



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

January 29, 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:** S.B. No. 2603 – RELATING TO EARLY CHILD CARE
Hearing Date: Wednesday, January 31, 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 S.B. No. 2306 and defers to the Department of Human Services regarding implementation.

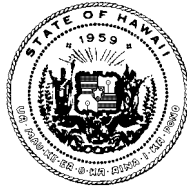
EOEL is committed to working collaboratively with stakeholders to expand access to high quality early learning for all keiki across the State. Professionals stand as a cornerstone of high-quality early learning as we continue to increase access to these opportunities while building the infrastructure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

EOEL recognizes that increasing 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.

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 bill.

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

January 30, 2024

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

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: [SB 2603](#) – RELATING TO EARLY CHILD CARE.

Hearing: Wednesday, January 31, 2024, 1:00 p.m.
Conference Room 225, State Capitol & Video Conference

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of the bill and provides comments. DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation not reduce or replace priorities identified 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 and group child care centers and bonuses to registered family child care homes. Requires annual reports to the legislature. Appropriates funds.

There has been a steady decline in the number of licensed and registered family child care homes and group child care centers from December 2020 to post-pandemic December 2023. Providers have had to make difficult decisions to close classrooms and, on occasion, entire centers because they don't have the qualified child care staff to meet the staff-child ratios. Many qualified child care providers are choosing to leave the child care field entirely

because of low wages and lack of benefits, or they are seeking employment in public pre-k classrooms where there is payment parity among public school kindergarten teachers.

To assist providers with recruitment, retention, and operating costs, DHS started its supplemental grant program on January 2, 2024. The grant program provides a staff retention bonus award of \$3,000 to teachers, assistant teachers, infant and toddler caregivers, and directors and \$2,000 to aides and registered family child care providers in licensed group child care centers and homes, infant and toddler centers, and registered family child care homes. Eligible providers will receive the staff retention bonus awards and operating cost award by September 30, 2024. If this measure becomes law, the child care provider subsidy and bonus program for child care workers will sustain continued efforts to stabilize the workforce after the DHS supplemental grant program ends on September 30, 2024.

DHS respectfully requests an amendment to include licensed group child care homes in the child care provider subsidy program since they must comply with the same child care worker qualifications as licensed group child care centers. DHS recommends the following amendments:

- Section 2, page 2, at lines 4 and 5, "(1) Infant and toddler child care centers, ~~and~~ group child care centers, and group child care homes to apply for and receive a subsidy to increase the pay of a child care center's child care workers to a rate of not less than \$16.00 per hour;"
- Section 2, page 7, at lines 18-20, "Applicant" means:
(1) "An infant and toddler child care center, ~~or~~ a group child care center, or a group child care home licensed by the department that submits an application for a subsidy pursuant to the program;"
- Section 2, page 8, at lines 10-13, "Child care worker" means a lead caregiver, caregiver, teacher, assistant teacher, or child care aide employed by an infant and toddler child care center, ~~or~~ a group child care center, or a group child care home.
- Section 2, page 8, at lines 14-16, "Covered child care worker" means a child care worker employed by an infant and toddler child care center, ~~or~~ group child care center, or group child care home..."

- Section 2, page 9, after the definition of "Group child care center" add "Group child care home" means a facility, which may be an extended or modified private home, at which care is provided for seven to twelve children.
- Section 2, page 9, at lines 12-14, "Licensed or registered child care provider" means a family child care home, group child care center, group child care home, or infant and toddler child care center licensed or registered by the department.
- Section 2, page 9, at lines 17-19, "Subsidy" means an award of state funds to a specified infant and toddler child care center, ~~or~~ a group child care center, or a group child care home applicant..."
- Section 3, page 10, at lines 3-7, "The department of human services shall submit annual reports on the development and implementation of the child care provider subsidy and bonus program, including impacts to infant and toddler child care centers, group child care centers, group child care homes, family child care homes, and child care workers..."

