Grant Total</b>	<b>\$19,370,000.00</b>	<b>\$48,425,000.00</b>	<b>\$77,480,000.00</b>

We want to highlight that any wage increase below \$8.00 an hour will result in many childcare workers continuing to make below Hawai’i’s [self-sufficiency budget](#) (2022).

Supplement Per Hour	Caregiver Hourly Wage if Salary is Minimum Wage	Annual Income with Supplement	Poverty Level (with Supplement)	Self-Sufficiency Budget (2022) (One Adult - \$41,245)
<b>\$2.00</b>	\$16.00	\$33,280.00	192%	81%
<b>\$3.00</b>	\$17.00	\$35,360.00	204%	86%
<b>\$5.00</b>	\$19.00	\$39,520.00	228%	96%
<b>\$8.00</b>	\$22.00	\$45,760.00	264%	111%

The proposed legislation will support licensed infant and toddler childcare centers, group childcare centers, and registered family childcare homes through subsidies and bonuses. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have seen the childcare workforce decrease, with one of the reasons being unable to afford living in Hawai’i on such a low salary. According to the 2022 Research and Development (RAND) study on [Early Childhood Educators in Hawai’i](#), wages and salaries for early educators in Hawai’i are not competitive with jobs requiring similar levels of education or experience; median hourly wages, estimated at approximately \$13-\$17 per hour, are well below the living wage estimate of at least \$28.50 per hour for the state. By enhancing wages, we aim to attract and retain a skilled and dedicated childcare workforce, thus meeting the growing demand for childcare services.

Mahalo for your continued commitment to Hawai’i’s keiki.



# holomua

COLLABORATIVE

---

## OUR MISSION

To support and advance public policies that make Hawai'i affordable for all working families.

## OUR VISION

Collaborative, sustainable, and evidence-based public policies that create a diverse and sustainable Hawai'i economy, an abundance of quality job opportunities, and a future where all working families living in Hawai'i can thrive.

---

## BOARD MEMBERS

Jason Fujimoto  
Meli James, *Board Chair*  
Micah Kāne  
Brandon Kurisu  
Mike Mohr  
Brad Nicolai  
Mike Pietsch

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Josh Feldman  
Brittany Heyd  
Alicia Moy  
Ed Schultz

Josh Wisch  
*President & Executive Director*

---

827 Fort Street Mall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

+1 (808) 909-3843  
info@holomuacollaborative.org

HolomuaCollaborative.org

---

Page 1 of 2

**Committee:** Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
**Bill Number:** HB 1964, HD2, Relating to Early Child Care  
**Hearing Date and Time:** March 18, 2024 at 1:00pm (Room 225)  
**Re:** Testimony of Holomua Collaborative in support

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members:

We write in support of HB 1964, Relating to Early Child Care. The purpose of HB 1964 is to require the Department of Human Services to establish and implement a child care provider subsidy and bonus program to provide subsidies to retain the existing child care workforce in licensed infant and toddler child care centers, group child care centers, and group care homes and provide bonuses to registered family child care homes.

Hawai'i is having an increasingly difficult time retaining and recruiting infant and toddler child care workers. Indeed, between 2018 and 2020 Hawai'i lost 20% of its child care workforce. When child care workers leave the profession, it becomes harder for child care providers to stay open. This ultimately makes it harder for families to get child care as demand increases while supply shrinks. And this disparity between supply and demand for child care is why families struggle to pay for facilities that charge \$20,000 per year per child, because that is what they must do to stay afloat.

Holomua supports initiatives that help keep all local working families in Hawai'i by addressing issues of affordability. We are especially interested in fostering cross-sector collaboration and supporting policies that are evidence-based. The subsidy program crafted by the authors of HB 1964 is a perfect example of this.

This solution involves the nonprofit sector (advocates like the Hawai'i Children's Action Network and the Hawai'i Early Childhood Advocacy Alliance) who have created the idea of this program, the government sector (in the form of the Department of Human Services who will be in charge of developing out the program), and the private sector in the form of the child care providers themselves, who are currently faced with not having enough professional employees because they lack the funding to pay them.

The RAND Corporation<sup>1</sup> has noted that as of May 2021, the typical child care worker in Hawai'i earned just under \$13.79 on an hourly basis. When adjusting for cost of living, this is lower than the national median hourly wage for child care workers. This is unsustainable. And it underscores why bringing child care workers in Hawai'i to a rate of not less than \$16 an hour will be critical for recruitment and retention.

---

<sup>1</sup> See "Early Childhood Educators in Hawai'i: Addressing Compensation, Working Conditions, and Professional Advancement," at [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA1908-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1908-1.html).

Additionally, multiple studies have shown that a person's most dramatic brain development occurs in the first three years of their life. Making sure that the frontline child care workers—who are in charge of molding the minds of babies and other young children during these critical years—are paid well enough to stay in the profession benefits: (1) the child care workers who can now stay in the profession; (2) the children who will receive professional care during critical years; (3) businesses whose employees depend on child care; (4) parents who can stay at their jobs because of greater access to child care; and (5) society as a whole, because a new generation of children will be better prepared to learn, grow, and thrive.

We know that child care providers operate on miniscule financial margins with fixed costs that can't be negotiated or reduced, like rent or electricity. This means that when they need to lower expenses they must turn to wages. And in turn, child care professionals leave the state. If this trend continues, we are likely to have lost more than a quarter of this workforce between 2018 and today.

This collaborative, evidence-based program can break this cycle and put us on a path to greater affordability both for child care workers and for those who need access to child care. We are proud to support it.

Sincerely,



Josh Wisch  
President & Executive Director





**BUILDBETTER.LIVEBETTER.®**



**March 18, 2024**

**Committee:** Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
**Bill Number:** HB 1964, HD2, Relating to Early Child Care  
**Hearing Date and Time:** March 18, 2024, 1:00pm  
**Re:** Testimony of HPM Building Supply in Support

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members:

I would like to submit this letter and written testimony in support of HB 1964, Relating to Early Child Care. The purpose of HB 1964 is to create a subsidy program to support childcare workers.

HPM Building Supply is a 100% employee-owned company serving Hawaii's home improvement market and building industry for over 100 years since 1921. With 18 locations across Hawaii and Washington State, HPM offers various services and products, including retail stores, building supply and lumber yards, home design centers, drafting and design services, and manufacturing facilities. HPM is dedicated to enhancing homes, improving lives, and transforming communities.

As a State-wide employer with over 600 employees, we understand that many of our employees face childcare decisions daily. Much-needed childcare services gives parents peace of mind to go to work knowing their child is being taken care of.

This bill seeks to improve the support of childcare workers by increasing wages by appropriating State funds. These early childhood workers are underpaid, and they provide a necessary public good. Increasing the minimum wage of these workers and providing a bonus program would assist with recruitment and retention.

This bill also aligns with HPM's values of Heart, Character, and Growth. By supporting early childhood workers and educators, we invest in our future. We show that we care about the future generations and our current workforce shaping it. Our company's value of Heart is caring for one another as a community.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 1964. I strongly encourage your support and passage of this measure.

Sincerely,

Dennis Lin  
Community Relations Administrator



(808) 966-5466 • FAX (808) 966-7564  
16-166 MELEKAHIWA STREET • KEAAU, HAWAII 96749

HPMHAWAII.COM





TITLE GUARANTY  
HAWAII

March 18, 2024

**Testimony in support of HB 1964, HD2, Relating to the Early Child Care**

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and members of the Committee,

We write in support of HB 1964, Relating to Early Child Care, which requires the Department of Human Services to establish and implement a child care provider subsidy and bonus program to provide subsidies to retain the existing child care workforce in licensed infant and toddler child care center, group child care centers, and group child care homes.