For the application for a subsidy or bonus in section 2, page 3, lines 7-11, DHS respectfully requests to remove the requirement for an applicant to provide proof that each covered child care worker or family child care home: (A) Has United States citizenship or permanent United States resident alien status and is a resident of the State at the time of application since the employer is already required to document verification of identity and employment authorization of each employee upon hire.

In section 2, page 3, lines 7-14, DHS also provides clarification regarding proof that each covered child care worker is a licensed child care provider. The recommended amendment is:

- (B) "Is an employee of a licensed or a registered child care provider, or is an exempt provider approved by the department;"

DHS also respectfully requests the following addition to ineligible uses of state funds in section 2, page 4, lines 8-9:

- (B) "Shall not use state funds for entertainment or lobbying activities or any other unauthorized uses prohibited by law or as determined by the department;"

In Section 2, page 5, lines 1-18, DHS recommends including the University of Hawaii or any entity of the University of Hawaii as an entity who shall not receive a subsidy or bonus pursuant to the program as subsection (d)(4) since it is a public education institution.

As a result of DHS' experience in issuing previous rounds of grant awards, with limited staffing in the DHS child care regulation program office, DHS requests an additional amendment authorizing it to contract a provider to run the program. At this time, it will be difficult for the department to administer and oversee the child care provider subsidy and bonus program, and being able to allow a third party to oversee the program will reduce delays in the implementation and issuance of the provider subsidies and bonuses. Therefore, DHS requests the following amendment to section 2, page 6, lines 1-5, "The department or its designee shall review each application to determine whether each covered child care worker or family child care home is eligible to receive a subsidy or bonus moneys and shall make a final decision on each application."

Lastly, DHS respectfully requests the following amendments to the appropriations sections of the bill:

- Section 4. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii and deposited to the child care grant program special fund, the sum of \$ or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 for the child care provider subsidy and bonus program established by section 2 of this Act.

The sum appropriated to the child care grant program special fund shall be expended by the department of human services for the purposes of this Act.

- (new) Section 5. There is appropriated out of the child care grant program special fund, the sum of \$ or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 for the child care provider subsidy and bonus program established by section 2 of this Act.

The sum appropriated from the child care grant program special fund shall be expended by the department of human services for the purposes of this Act.

- Section 6. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii, the sum of \$100,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for one (1) program specialist to carry out the implementation and monitoring of the child care provider subsidy and bonus program established by section 2 of this Act.

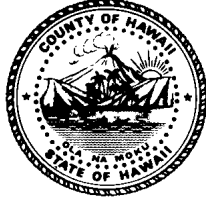
The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of human services for the purposes of this Act.

As the session continues, DHS will provide cost estimates to establish, implement, and administer the child care provider program.

If the measure passes, DHS would need time to develop standards, policies, an application form, and procedures for the administration of the child care provider subsidy and bonus program. Additionally, DHS must make program and system changes and develop administrative processes and rules to establish and implement the program. DHS requests an extended effective date of January 31, 2025, or later. The later effective date for this new program will provide DHS with needed time as the department oversees and administers the supplemental grant program by September 30, 2024.

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

Mitchell D. Roth
Mayor



Douglass S. Adams
Director

Frecia Cevallos
Deputy Director

County of Hawai'i

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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

Re: SB 2603, Relating to Early Childcare

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

I am writing in strong support of SB 2603.

For years, childcare providers have been subsidizing the tuition of families in their care through the acceptance of low wages. While affordable childcare 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, childcare 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.

In the recent release of our state's Kindergarten Entrance Assessment (KEA) scores, it was shown that only 29.6% of our kindergarteners are 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 childcare, but it will also help to recruit and attract more young professionals to the rewarding field of early childhood.

Very Respectfully,

Douglass S. Adams
Director

To: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: SB 2603 – in strong support

Hawaii State Capitol, Conference Room 225

January 31, 2024; 1:00PM

Aloha 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 Senate Bill 2603 relating to Early Child Care.**

At the heart of every early childhood care and education program are the professionals who cultivate the nurturing environment where our youngest keiki can grow, learn and thrive. 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 child care workers faced food insecurity. A 2022 study completed by the University of Hawaii Early Childhood Educator Excellence and Equity Project showed that early childhood care and education professionals earned between \$13 and \$17 per hour on average. 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 that they'll rely on their entire lives. A child's most rapid brain development happens between birth and three years old and this is when they develop vital skills that lay the foundation for lifelong education—in social-emotional skills, math, motor skills and literacy.