Title Guaranty of Hawai'i is the oldest and largest title company in the state. We have been owned and operated by a kama'aina family since 1896 and we are proud to employ over 250 people who work in our branches all across the state. Being a longtime employer of so many people in Hawai'i, we know how important it is that our employees have access to quality and affordable child care. But we also know it's difficult for people to obtain child care in Hawai'i and when they do, it can be prohibitively expensive. For many parents, including those who work for us, being able to access child care they can afford is what allows them to continue to work. So, not having access is bad for us as an employer, stressful for the parents who we employ, and—most importantly—detrimental to the children. As not just a longtime employer, but also a committed member of our local community, we're lending our voice to support this effort because it is so important.

Early childhood care and education professionals are critical to young children's development. It is in their first three years when children's brains develop most rapidly. That means infant and toddler child care providers are critical to shaping the next generation of responsible, curious and contributing Hawai'i residents. These professionals come to their work with training that is specialized so that they can work with young children to grow and learn in developmentally appropriate ways. But we do not pay these folks nearly enough, which is why so many of them are leaving the profession. We can't afford to keep losing them.

This child care worker subsidy program is a smart first step toward improving wages for early childhood care and education professionals, and we are happy to support it.

Sincerely,

Mike B. Pietsch  
President and Chief Operating Officer  
Title Guaranty of Hawai'i



Title and Escrow is our business. Hawaii is our home.



Statement of  
**Meli James**  
**Cofounder**  
**Mana Up**

**HB 1964, HD2, Relating to Early Child Care**

Aloha,

On behalf of Mana Up, I write in support of HB 1964, Relating to Early Child Care. Hawai'i is having an increasingly difficult time retaining and recruiting infant and toddler child care workers. Indeed, between 2018 and 2020 Hawai'i lost 20% of its child care workforce. When child care workers leave the profession, it becomes harder for child care providers to stay open. This ultimately makes it harder for families to get child care as demand increases while supply shrinks. And this disparity between supply and demand for child care is why families struggle to pay for facilities that charge \$20,000 per year per child, because that is what they must do to stay afloat.

Mana Up supports innovative initiatives that help make Hawai'i affordable to all working families. Mana Up is a statewide initiative that supports entrepreneurs in Hawai'i, providing them with resources and tools to scale globally. As these entrepreneurs continue to grow, they also help to sustain the local community through economic diversification, local job creation, givebacks, investment, and a regenerative culture of entrepreneurship – providing a better future for generations to come here in Hawai'i. In fact, many of these entrepreneurs we work with who are helping contribute to growing our local economy having families, including young children requiring child care to be able to run their businesses and sometimes a full-time corporate job as well.

We know that child care providers operate on miniscule financial margins with fixed costs that can't be negotiated or reduced, like rent or electricity. This means that when they need to lower expenses they must turn to wages. And in turn, child care professionals leave the state. If this trend continues, we are likely to have lost more than a quarter of this workforce between 2018 and today.

This program is the type of innovative, collaborative, evidence-based program that can break this cycle and put us on a path to greater affordability both for child care workers



and for those who need access to child care. We are proud to support it. We appreciate the opportunity for Mana Up to testify.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit this testimony on behalf of Mana Up.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Meli James', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Meli James  
Cofounder, Mana Up



**Testimony in Support of HB 1964, HD2, Relating to Early Child Care**

---

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and members of the Committee,

We write in strong support of HB 1964, which will require the Department of Human Services to establish and implement a child care provider subsidy and bonus program to adequately compensate and retain the existing early child care workforce in all licensed and infant toddler child care centers, group child care centers, and registered family child care homes.

aio is a locally owned company with holdings across a broad range of industries. Our companies are purpose-driven and firmly rooted in local values. At aio, Hawaii is at our core, and through our products and services, we work hard to make Hawaii a better place for future generations.

Our employees are our greatest asset, and we want to ensure that they have access to quality and affordable childcare for their keiki. This subsidy program is a good first step at retaining top child care professionals.

Research shows that early childhood care professionals are critical to a child's development, and we want the best care possible to teach and mold the next generation.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in support,

A handwritten signature in dark purple ink that reads "Brandon Kurisu".

Brandon Kurisu  
aio Family of Companies





Date: March 17, 2024

To: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: Support for **HB1964 HD2**, Relating to Early Child Care

---

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 HB1964 HD2**, which would establish a child care provider subsidy and bonus program to support compensation and retention of the early care and education workforce in child care centers and family child care homes.

High-quality child care and early learning programs are fundamental to thriving children, flourishing families, and a robust economy. An effective, well-trained, early childhood workforce is the backbone of these programs. This workforce, however, suffers from chronically low wages and turnover.

A 2022 study completed by the RAND Corporation in partnership with the University of Hawaii at Mānoa showed that the average hourly wage for early care and education professionals in Hawaii ranges between \$13 and \$17 per hour. The COVID-19 pandemic compounded the impact of annual workforce turnover rates for early childhood educators that already ranged from 26-40%. Based on national trend data in child care employment, Hawaii is likely to have lost more than a quarter of our early care and learning workforce between 2018 and now.

This erosion in the workforce has reduced existing operating capacity and poses significant barriers to expansion of Hawai'i's child care and early learning programs. In the last six months of 2023 alone, the state experienced the closure of seventeen licensed Group Child Care (GCC) centers and the loss of 640 GCC center slots. Capacity has decreased by over 200 more seats in just the first ten weeks of 2024. Additional capacity is consistently being lost in centers that continue to operate but have reduced capacity due to the inability to fully staff classrooms.

To ensure families have access to early childhood care and education from birth to kindergarten, we must improve pay for the professionals who are the heart of those classrooms and homes. Addressing workforce compensation must start somewhere. Financial relief strategies such as the wage subsidies and bonuses proposed by this bill have been implemented by 37 different states, resulting in significant improvements in teacher/caregiver retention and reductions in turnover rates by half or more.

In order for Hawai'i to meet the education, employment, and economic needs of the state, the state must support and sustain the child care sector and improve families' access to child care and early learning programs by prioritizing strategies to stabilize and expand the early childhood workforce. Towards this end, we strongly urge you to support **HB1964 HD2**.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Hearing Date: **Monday, March 18, 2024, 1:00 pm, Conference Rm. 225**

To: Senate Committee on Human Services  
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry J. C. Aquino, Vice Chair

**Re: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1964 HD2, Relating to Early Child Care**

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and the Members of Committees,

Members of AAUW of Hawaii thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 1964 HD2, Relating to Early Child Care which would appropriate funds to require the Department of Human Services to establish and administer a two-year Infant and Toddler Child Care Worker Subsidy Pilot Program and appropriate funds.

Having children actually penalizes women in the workforce. The Institute for Women's Policy Research reports 50.5% of households with children in Hawai'i have mothers who are the main source of family income. However, women working full time make only \$.76 for every dollar working fathers make in Hawaii. One major obstacle preventing mothers from securing a well-paid, stable job is finding and retaining available, affordable, quality childcare.

Early childhood care and educational professionals are undervalued in Hawaii, averaging \$13 to \$17 per hour wage. It is no surprise that the number of professionals in this sector has been decreasing, although they are in high demand. AAUW of Hawaii supports this measure since it would appropriate funds to pilot a wage subsidy program for the early childhood care and educational professionals. Findings from this pilot program will then be used to understand what we need to pay these professionals to retain them. Supporting this bill will aid Hawaii in retaining and recruiting qualified child care workers, including women who want to work in the field, but cannot, or will not, due to the current low wage. It will also increase the number of needed available slots.

Please pass this measure and mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jean Evans".

Jean Evans  
Public Policy Committee, AAUW of Hawaii  
publicpolicy-hi@aauw.net

*The American Association of University Women (AAUW) of Hawaii is an all-volunteer, statewide chapter of a national organization and is made up of six branches: Hilo, Honolulu, Kauai, Kona, Maui, and Windward Oahu. AAUW's mission is to advance gender equity for equal opportunities in education, at workplace and for economic security, and in leadership.*



# Chamber of Commerce HAWAII

*The Voice of Business*

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Monday, March 18, 2024, at 1PM  
Conference Room 225 & Video Conference**

**RE: HB1964 HD2 Relating to Early Child Care**

Aloha Chair Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee:

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii Supports (“The Chamber”) **supports HB1964 HD2**, which establishes and appropriates funds to implement a childcare provider subsidy and bonus program to provide subsidies to retain the existing childcare workforce.

Limited access to childcare is one of the challenges that our local workforce faces today and a significant reason for Hawaii’s overall workforce shortage. Low wages and a high cost of living make it difficult for childcare facilities to retain and grow the workforce. This measure, if implemented, would support Hawaii’s businesses and families by allowing employees to rejoin the workforce. This will further workforce retention and expansion, creating profound economic benefit to our state now and in the future.

Increasing the availability of childcare and providing necessary support to strengthen our childcare and early education workforce is of high priority to The Chamber, and critical for our workforce viability and economic future. Our business community and its workforce cannot increase its capacity without support such as that which would be provided by this measure.

In discussions with our members, increasing the availability of childcare is a high priority. This measure mitigates childcare provider business closures and will help to increase the availability of childcare providers. needed for the viability of our workforce. Our business community and workforce cannot increase its capacity without such support.

The Chamber is Hawaii’s leading statewide business advocacy organization, representing about 2,000+ businesses. Approximately 80% of our members are small businesses with less than 20 employees. As the “Voice of Business” in Hawaii, the organization works on behalf of members and the entire business community to improve the state’s economic climate and to foster positive action on issues of common concern.

On behalf of The Chamber, thank you for this opportunity to testify.





March 18, 2024

Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

Chair Joy A. San Buenaventura

Vice Chair Henry J.C. Aquino

Sen. Jarrett Keohokalole

Sen. Maile S.L. Shimabukuro

Sen. Brenton Awa

Re: HB1964 HD2 Relating to Early Child Care

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

The Hawai'i State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (HSCADV) addresses the social, political, and economic impacts of domestic violence on individuals, families, and communities. We are a statewide partnership of domestic violence programs and shelters. On behalf of HSCADV and our 27 member programs statewide, I respectfully submit testimony in **strong support of HB1964 HD2**.

**The availability of childcare is one of the major economic factors survivors of domestic violence consider when making decisions about their safety such as when and if they can leave an abusive partner.** Investing in the childcare workforce and ensuring there are enough professionals in the field to meet our state's needs is not only a public good, but has the potential to contribute to family safety as well.

This bill ensures families have access to early childhood care and education from birth to kindergarten and we must improve pay for the professionals who are the heart of those classrooms. Please support the creation of a childcare worker subsidy and bonus program as a step toward improving wages for early childhood care and education professionals.

Hawai'i's early childhood care and education professionals are some of the most undervalued in our state. A 2022 study completed by RAND Corporation in partnership with the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa showed that on average, childcare workers earn between \$13 to \$17 per hour. Low pay is consistently cited as a barrier to early childcare employment.

Preschools, childcare providers, and families already carry a heavy burden. They cannot carry more without support. Hawai'i's early childhood care and education professionals provide a public good, which requires public investment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Angelina Mercado, Executive Director

**HB-1964-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/14/2024 10:41:07 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/18/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
John Fink	Testifying for Aloha United Way	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

If we don't support those who support our keiki, who will? Yet another vital piece of legislation meant to ensure that we have the helpers to guide/teach our kids.



# Parents And Children Together

BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIPS  
THAT MATTER MOST

ParentsAndChildrenTogether.org

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1964 HD2 RELATING TO EARLY CHILD CARE

**TO:** Chair San Buenaventura, Vice-Chair Aquino & Members,  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
**FROM:** Ryan Kusumoto, President & CEO  
**DATE:** March 18, 2024 at 1:00 PM

**Parents and Children Together (PACT) supports HB 1964 HD2, Relating to Early Child Care**, which will establish and implement a child care provider subsidy and bonus program to help retain the child care workforce in licensed programs.

Many child care workers struggle to make ends meet due to disproportionately low wages in a state with such a high cost of living. This disparity contributes to high turnover rates and loss of workforce which disrupts the continuity of care for children and incurs significant costs for child care providers and families. Lack of affordable and available child care has far reaching consequences, from the individual development of children to family economic stability (parents unable to return to work) to employer operations. When child care is not available, parents cannot work, triggering a cascade of problems for the family and for employers.

Child care workers are the backbone of our society, providing a nurturing and educational environment for our children during their formative years. They ensure the safety and well-being of our youngest citizens and facilitate their cognitive, emotional, and social development. Their impact lays the foundation for future success in school and life. Investing in higher wages for child care workers, will foster a more stable and sustainable child care system. A well-compensated workforce will attract and retain qualified professionals, ultimately enhancing the quality of care provided to Hawai'i's keiki.

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.

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

TO: Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Robert G. Peters, Chair  
Early Learning Board

SUBJECT: Measure: HB 1964, HD 2 – RELATING TO EARLY CHILD CARE  
Date: Monday, March 18, 2024  
Time: 1:00 PM  
Place: Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

Early Learning Board Position: Support

The Early Learning Board (ELB) is the governing board for the Executive Office on Early Learning. The Board supports HB 1964, HD 2, recognizing the critical need to recruit and retain early childhood professionals who fulfill an essential infrastructure role in our communities Statewide.

The early childhood and early education professional workforce situation has been well-documented nationally, reflecting both its high demand and limited capacity. This same trend exists in Hawaii which was confirmed by the RAND Study completed in cooperation with the University of Hawaii Manoa in 2022. Low pay is consistently cited as a key barrier to entry into the field. Added to this challenge is the fact that many educational professionals left the sector during the pandemic and have not returned. The result has been that a number of early childhood settings are operating at reduced capacity, and some have closed due to staffing shortages.

A significant vehicle for addressing the current situation is to improve compensation and, thereby, seek to recognize the value of these currently underappreciated professionals. HB 1964, HD 2 is a step toward doing so as it provides for a child care provider subsidy and bonus program to provide subsidies to retain the existing child care workforce in licensed infant and toddler child care centers, group child care centers and group child care homes.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of HB 1964 HD 2. The ELB appreciates the on-going support of the Legislature to support the workforce of this critical area of our community infrastructure.



**Hawaii  
Legislative  
Council  
Members**

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair  
Committee on Health and Human Services

Monday, March 18, 2024  
1:00 PM, Room 225

Joell Edwards  
Wainiha Country  
Market  
Hanalei

RE: **HB1964 HD2** Early Child Care Provider Subsidy - **Support**

Russell Ruderman  
Island Naturals  
Hilo/Kona

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino & Committee Members,

Dr. Andrew Johnson  
Niko Niko Family  
Dentistry  
Honolulu

The Chamber of Sustainable Commerce represents over 100 small businesses across the State that strive for a triple bottom line: people, planet and prosperity; we know Hawaii can strengthen its economy without hurting workers, consumers, communities or the environment.