In addition to helping develop the next generations of curious and engaged citizens, infant and toddler child care 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 have not returned. This means that over the last five years, we have likely lost a quarter of the early childhood care and education workforce.

We need to retain the dedicated professionals currently in the workforce and attract the next generation of child care workers and early childhood educators. These efforts must start with raising their wages.

This bill is a crucial step forward. SB2603 requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) 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 and group child care centers and bonuses to registered family child care homes.

As the state continues its work to expand early childhood care and education options for families, we must focus on expanding the workforce. **Please support SB2306**

Mahalo,

Deborah Zysman, MPH
Executive Director



Date: January 29, 2024

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

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: Support for **SB2603**, 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 SB2603, 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 past six months alone, the state has experienced the closure of seventeen licensed Group Child Care (GCC) centers and the loss of 640 GCC center slots. Additional capacity has been 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 **SB2603**.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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.

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Page 1 of 2

Committee: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Bill Number: SB 2603, Relating to Early Child Care
Hearing Date and Time: January 31, 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 SB 2603, Relating to Early Child Care. The purpose of SB 2603 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 and group child care centers and 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 SB 2603 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 Corporation¹ 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.

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

¹ 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.

and other young children during these critical years—are paid well enough to 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



COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

BILL SB2603
POSITION: SUPPORT

Hearing Date: January 31, 2024

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

Aloha United Way supports SB2603 which provides subsidies to adequately compensate child care providers, along with a bonus program, to attract and retain our early child care workforce.

Quality early childcare programs are essential for our communities. While the high need for care grows, the sector will fall far short of the need for childcare because of the low compensation childcare professionals receive. Current wages often mean their own households live below the ALICE threshold or in poverty. Such low wages mean it is incredibly hard to attract new employees to this workforce and limits available child care seats.

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.

This bill provides **critical child care workforce support and will help ALICE families** with limited options for child care, increase workforce participation and economic growth, and elevate income for child care workers. Adequate, high-quality, affordable programs can only happen if the field can attract professional, trained workers who see a viable career that provides living wages.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your action to support ALICE households and families across Hawaii by passing SB2603.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kayla Keehu-Alexander".

Kayla Keehu- Alexander
Vice President, Community Impact
Aloha United Way

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

Suzanne Skjold
Chief Operating Officer
Aloha United Way



Chamber of Commerce HAWAII

The Voice of Business

LATE

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Wednesday, January 31, 2024, at 1PM

Conference Room 329

RE: SB 2603

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

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii Supports (“The Chamber”) **supports SB 2603**, 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 child care centers and group child care centers and bonuses to registered family child care homes. Requires annual reports to the legislature.

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 bill would help retain and expand the local childcare workforce which is critical to ensure a thriving future for all of Hawaii businesses.

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.



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- Pūnana Leo o Hāna
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- Pūnana Leo o Waiālua

DATE: January 31, 2024
 TIME: 1:00PM
 LOCATION: State Capitol, Conference Room 225
 SB2603 Relating to Early Child Care

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Ka'iulani Laehā, Chief Executive Officer of the 'Aha Pūnana Leo. The 'Aha Pūnana Leo is the only statewide provider of Hawaiian medium early childhood programs and education. We stand on 40 years of experience in language revitalization and early childhood related programs.

The 'Aha Pūnana Leo would like to **support SB2603 with comments.**

As a laboratory school of Ka Haka 'Ula o Ke'elikōlani, the state Hawaiian language college, 'Aha Pūnana Leo provides a state-wide system of early childhood teacher training, language fluency development, curriculum development, assessments and action research. Together with the public charter Ke Kula 'o Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u and the college we demonstrate a Hawaiian medium education pathway from infant-toddler through doctoral degree education.