Robert H. Pahia  
Hawaii Taro Farm  
Wailuku

This is why we support HB1964 HD2, which requires the Department of Human Services to establish and implement a child care provider subsidy and bonus program to provide subsidies to retain the existing child care workforce in licensed infant and toddler child care center, group child care centers, and group child care homes and bonuses to registered family child care homes.

Maile Meyer  
Na Mea Hawaii  
Honolulu

Too many working families struggle to secure affordable, quality childcare; they are unable to return to the workforce and contribute to a vibrant economy. For some, the costs of childcare surpasses their own take home pay, especially when rush hour commuter traffic results in the need for 10 additional hours a week of childcare beyond the parents' own paid work times.

Tina Wildberger  
Kihei Ice  
Kihei

When employers look around and say, "Where did our workforce go; why can't we find anyone to work?" One response is that they are staying home to take care of their children, their grandchildren or their younger siblings. If a business cannot find sufficient numbers of workers to generate sufficient revenue to cover all the overhead costs of the business, then the business will have to close. The state will lose revenue from the general excise taxes and income taxes associated with those shuttered businesses.

L. Malu Shizue Miki  
Abundant Life  
Natural Foods  
Hilo

Until the Legislature sufficiently funds the Department of Education so that it can expand its Early Childhood Education programs across the state, for children of all ages, then the legislature must provide alternative solutions to try to fix the childcare shortage and ensure the state's revenue streams are uninterrupted.

Kim Coco Iwamoto  
Enlightened Energy  
Honolulu

Chamber of  
Sustainable  
Commerce  
P.O. Box 22394  
Honolulu, HI  
96823



*Fujiwara & Rosenbaum, L.L.L.C.*

*Alahea Corporate Tower  
1100 Alahea St., Fl. 20, Suite B  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813*

March 17, 2024

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

**Re: H.B. 1964 H.D. 2 RELATING TO EARLY CHILDCARE, STRONG SUPPORT**

**Hearing: Monday, March 18, 2024, 1:00 p.m. Conf. Rm 225**

Dear Chair Buenaventura and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

I have specialized in civil rights and employment law as a plaintiff's attorney since 1986 with a specialized interest in women's and minorities' rights. Our law firm is in strong support of **H.B. 1964 H.D. 2**, which requires the Department of Human Services to establish and implement a childcare provider subsidy and bonus program to provide subsidies to retain the existing childcare workforce in licensed infant and toddler childcare centers, group childcare centers, and group child care homes and bonuses to registered family child care homes.

Childcare and early education programs can provide children with opportunities for cognitive, language, emotional, and social development and provide parents with the ability to work and generate income for their families. Providing a solid learning foundation for children, while also fostering productivity for working parents, contributes to the economic stability and prosperity of the State.

Working families in Hawaii need affordable solutions for childcare provided by quality childcare professionals. Creating incentives through the proposed subsidy program endeavors to retain current providers so that they may continue to offer their valuable services, but it is also likely to help in recruiting and attracting dedicated providers to the early learning workforce.

Fujiwara & Rosenbaum supports H.B. 1964 H.D. 2 because we recognize the importance of high-quality childcare and early education, and this bill strives to make it more available for working parents.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this measure.

Sincerely,  
Elizabeth Jubin Fujiwara, Senior Partner



**HB-1964-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 8:05:07 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/18/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Doris Matsunaga	Testifying for Save Medicaid Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Save Medicaid Hawaii supports HB 1964 HD2





### Our Mission

Increase Hawai'i's investments in its youngest keiki by collaborating with elected officials and serving as a trusted partner and reliable resource for information on issues related to Hawai'i's youngest keiki and families.



### Steering Committee

#### Honolulu County

Justina Acevedo-Cross  
Greg Auberry  
Chiyomi Chow  
Kanoë Enos  
JoAnn Farnsworth  
Danny Goya  
Alex Harris  
Sakinah Harrison  
Shawn Kana'iaupuni  
Ryan Kusumoto  
Ka'iulani Laehā  
Lynelle Marble  
Megan McCorrison  
Mike Mohr  
Marty Oliphant  
Cherilyn Shiinoki  
Eliza Talbot  
Laurie Tochiki  
Kerrie Urosevich  
Carol Wear  
S. Kukunaokalā Yoshimoto

#### Maui County

Ka'ina Bonacorsi  
Kawika Mattos  
Bobbie-Jo Moniz-Tadeo

#### Kaua'i County

Sarah Blane  
Alice Luck

#### Hawai'i County

Sulma Gandhi  
Kahi Moreman  
Angela Thomas



### Contact Info

700 Bishop Street, Suite 1701  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 93813

info@committokeiki.org  
CommitToKeiki.org

Date: March 15th, 2024  
To: Committee on Health and Human Services  
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

From: Commit to Keiki  
Re: Support for **HB1964**, Relating to Early Child Care

### Commit to Keiki strongly supports the passage of HB1964 with amendments.

Commit to Keiki has three key priorities to support early childhood development and the health and wellbeing of Hawai'i's youngest keiki and their families. Priorities include

1. Child Care and Early Learning
2. Early Childhood Mental Health
3. Family Violence Prevention

**HB1964** would establish a child care provider subsidy and bonus program to support compensation and retention of the early care and education workforce in child care centers and family child care homes. An effective, well-trained, early childhood workforce is the backbone of these programs. This workforce, however, suffers from chronically low wages and turnover.

A 2022 study completed by the RAND Corporation in partnership with the University of Hawaii at Mānoa showed that the average hourly wage for early care and education professionals in Hawaii ranges between \$13 and \$17 per hour. Based on national trend data in child care employment, Hawaii is likely to have lost more than a quarter of our early care and learning workforce between 2018 and now.

To ensure families have access to early childhood care and education from birth to kindergarten, we must improve pay for the professionals who are the heart of those classrooms and homes. Financial relief strategies such as the wage subsidies and bonuses proposed by this bill have been implemented by 37 different states, resulting in significant improvements in teacher/caregiver retention and reductions in turnover rates by half or more.

We urge you to support **HB1964** and we request the addition of the following to the bill language; Section 2 (11):

*'Aha Pūnana Leo and any other laboratory school of the Hawaiian language college shall be eligible for this funding when specifically supported by the Hawaiian Language College to honor the two official languages in Hawai'i.*

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



TO:

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair  
Committee on Health and Human Service

FROM:

Brenda Watanabe, VP Public Policy, HIAEYC Board

SUBJECT: Measure: HB1964 HD2 – RELATING TO EARLY CHILD CARE

Hearing Date: March 18, 2024

Time: 1:00pm

---

The mission of the Hawai'i Association for the Education of Young Children (HiAEYC) is to promote, support, and expand quality and professionalism in early childhood programs and services for Hawai'i's young children (birth to age 8) and their families. HiAEYC is the Hawai'i affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

HIAEYC strongly supports HB1964 HD2. Childcare providers play a vital role in supporting working families by providing accessible, affordable, and high-quality childcare services. These services create a nurturing and educational environment for children, which helps them develop cognitively, emotionally, and socially, laying the foundation for their future success in school and life.