One of our most significant challenges in language revitalization work, especially seen in language nest programs, is the dire need for kumu proficient in the language. The establishment of our current P-25 Hawaiian language medium pathway was revolutionary for native language revitalization efforts on a national level.

In order to ensure access and eligibility for Hawaiian language medium programs to benefit from this bill, we request the addition of following to the bill language; Section 2 and Section 2 (3) (e):

'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.

Mahalo,


 Ka'iulani Laehā



January 30, 2024

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

As the President of Kama'aina Kids, overseeing operations across more than 100 childcare sites spanning four islands and caring for over 6,500 children aged infants through after-school programs, I am reaching out to emphasize the critical importance of community-based childcare in Hawaii. Our commitment to providing quality childcare is unwavering, but we face a significant challenge due to the shortage of early childhood education and childcare teachers and staff in the state.

Community-based childcare is not just essential for the families we serve, but also for those eager to return to work but unable to find care. The shortage of skilled professionals in early childhood education hinders our ability to meet the growing demand for childcare services. Recognizing this, I urge your support for the creation of a childcare worker subsidy and bonus program to enhance the compensation for these invaluable professionals.

Hawaii's early childhood care and education professionals play a pivotal role in shaping the future of our keiki. However, a 2022 study conducted by the RAND Corporation in collaboration with the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa revealed that the pay gap between Public School DOE teachers and licensed childcare lead teachers is significant even if the education and training required are similar.

This inadequate compensation acts as a significant deterrent for individuals considering a career in early childcare.

Preschools, childcare providers, and families are already facing considerable challenges. Addressing the wage disparity is crucial, and public investment is essential as early childhood care and education professionals contribute to the public good.

By investing in the people who take care of our children, we not only enhance the quality of early childhood education but also support Hawaii's working families.

I urge your thoughtful consideration and support for this vital initiative.

Dana Vela

President and CEO

Kama'aina Kids Corporate Office
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Aloha Legislators:

The Hawai'i Association of School Psychologists (HASP) **supports** SB2603.

SB2603 accomplishes the following:

- (1) It requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide subsidies to child care workers of licensed infant and toddler child care centers, group child care centers, and bonuses to registered family care homes
- (2) It establishes a child care provider subsidy and bonus program to adequately compensate and retain the existing early child care workforce in all licensed and registered child care provider settings
- (3) It appropriates funds for the child care worker subsidy and bonus program, and provides an appropriation request to ensure DHS will have the funds to implement the program
- (4) It requires DHS to submit annual reports on the development and implementation of the child care worker subsidy and bonus program
- (5) It allows 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
- (6) It allows family child care homes to apply for and receive a bonus of at least \$6,000 per year

Please support this measure to improve pay for the professionals who are the heart of 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.

Respectfully Submitted:

Alec Marentic, Ed.S., NCSP

HASP, Legislative Chair



January 30, 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: SB2603 Relating to Early Childcare

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 SB2603.**

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.

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



Hearing Date: **Wednesday, January 31, 2024, 1:00 pm, Conference Rm. 225**

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

Re: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2603, 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 SB 2603, 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.



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(808) 522-1103 (FAX)
EMAIL: snandmarycastle@hawaii.rr.com

ALFRED L. CASTLE
Executive Director and Treasurer

THE
SAMUEL N.
AND
MARY CASTLE
FOUNDATION

January 29, 2024

and the
HENRY & DOROTHY CASTLE
MEMORIAL FUND

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee On Health And Human Services

From: Alfred L. Castle, CEO, Samuel N. & Mary Castle Foundation
Re: Bill 2603

I am submitting written testimony and I am in strong support of bill 2603 which would create child care worker subsidies.

Improving wages for essential child care and early education professionals will be a long needed step in recruiting and retaining scarce workers.

The Samuel N. & Mary Castle Foundation has supported early learning for Hawaii for over a century; public support for child care workers is needed to ensure more families have access to quality care. Many states are ahead of Hawaii and the provisions of this bill are needed to help our state catch up.

Alfred L. Castle



BUILDBETTER.LIVEBETTER.®

January 29, 2024

Committee: Senate Committee on Health & Human Services
Bill Number: SB 2603, Relating to Early Child Care
Hearing Date and Time: January 31, 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 SB 2603, Relating to Early Child Care. The purpose of SB 2603 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 SB 2603. 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



Statement of
Meli James
Cofounder
Mana Up

SB 2603, Relating to Early Child Care

Aloha,

On behalf of Mana Up, I write in support of SB 2603, 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,



Meli James
Cofounder, Mana Up



TITLE GUARANTY
HAWAII

We write in support of SB 2603, Relating to Early Child Care.

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.





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

January 31, 2024

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

We support SB 2603, 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 and group child care centers 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*



PATCH
Supporting Hawaii's Child Care Needs

Oahu Main Office
560 North Nimitz Highway
Suite 218
Honolulu, HI 96817
Tel: (808) 839-1988
Fax: (808) 839-1799
Patch@Patch-hi.org
www.PatchHawaii.org

Preschool Open Doors
Tel: (808) 791-2130
Toll-Free: 1-800-746-5620

Kauai
4485 Pahe'e Street
Suite 124
Lihue, HI 96766
Tel: (808) 246-0622
Fax: (808) 246-0069

Maui
1063 Lower Main Street
Suite C-217
Wailuku, HI 96793
Tel: (808) 242-9232
Fax: (808) 242-4672

East Hawaii
26 Waianuenue Avenue
Hilo, HI 96720
Tel: (808) 961-3169
Fax: (808) 238-3232

West Hawaii
75-5995 Kuakini Hwy.
Suite 521
Kailua-Kona, HI 96740
Tel: (808) 322-3500
Fax: (808) 322-0100

Member of:
Child Care Aware
National Workforce Registry Alliance
Aloha United Way
Kauai United Way
Maui United Way
Hawaii Island United Way



Agency Partner
BBB of Hawaii, Accredited Charity

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I am writing in **strong support** of SB 2603.

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.

First and foremost, I want to emphasize the critical role that affordable child care plays in supporting working families. For many parents, particularly those with limited financial resources, accessing quality child care can be an insurmountable challenge. Without adequate support, parents are often forced to make difficult choices between providing for their families and ensuring that their children receive the care and early education they deserve.

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.**

As a member of this community, I firmly believe that investing in our children's future is one of the most important investments we can make. The Child Care Subsidy Program represents a wise and compassionate investment in our collective well-being, one that yields dividends not only for families and children but for society as a whole.

Mahalo,

Carol Wear

Carol Wear
Interim Executive Director



**Hawaii
Legislative
Council
Members**

Joell Edwards
Wainiha Country
Market
Hanalei

Russell Ruderman
Island Naturals
Hilo/Kona

Dr. Andrew Johnson
Niko Niko Family
Dentistry
Honolulu

Robert H. Pahia
Hawaii Taro Farm
Wailuku

Maile Meyer
Na Mea Hawaii
Honolulu

Tina Wildberger
Kihei Ice
Kihei

L. Malu Shizue Miki
Abundant Life
Natural Foods
Hilo

Kim Coco Iwamoto
Enlightened Energy
Honolulu

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

Sen. Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Sen. Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Comm. on Health & Human Services

Wednesday, January 30, 2024
1:00 pm
Conference Room 225 or via Zoom

RE: SB2603 Early Child Care - SUPPORT

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

The Chamber of Sustainable Commerce represents over 100 small businesses across the State of Hawaii that strive for a triple bottom line: people, planet and prosperity; we know we can strengthen our economy without hurting workers, consumers, communities or the environment. This is why we support SB2603, 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 and group child care centers and bonuses to registered family child care homes and appropriates funds.

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.

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.

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.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 6:16:08 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Doris Segal Matsunaga	Testifying for Save Medicaid Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Save Medicaid Hawaii supports SB 2603 RELATING TO EARLY CHILD CARE.



January 31, 2024

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: SB 2603 Relating to Early Child Care

POSITION: STRONG SUPPORT

The Hawai'i State Democratic Women's Caucus write in strong support of SB 2603 Relating to Early Child Care which would establish a child care provider subsidy 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 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 a 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 respectfully request that the Committee pass this important measure. Thank you for the opportunity to provide our testimony in strong support of SB 2603 Relating to Early Child Care.