Despite their invaluable service, many childcare providers struggle to make ends meet due to disproportionately low wages in our state, which has a high cost of living. At HIAEYC, we often hear our members share stories of their passion for teaching children while trying to put food on the table for their own families. Many providers do not make a living wage and work multiple jobs to pay for basic living expenses. These conditions often lead to workforce burnout and high turnover rates, affecting the continuity of care for children and incurring significant costs for childcare facilities and families.

Investing in higher wages for childcare providers is crucial to demonstrate our recognition of their vital role and foster a more stable and sustainable child care system. A well-compensated workforce will attract and retain qualified professionals, ultimately enhancing the quality of care provided to Hawai'i's keiki. Therefore, we urge you to support HB1964 HD2. We thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Watanabe,  
VP of Public Policy, HIAEYC Board



**UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM**

**‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII**

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

---

Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Monday, March 18, 2024 at 1:00 p.m.

By

Nathan Murata, Dean  
College of Education

And

Michael Bruno, Provost  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 1964 HD2 – RELATING TO EARLY CHILD CARE

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i, College of Education supports the intent of HB 1964 HD2 to improve pay for the professionals who are dedicated to early childhood classrooms. Families must have access to early childhood care and education from birth to kindergarten. This measure is the first step toward ensuring that early childhood care and education professionals earn a livable wage.

The demand for quality child care and early education far exceeds the number of qualified child care and early education professionals currently available in the State. According to a RAND Corporation study conducted in partnership with the College of Education/UH Manoa, child care workers in the state earn between \$13 and \$17 per hour. This low pay is consistently cited as a barrier to becoming a childcare worker. This pay low consistently is cited as a barrier to becoming a childcare worker. Interestingly, the number of early childhood care and education professionals in Hawai'i has been decreasing significantly over the last 5-years despite the high demand in this sector. Lastly, Child care and preschools are essential infrastructure. Hawai'i's early childhood care and education professionals provide a public good that mandates public investment.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 1964 HD2.



**LATE**

March 17, 2024

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

**Re: H.B. 1964 H.D. 2 RELATING TO EARLY CHILD CARE.**

**Hearing: Monday, March 18, 2024, 1:00 p.m.  
Conf. Rm 225 & Videoconference**

Dear Chair Buenaventura and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

Hawaii Women Lawyers (“HWL”) **supports H.B. 1964 H.D. 2**, which requires the Department of Human Services to establish and implement a child care provider subsidy and bonus program to provide subsidies to retain the existing child care workforce in licensed infant and toddler child care centers, group child care centers, and group child care homes and bonuses to registered family child care homes.

HWL is a lawyer trade organization that aims to improve the lives and careers of women in all aspects of the legal profession, influence the future of the legal profession, and enhance the status of women and promote equal opportunities for all.

Childcare and early education programs can provide children with opportunities for cognitive, language, emotional, and social development and provide parents with the ability to work and generate income for their families. Providing a solid learning foundation for children, while also fostering productivity for working parents, contributes to the economic stability and prosperity of the State.

Working families in Hawaii need affordable solutions for child care provided by quality child care professionals. Creating incentives through the proposed subsidy program endeavors to retain current providers so that they may continue to offer their valuable services, but it is also likely to help in recruiting and attracting dedicated providers to the early learning workforce.

HWL supports H.B. 1964 H.D. 2 because it recognizes the importance high-quality childcare and early education, and it strives to make it more available for working parents.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this measure.



March 18, 2024

**LATE**

TO: Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair and  
Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services

From: Jeanne Y. Ohta, Co-Chair  
Hawai'i State Democratic Women's Caucus

RE: HB 1964 HD2 Relating to Early Child Care

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Hawai'i State Democratic Women's Caucus write in support of HB 1964 HD 2 Relating to Early Child Care which would establish a child care provider subsidy and bonus program to retain the existing child care workforce which is severely under staffed.

It is essential that we have quality, affordable child care and early education programs that are staffed by qualified child care and early education professionals. The shortage of these professionals has hampered the expansion of sorely needed programs, limiting access to quality child care for many of Hawaii's working families. Provider subsidies would help alleviate barriers to expansion of programs.

This is priority measure for the Hawai'i State Democratic Women's Caucus. The Hawai'i State Democratic Women's Caucus is a catalyst for progressive, social, economic, and political change through action on critical issues facing Hawaii's women and girls.

We also respectfully request that the Committee pass this important measure and also provide the funds necessary for the program. Thank you for the opportunity to provide our testimony in support of HB 1964 HD2 Relating to Early Child Care.

**HB-1964-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/13/2024 7:29:34 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/18/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Younghee Overly	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for hearing this measure which would supplement the wage of early childhood professionals. Early childhood professionals deserve a living wage since they make all other work possible.

**HB-1964-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/13/2024 6:29:51 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/18/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Dawn Morais Webster Ph.D.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a mother and grandmother, I see this bill as crucial to giving working mothers the support they desperately need to bring in income for their families while ensuring their children are cared for. This bill increases the pool of workers providing much needed early child care. Please pass this bill. Mahalo.

**HB-1964-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/13/2024 6:35:18 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/18/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Krystal Baba	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.



**HB-1964-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/13/2024 6:38:50 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/18/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Marion McHenry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass HB1964. This will help keep childcare workers, hire more childcare workers, and allow for more child care seats.

Mahalo,

Marion McHenry

Princeville, Kauai

**HB-1964-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/13/2024 6:54:43 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/18/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
ANDREW ISODA	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members,

My name is Andrew and I am testifying in **SUPPORT** of HB1964, which would keep child care workers, helps hire more workers, and gets us more child care seats.

This bill is important to me *[because, optional story share]*.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony!

Andrew Isoda  
Lahaina, Mau'i

**HB-1964-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/13/2024 7:05:51 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/18/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ted Burke	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members,

My name is Ted Burke and I am testifying in SUPPORT of HB1964, which would keep child care workers, helps hire more workers, and gets us more child care seats.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony!

**HB-1964-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/13/2024 7:58:17 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/18/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Barbara Barry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members,

My name is Barbara Barry from Maui and I am testifying in **SUPPORT** of HB1964, which would keep child care workers, helps hire more workers, and gets us more child care seats.

This bill is important to me because we need more qualified child care workers who can afford to live here without working 2 or more jobs!

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony!

**HB-1964-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/13/2024 8:24:57 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/18/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Cassandra Antonell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1964 because early childhood learning is so important for our keikis' futures. We need all child care workers who pour thier hearts & souls into teaching & loving our little ones to be well compensated for their invaluable contributions to our community.

March 13, 2024

**Committee** – House Committee on Health and Human Services

**Measure** – HB1964 HD2 RELATING TO EARLY CHILD CARE

**Hearing Date** – March 18, 2024

**Time** - 1:00 PM

**Location** - Room 225

**This testimony is in strong support of HB1964 HD2.**

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dr. Terry Lock. I am with the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) College of Education (COE) and serve as the director of the Hawai'i Early Childhood Educator Excellence and Equity (ECE<sup>3</sup>) Project.

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 1964 HD 1, which establishes a child care worker subsidy and bonus program (wage supplement program) for staff working in Department of Human Services (DHS) licensed infant toddler centers, group child care centers, and regulated family child care homes.

HB1964 HD 1 will provide much-needed wage supplements essential for recruiting and retaining early care and education professionals and keeping our child care and early learning programs open. This will allow parents with young children to have accessible and stable child care options so they can work and/or return to school.

The current situation, as highlighted by a [RAND study](#) commissioned by the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, reveals that child care workers in our state are earning between \$13 and \$17 per hour. These low wages has resulted in a disturbing number of early educators who have left the profession for other industries, creating dire consequences for children, families, employers, and our society as a whole.

Retaining quality early educators is crucial for children's physical, cognitive, social-emotional development, readiness for school, and long-term academic success. Improved pay for educators contributes to the overall quality and stability of child care and early learning programs.

Moreover, a wage supplement program can prevent early learning program closures and potentially open up more child care slots. Given that early childhood education heavily depends on its workforce, as much as [90% of the program's budget](#) may be allocated to staff and personnel wages. Fixed expenses, like rent and utilities, leave staff wages as one of the only areas where child care programs can cut. Because of the low wages, many early educators choose not to stay, and programs are forced to

shut down classrooms because of a lack of staff. Wage supplements can help early educators stay in their profession, thus protecting child care programs from closing.

The effectiveness of wage supplement programs has been demonstrated in other states. One of which is [North Carolina's Child Care WAGES](#), a program that reduced their state's early educator turnover rate from 31% to 14%. Additionally, the infusion of federal relief dollars through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) has been instrumental in helping child care providers across the nation stay open and make necessary workforce investments. This evidence suggests that implementing a wage supplement program in Hawai'i is not only feasible but also a proven strategy to address the workforce shortage in the ECE sector.

HB1964 HD 1 will allow licensed infant and toddler child care centers and group child care centers to apply for and receive a subsidy to increase the pay of its child care workers to a rate of not less than \$16.00 per hour. This aligns with the RAND Study which found that the median starting hourly wage for assistant teachers working in licensed child care centers is \$15.50. The starting wage for teachers with child development associate credentials is \$16. For teachers with associate degrees, it's \$17, and it's the same for teachers with bachelor's degrees or higher in fields other than early childhood education or child development. Teachers who have bachelor's degrees or higher in those fields have a median starting hourly wage of \$18.25.

HB1964 HD 1 will allow regulated family child care homes to apply for and receive a bonus of at least \$6,000 per year. In the RAND study, family child care providers who participated in the study reported being paid substantially less preschool directors, even if they worked the same number of hours. These family child care providers also reported that a substantial workforce challenge was their limited access to benefits.

In conclusion, I urge you to please support HB1964 HD 1. Hawai'i's early childhood care and education professionals provide a public good that mandates public investment.

Mahalo for your your leadership and attention to this critical matter.

Dr. Terry Lock

**HB-1964-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/14/2024 9:08:17 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/18/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rachel	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**I respectfully submit testimony in support of HB1964 HD2.**

**The availability of childcare is one of the major economic factors survivors of domestic violence consider when making decisions about their safety such as when and if they can leave an abusive partner. Investing in the childcare workforce and ensuring there are enough professionals in the field to meet our state’s needs is not only a public good, but has the potential to contribute to family safety as well.**

**This bill ensures families have access to early childhood care and education from birth to kindergarten and we must improve pay for the professionals who are the heart of those classrooms. Please support the creation of a childcare worker subsidy and bonus program as a step toward improving wages for early childhood care and education professionals.**

**Hawai‘i’s early childhood care and education professionals are some of the most undervalued in our state. A 2022 study completed by RAND Corporation in partnership with the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa showed that on average, childcare workers earn between \$13 to \$17 per hour. Low pay is consistently cited as a barrier to early childcare employment.**

**Preschools, childcare providers, and families already carry a heavy burden. They cannot carry more without support. Hawai‘i’s early childhood care and education professionals provide a public good, which requires public investment.**

**Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.**



Rachel Saverex

**HB-1964-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/14/2024 10:15:36 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/18/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Deb Nehmad	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Our children's caretakers need a living wage. Please support this important bill.

deb nehmad

**HB-1964-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/14/2024 10:43:01 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/18/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Marilyn Mick	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members,

My name is Marilyn Mick and I am testifying in **SUPPORT** of HB1964, which would keep child care workers, helps hire more workers, and gets us more child care seats.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

**HB-1964-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/14/2024 3:51:12 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/18/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Terri Yoshinaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members,

My name is Terri Yoshinaga and I am testifying in **SUPPORT** of HB1964, which would keep childcare workers, help hire more workers, and get us more childcare seats.

Dear respected committee members,

My name is Zoe Ray Ynzunza, I am a student at the UH Manoa College. I firmly support HB1964.

I support this bill due to the first hand experience I have with low wages adversely affecting the childcare support available. My parents were extremely stressed about finding good childcare for myself and my younger brother as children due to the lack of preschools in our city. With two young children, it was impossible to find relatives willing to watch us who were busy with their own jobs or children. Thus, daily my parents had to make an hour commute two cities over to find adequate pre schooling and child care. This was very stressful for them because they had to be very careful with their time management, an almost impossible task when dealing with young fussy children. However, once I started kindergarten my parents had to go on the hunt again to find someone willing to look after me. Finding additional childcare services was done while keeping to the commitment of taking my brother the hour commute to the preschool.

This lack of pre schooling available and the subsequent child care was due to the lack of proper wages. In Hawai'i, childcare workers only make \$13 to \$17 dollars an hour which far under reaches the estimated \$28.50 an hour in order to make a living in this state. Hawai'i's cost of living index is 193.3, which is the highest in the nation. This means that the cost of living is almost double that of the average. These childcare workers are thus put in a position where they simply cannot make enough money to survive in this state. This is seen explicitly in a 2020 study, 1 in 3 childcare workers reported food insecurity.

These financial pressures were similarly felt by the child care workers found by my parents after I started kindergarten. They were often stressed over money due to the high cost of living and could not afford to keep their practice afloat. This led to my father quitting his job and taking care of me and both my brothers. This was a serious loss of income, especially for a family of five, that my mother had to make up for with her own job. Thus, the financial burden put on child care providers not only makes living difficult for them but also parents who need to find proper care for their children.

This bill is essential to protect people trying to make a living through child care. It will keep these people in the workforce and stem the flow of people leaving the workforce. From 2018 to 2020 there was a 20% loss of the childcare workforce and more than ¼ of workers have not returned since after the pandemic. This leads to more situations like mine, where there simply are not enough options for parents to find child care providers near them. This bill will allow for the financial security desperately needed to keep these workers from leaving their jobs. My parents could not find the care their children needed, I would not wish that for anyone.

Thank you for allowing the opportunity to submit testimony and for your time.



COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

BILL HB1964 HD2  
POSITION: SUPPORT

Hearing Date: March 18, 2024, 1pm, Room 225

Aloha Chair Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members:

**Aloha United Way strongly supports HB1964 HD2** which provides subsidies to adequately compensate child care providers, along with a bonus program, to attract and retain our early childcare workforce.

Quality early childcare programs are essential for our communities and workforce and the need for care has grown sharply. The childcare sector cannot grow to meet this need primarily because of the low wages childcare professionals receive, making it incredibly hard to attract new employees to meet workforce needs and or to add childcare seats. Current childcare workers are often living below the ALICE threshold or in poverty, because the current wages are too low to support even the basic needs of their own households.

Aloha United Way and agencies in the ALICE initiative support this bill to build a stronger child care system and measurable increases to income and employment opportunity for ALICE families. ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed, and refers to households who are employed but whose incomes are not enough to meet their basic living costs. A UW's 2022 ALICE report found that **44% of Hawaii's households are ALICE** and showed an alarming 50% increase in ALICE households falling into poverty.