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 on Health and Human Services
Wednesday, January 31, 2024 at 1:00 p.m.

By

Nathan Murata, Dean
College of Education

And

Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 2603 – 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 SB 2603 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. As part of the RAND Corporation in partnership with the College of Education/UH Manoa, child care workers earn between \$13 and \$17 per hour. 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 opportunity to provide comments on SB 2603.



**Testimony Presented to the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
January 31, 2024 at 1:00 p.m. (Room 225)**

SB 2603, RELATING TO EARLY CHILD CARE

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

We write in strong support of SB 2603, 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 infant and 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,

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

Brandon Kurisu
aio Family of Companies



Committee on Health and Human Services
SB 2603
Wednesday, January 31, 2024
1:00 PM, Conference Room 225
IN SUPPORT

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I am writing in **strong support** of SB 2603.

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 pilot 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. **Hawai‘i’s early childhood care and education professionals provide a public good, which requires public investment.**

Preschools, childcare providers, and families already carry a heavy burden. Often overlooked are those who need early childhood care because of medical needs and having access to publicly funded . My family is still recovering, years later, from the exorbitant cost and emotional toll we incurred hiring child-care from unlicensed or uncertified individuals during a medically challenging 2nd pregnancy because my husband was unable to stay home and provide the necessary support. Those who helped us in our home needed a lot of training, costing me more time and energy than I had to give. Two others worked out of their homes and had space for us; the first did not change our daughter’s diaper all day and allowed their unemployed spouse to get high while home assisting with the children and the second, had to close her business due to complications with the licensing process and disgruntled neighbors. Parents should never have to cancel doctor’s appointments, stop therapy, or choose between risking a pregnancy and health or exhausting their financial resources while adding additional stress. Please support this measure!

Mahalo, Christen Zulli

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 6:22:18 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leilani Kailiawa	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Committee on Health and Human Services

SB 2603

Wednesday, January 31, 2024

1:00 PM, Conference Room 225

IN SUPPORT

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support of SB 2603.

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 pilot 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.

I am the mother of 3 sons from Hilo. I struggled with finding quality child care when my sons were young toddlers. Here on Hawai‘i Island, we could use more options and more child care providers because I experienced it.

Please support this measure.

Mahalo,

Leilani Kailiawa

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 11:13:54 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Malia Tsuchiya	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

TO: [COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES](#)

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

DATE: Wednesday, January 31, 2024

TIME: 1:00 PM

Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

PLACE: State Capitol

415 South Beretania Street

Bill: **SB 2603**

Position: **IN SUPPORT**

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and respected committee members,

Thank you for hearing SB 2603. I am writing in **STRONG SUPPORT OF SB2603.**

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 SB 2603.**

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

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/28/2024 9:58:40 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Ball	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Childcare providers and early educators are the single greatest resource we have toward sustaining the success of future generations. As the father of two young children, I witnessed many of my children's most talented pre-K teachers leaving for the continent because of the high cost of living in Hawai'i or leaving the profession altogether. Even in a historically undervalued profession, early educators are the least well paid and least respected members of the teaching profession, despite having the largest impact on student outcomes throughout their lives. Investing in this bill will prove to be spending pennies on the dollar and will tell our early educators that their roles and their impact on our keiki is truly valued. Thank you for supporting this measure and valuing the essential work childcare providers do throughout the state.

With aloha,

David Ball

Waiālae-Kahala

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/27/2024 5:15:35 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marissa Ornellas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Health and Human Services Committee Members, my name is Marissa Ornellas.

I am testifying in support of bill SB2603, which would create child care worker subsidy program as a step toward improving wages for early childhood care and education professionals. *This bill not only helps us retain current childcare workers, but helps ensure families have access to quality and affordable child care.*

Without subsidies as a bill like this would provide, child care workers tasked with one of **THE MOST CRITICAL** duties of **RAISING CHILDREN** continue to be grossly underpaid. This directly translates to maintaing the status quo of childcare workers that are either ill trained with poor capacity, or adept workers that forgo a better quality of life for nominal wages. Parents on the other hand pay a significant percentage of monthly earnings to retain childcare, whether in a program of quality or not. Subsidies are critical in addressing this grave problem.