Further, other sectors are suffering from a reduced workforce pool. HB1964 provides **critical childcare workforce support and will help ALICE families** with limited options for childcare, **increase workforce participation and economic growth**, and elevate income for childcare workers. Adequate access to childcare can only happen if the field can attract professional, trained workers who see a viable career that provides living wages. HB1964 is a smart program that can demonstrate a way to increase the workforce and improve economic outcomes.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your action to support ALICE households and families across Hawaii by passing HB1964 HD2.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Suzanne Skjold".

Suzanne Skjold  
Chief Operating Officer  
Aloha United Way

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Monday March 18, 2024  
1:00 PM, Conference Room 225  
**IN SUPPORT**

**RE: HB1964HD2**  
**Relating to Early Child Care**

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura and Committee Members,

I am writing in **strong support** of HB1964.

Quality early childhood education is a cornerstone of our economic infrastructure. Not only is child care necessary for parents to work, but more importantly, it is a critical time for the positive development of the young child in care. Having a stable cadre of teachers and caregivers is essential.

For years, child care providers have been subsidizing the tuition of families in their care through the acceptance of low wages. As qualifications rise for both program licensing and accreditation, as well as individual requirements for staff, those who qualify for better paying positions, like Kamehameha Preschools and the DOE, leave our community-based programs.

In the recent release of our state's Kindergarten Entrance Assessment (KEA) scores, it was shown that only 29.6% of our kindergarteners are actually ready to start school. Additionally, only 50% of our third graders are reading at grade level. This data proves that we need to better support our youngest children in the early years by supporting their preparation for entering our education system.

Please pass this bill out of your committee and support its passage through the legislative process. Not only will it support our current providers in center based and family child care, but it will also help to recruit and attract more young professionals to the rewarding field of early childhood. The ultimate reward will be better outcomes for our youngest children.

Please support this measure.

Mahalo,  
Angela C Thomas



**HB-1964-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 3:27:37 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/18/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Elaine Yamashita	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha -

I strongly support HB 1964 HD 2. I retired from UH Maui College in 2019, and have been in the field of early childhood education for 40+ years. While salaries have increased since I started as a preschool director/teacher in 1979, they have not kept up with our cost of living. The work of caring and educating young children is complex and demanding and we are seeing people leave jobs they love because they can no longer afford to stay.

This bill would be a start, sorely needed as we see programs and classrooms on Maui closing due to lack of qualified staff.

Please invest in the people doing the crucial work of early care and education.

Mahalo,

Elaine Yamashita

To: Hawaii State Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

Hearing Date/Time: Monday 18, 2024, 1:00pm

Place: Hawaii State Capitol, CR 225 & Videoconference

Re: Judith Ann Armstrong supports HB1964 HD2 Relating to Early Child Care

Dear Chair Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Senator Henry J.C. Aquino and members of the Committee on Health & Human Services,

I, Judith Ann Armstrong, support HB1964 HD2 Relating to Early Child Care.

This bill will help keep the Child Care workers we have and assist in the hiring of more Child Care workers which will help increase the number of Child Care seats available.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB1964 HD2.

Sincerely,

Judith Ann Armstrong

# Patti Cook

Box 6960, Kamuela, HI 96743  
(808) 937-2833 - [Cookshi@aol.com](mailto:Cookshi@aol.com)

**TO: State Senate Committee on Health and Human Services**

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair & Committee Members

**RE: SUPPORT for HB1964 HD2 RELATING TO EARLY CHILD CARE**

Hearing @ 1PM Monday, March 18, 2024

**MAHALO** for scheduling this hearing and please **expedite passage of HB1964 HD2 which supports the state's ongoing efforts to expand early child care and education.**

One of the greatest barriers for early child care and education providers to expand or even remain open is their ability to find adequate staffing. Between 2018 and 2020, Hawai'i's child care workforce is reported to have declined by more than 20%, according to the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment. Why? There are numerous contributing factors but one significant finding by the UH Early Childhood Educator Excellence and Equity Project in their 2022 report is that early child care and education professionals made on average between \$13 and \$17 per hour, far below what is needed for a living wage. While there is clearly interest in careers in early childhood, it seems that once certified, many of these trained, licensed individuals are wooed away to other public and private venues by better wages, and this is impacting child care providers' ability to stay open and expand. This in turn impacts families' ability to secure quality early child care and education, which then can affect their economic stability.

How serious is the lack of a trained workforce? In the past six months, Hawai'i has experienced the closure of 17 licensed Group Child Care (GCC) centers and the loss of 640 GCC slots. Additional capacity has been lost in centers that continue to operate but have reduced capacity due to their inability to fully staff classrooms.

If Hawai'i is to ensure families have access to early child care and education from birth to kindergarten, the pay for these professionals must be improved. Financial relief strategies such as the wage subsidies and bonuses proposed by this bill have been implemented by 37 other states, resulting in significant improvements in teacher/caregiver retention and reductions in turnover by half or more.

For Hawai'i to meet the education, employment and economic needs of our families and state, we need to prioritize strategies that stabilize and expand the early childhood workforce. This bill is a significant step in this direction. Mahalo for considering passage of HB 1964.

A hui hou -

**Patti Cook**

Waimea, Island of Hawai'i

**HB-1964-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 8:34:33 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/18/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Doris Segal Matsunaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members,

My name is Doris Segal Matsunaga and I am testifying in **SUPPORT** of HB1964, which would keep child care workers, helps hire more workers, and gets us more child care seats.

This bill is important to me *as a grateful grandmother wwho knows how hard child care workers work and how much working families need them.*

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony!

**HB-1964-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 10:07:53 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/18/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kimberly Dark	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members,

My name is Kimberly Dark and I am testifying in **SUPPORT** of HB1964, which would keep child care workers, helps hire more workers, and gets us more child care seats.

This bill is important to me because children need quality care from people who earn a living wage.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony!

To: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

**Re: HB 1964 HD 2 – Relating to Early Child Care**

Hawaii State Capitol, Conference Room 225 and Videoconference

Monday, March 18, 2024; 1:00PM

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee:

As a former family child care provider for over 20 years, thank you for the opportunity to testify in **STRONG SUPPORT** of **House Bill 1964 HD 2 relating to Early Child Care**.

Child care workers are the backbone of our society, providing a safe and secure environment for parents to leave their children while they go to work. As a child care provider, I worked from 5:30 AM to 5:30 PM, sometimes longer if parents were stuck in traffic commuting back to the westside of O‘ahu from working in Honolulu. This time does not include the trips to the grocery store to shop for the children's meals in my care or the time needed to meet all the requirements mandated by the Department of Human Services to retain my license.

**Before taxes**, my take-home pay per month was \$3900.00, which equates to \$13.00/hour, an unsustainable wage living in Hawai‘i. Further, this was my pay only when I was at capacity, which was two infants aged 0-18 months and four children aged 18+ months, as mandated by the Department of Human Services. This was a challenge because most parents are looking for a childcare provider after they give birth so they can return to work after their six week maternity leave (by the way we need *paid family leave* because this is not enough time to bond with a newborn, adjust to a new way of life, and heal from pregnancy and birth), so most times my two 0-18 month slots were filled but filling the other four slots was a challenge because most parents are only looking for childcare at 18+ months if their childcare provider quit. Sometimes, I would go months not being able to fill those slots resulting in less pay.

Additionally, because I do not live in urban Honolulu, I could not charge the rates being charged in urban Honolulu, which was often much higher than other areas. Childcare providers in urban Honolulu are able to charge more because they are located near people’s place of work and allow parents more flexibility with pick-up and drop off times because they don’t have to contend with traffic and having to pay early drop off and/or late pick up fees. This is especially difficult for single parents who are relying on one income to pay for their housing, food, other basic needs, and child care. In my experience, some parents living in non-urban Honolulu would decide to quit their job and stay home to watch their children and make due with one income because one parent’s income would be entirely consumed by their childcare expenses. This created a domino effect with less people in the workforce and less parents seeking child care, which for me was difficult, anticipating my ever fluctuating child care income while raising a family of my own.

After 22 years of being a Hawai‘i State childcare provider, I made the difficult decision to close my family child care business due to the ever fluctuating income, lack of health insurance benefits, and increasing mandates from the state, because it was no longer sustainable for me to

continue in this profession, as it did not meet my basic needs to care for my family in Hawai'i. This also impacted the community that I provided care, as I continued to receive calls months after I closed from parents seeking child care. When we are not paid living wages, people in the areas that we live suffer as well, because they have even more limited child care options available to them.

I urge the committee to prioritize the invaluable work of child care providers and their unrecognized contribution to Hawai'i's economy, by paying them livable wages.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this critical issue. **Please pass HB 1964 HD 2.**

Sincerely,

Debra Kuhns

**HB-1964-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 12:12:59 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/18/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Gary Emelle	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and committee members,

I strongly support HB1964 HD2:

1. Childcare workforce in Hawaii has a shortage since 2018-2020, mainly due to low wages.

Hawaii DOE teachers & licensed childcare lead teachers have similar education and training but there is a significant pay gap. I am a former DOE early childhood educator(25 years)).

2. Employees throughout Hawaii need access to quality and affordable childcare .

Please support the creation of a childcare worker subsidy & bonus program as a step toward improving wages for early childhood education professionals.

Hawai'i's preschool population is our future and requires public investment to provide quality preschool education.

As a state, we must create immediate long term solutions. I support HB1964HD2 as a start to the solution.

Gary Emelle, M.Ed.



Committee on HHS

Bill: **HB 1964 HD-2**

Position: **IN SUPPORT**

Dear Chair and respected committee members,

Thank you for hearing **HB 1964**. I am writing in **STRONG SUPPORT OF HB1964 HD-2**.

My name is Johnnetta Jordan-Piper and I have owned and operated Smaller Scholar LLC, a registered and licensed family childcare home in Mililani, Hawaii, since 2018 and operated as a Military Family Childcare provider for over 20 years. I currently serve as the Vice-President of the Honolulu Community Action Program Policy Committee. I am a member of the National Association for Family Childcare (FCC). I am a proud Army veteran, military spouse, mother, grandmother, and educator. I have been married to a wonderfully supportive husband for 27 years. We have two sons, two daughters, and two beautiful grandchildren, aged 4 and 10.

Please give proper action to help for young woman and some men who make the choice to provide care to our keiki. People like Maliah, who has two children of her own, but works as a childcare worker fulltime along with two-part position as child provider worker. Maliah's work week is 70 per week, but she doesn't gross more than \$30k with all three jobs. She cannot afford a discounted rate for childcare but uses her family in her absence. Malia is dedicated to her profession, although very young, she is pursuing her Child Develop Associate to increase her pay and grow as an early childcare provider.

Thank you for this opportunity.

**LATE**

**HB-1964-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/18/2024 8:43:24 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/18/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Raya Esteban	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and committee members,

Please support HB 1964, which would support the creation of a child care worker subsidy and bonus program as the first step toward improving wages for early childhood care and education professionals. To ensure families have access to early childhood care and education from birth to kindergarten, we must improve pay for the professionals who are the heart of those classrooms.

Hawai‘i’s early childhood care and education professionals are some of the most undervalued in our state. In piloting solutions, we want to start with those most likely to be farthest from fair wages. A [2022 study](#) completed by the University of Hawai‘i Early Childhood Educator Excellence and Equity Project showed that, on average, child care workers earn between \$13 and \$17 per hour. National trends suggest that the younger the child is that you educate and care for, the lower your pay is likely to be.

I was a preschool teacher for three years, and though I loved my job, I often struggled to make ends meet. I had to take on multiple jobs to supplement my income and earn a livable wage; oftentimes, the toll of working numerous jobs left me exhausted and unable to provide the quality care my kids deserved. At the time, I was living under my parents’ roof, and so I did not have to pay for rent. But if I had to account for housing expenses, there would have been no possibility for me to fulfill my vocation as an early childhood educator. This would have been a huge waste of my talent, expertise, and dedication for early childhood care and education—a professional field that requires specialized skills and knowledge.

Any individual with the passion and finesse to care for and educate young children should not have to suffer through poverty-level wages as a consequence. That is an injustice to our early care educators, to the children and families that they serve, and the whole of society that depends

on the early childhood education workforce to mold the minds and hearts of our next generation of leaders.

Furthermore, early learning programs depend on staff to maintain their operations. If more and more early childhood education professionals leave the field because of low wages, we will have no one to care for our keiki, and early learning programs may be forced to shut down. This will have devastating outcomes for children, who deserve safe, stable, and nurturing environments particularly in the formative years of their lives. It will also severely impact parents, who seek spaces where their children can receive the care and education they need to grow and thrive. It affects business owners and employers of parents, who may have to quit their jobs if child care is unavailable. And of course, our society will be adversely affected by a shortage of high-quality early learning settings, which play a crucial role in developing our keiki into compassionate, empathetic, and productive citizens who actively contribute to our communities.

Preschools, child care providers, and families already carry a heavy burden. They cannot carry more without support. Because Hawai'i's early childhood care and education professionals provide a public good, it requires public investment.

Please support this measure.

Mahalo,

Raya Esteban

**LATE**

Committee on Human Services  
Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino  
Date: Monday March 18, 2024  
Time: 1:00 p.m..  
Place: Via Videoconference  
Conference Room 225  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street  
Bill: **HB 1964 HD 2**  
Position: **IN SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Amato and respected committee members,

Thank you for hearing **HB 1964 HD 2**. I am writing in **STRONG SUPPORT OF HB1964 HD 2**.

My name is Malia Tsuchiya. I am a mother of five and former child care provider. I no longer work as a childcare provider because the wages are not enough to make a living wage. I would love to return to childcare and education but it is not a viable option for me and my family.

My youngest child turned three recently and I know through experience that the options for quality affordable childcare are very limited. Through experience, I have also found that staffing is a problem that has, and is continuing to negatively impact the ability for programs to remain in service to the community.

According to a study done by RAND corporation childcare workers in Hawaii make \$13-\$17 dollars. From 2018-2020 over 20% of Hawaii's Early Childcare Workforce left the workforce. ARPA funding helped to stem the mass exodus of childcare workers from the field. Unfortunately, ARPA funds are expiring and this extra support that helped so much will no longer be available to stabilize programs and workforce.

Both anecdotal and quantitative research consistently shows that low wages are a significant deterrent to the recruitment and retention of childcare workers. Without a strong commitment to increasing wages for childcare workers the trend of lost childcare spaces due to staffing shortages will continue. I humbly ask for your support in lifting childcare wages through subsidies and bonuses. Please help our childcare programs stay open and make being a childcare worker a viable option for current and future workers.

Please vote **IN FAVOR of HB 1964 HD 2**.

Thank you for your time and commitment to serving Hawai'i's people and supporting the early childhood workforce that supports working parents like me.

Sincerely,  
Malia Tsuchiya