It is widely understood that early childhood (specifically ages 0-5) is a time of the **most drastic brain development** and learning in the human lifespan. The early childhood experiences of Hawai'i's children matter, and this translates to stastics in education, crime, mental and emotional wellbeing, workforce productivity, socioeconomics and beyond. Please take this opportunity to make a difference for Hawai'i, the children of today and generations to come.

Thank you for listening and allowing me to share my support of bill SB2603.

Mahalo,

Marissa L. Ornellas

Committee on Health and Human Services
SB 2603
Wednesday, January 31, 2024
1:00 PM, Conference Room 225
IN SUPPORT

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I am writing in **strong support** of SB 2603.

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 pilot 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.**

Waitlists, many locations short staffed, care provider turnovers... all a nightmare! My family piecemeals care much needed for our toddler. Please support this measure!

Mahalo,



Krystal Baba

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/26/2024 6:19:48 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ryan Samonte	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chairs & Committee Members,

I strongly support SB 2603.

As a father of a toddler, juggling childcare continues to be a struggle on top of working multiple jobs to provide for our family.

We need more care options with quality employees who also earn an honest wage.

Please support this measure!

Thank you!

Ryan S.
Waipahu, HI

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/26/2024 7:23:17 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jazzlyn Young	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/27/2024 8:09:22 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessie L Gonsalves	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a mother to a toddler. I fully support this SB2603. Teachers getting paid accurately will influence,encourage and help keep good teachers for our keiki. Please please pass this SB2603!

Mahalo,

Jessie Gonsalves

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/27/2024 9:29:04 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pelenatita Namoa-Hanusa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Health and Human Services Committee Members, my name is Pelenatita Namoa-Hanusa.

As a working mother and a supporter of our keiki, I am testifying in support of bill SB2603, which would create child care worker subsidy program as a step toward improving wages for early childhood care and education professionals. This bill not only helps us retain current childcare workers, but helps ensure families have access to quality and affordable child care.

This bill is important to me because I know too many women whether with a partner or not who struggle in the early years of having a child. Often times, we need to rely on parents or grandparents who are too old to keep up with little ones. That is not an ideal way for children to be cared for especially if the grandparents consistently do not follow what the mothers ask of them to do (ex: do not give peanut butter because of allergies, don't smoke around the kids, etc.). Little ones need attention , love, care, play time, an social interaction with other children.

Many times, mothers need to work minimum hours or not work at all so they can be home to care for baby all while stressing over how to make ends meet. That overall is a recipe for decreased mental health and higher risk of baby endangerment.

Hiring quality childcare providers by using extensive background checks and ensuring certified/ licensed training can put our kids safely with trained professionals. On top of that, paying child care providers a livable wage is how we will retain them. They also need to make a living in order to thrive in Hawaii's outrageously expensive cost of living. By supporting early quality child care, you are allowing an increase in the workforce, also a thriving Hawai'i because our children will be in good hands during the early years increasing the chances of them becoming responsible citizens. It really is a win-win.

Thank you for listening and allowing me to share my support of bill SB2603.

Mahalo,

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/27/2024 11:54:06 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marya Grambs	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Health and Human Services Committee Members, my name is Marya Grambs.

I am testifying in support of bill SB2603, which would create child care worker subsidy program as a step toward improving wages for early childhood care and education professionals.

It is so important for our families to be able to obtain quality child care and child care workers must be paid adequately.

This bill not only helps us retain current childcare workers, but helps ensure families have access to quality and affordable child care.

Thank you for allowing me to share my support of bill SB2603.

Mahalo,

Marya Grambs

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/28/2024 12:57:34 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elaine Yamashita	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I have been advocating for equitable pay for early childhood educators for decades and support this bill. it's definitely a step in the right direction that will benefit not only the educators, but also the keiki and their 'ohana.

Elaine Yamashita

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/28/2024 10:57:21 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sherrie Galdeira	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Committee on Health and Human Services

SB 2603

Wednesday, January 31, 2024

1:00 PM, Conference Room 225

IN SUPPORT

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support of SB 2603.

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 pilot 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.

Please support this measure.

Mahalo,

Sherrie Galdeira

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 7:53:15 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chris Barzman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Health and Human Services Committee Members, my name is Chris Barzman.

I am testifying in support of bill SB2603, which would create child care worker subsidy program as a step toward improving wages for early childhood care and education professionals. This bill not only helps us retain current childcare workers, but helps ensure families have access to quality and affordable child care.

This bill is important to me because childcare costs are larger than food and housing combined in my family.

Thank you for listening and allowing me to share my support of bill SB2603.

Mahalo,

Chris

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 9:21:44 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amanda Pump	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Having raised my family with out natural supports available on Island, I strongly support SB 2603.

Affordable and available childcare is one of the leading barriers for young families having to make the difficult decision to either work or start a family. With rising costs of housing, food, gas, and basic needs it is nearly impossible to have one parent remain home with their child(ren) and still afford to live within the State.

This bill will assist families in getting back into the workplace, will reduce the stress for the enormous costs of childcare, and will strengthen families and will help our communities thrive.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 10:41:58 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Health and Human Services Committee Members, my name is Nanea Lo. I'm born and raised in the Hawaiian Kingdom. I live in Mō'ili'ili. I'm writing in STRONG SUPPORT.

I am testifying in support of bill SB2603, which would create child care worker subsidy program as a step toward improving wages for early childhood care and education professionals. This bill not only helps us retain current childcare workers, but helps ensure families have access to quality and affordable child care.

This bill is important to me because [share your personal experiences and stories if you are comfortable].

Thank you for listening and allowing me to share my support of bill SB2603.

me ke aloha 'āina,

Nanea Lo

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 10:46:33 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Will Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am testifying in support of SB2603, which would create child care worker subsidy program. This is a step toward improving wages for early childhood care and education professionals. This bill not only helps us retain current childcare workers, but helps ensure families have access to quality and affordable child care. Mahalo!

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 11:39:38 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chelsea Ching LaFrance	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill!

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 1:24:27 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zoe Brooks-Jeffiers	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Health and Human Services Committee Members, my name is Zoe.

I am testifying in support of bill SB2603, which would create child care worker subsidy program as a step toward improving wages for early childhood care and education professionals. This bill not only helps us retain current childcare workers, but helps ensure families have access to quality and affordable child care.

This bill is important to me because I work to make Hawai‘i a state where all families and children can thrive. I see people my age not having children and postponing have families because they are unable to afford it-- even with great paying jobs. I see friends in the childcare and education fields leaving work because it doesn't pay enough to make end means and accomplish their long term goals. It is time for these things to change.

Thank you for listening and allowing me to share my support of bill SB2603.

Mahalo,

Zoe Brooks-Jeffiers

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 2:10:54 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Health and Human Services Committee Members, my name is [name].

I am testifying in support of bill SB2603, which would create child care worker subsidy program as a step toward improving wages for early childhood care and education professionals. This bill not only helps us retain current childcare workers but helps ensure families have access to quality and affordable child care.

This bill is important to me because I know of many childcare workers who are severely underpaid for doing such a great job. They do their jobs while being underpaid because they obviously love what they do. Just because they loved their jobs does not mean that they should be taken advantage of.

Thank you for listening and allowing me to share my support of bill SB2603.

Mahalo,

Alapa'i Kaulia

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/28/2024 1:41:21 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Younghee Overly	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and the Members of Senate Committee on HHS, please pass this measure so we have a chance at keeping our childcare workers stay in childcare. They need a living wage. Mahalo nui.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 8:22:51 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shantell Calarruda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Health and Human Services Committee Members, my name is Shantell Calarruda.

I am testifying in support of bill SB2603, which would create child care worker subsidy program as a step toward improving wages for early childhood care and education professionals. This bill not only helps us retain current childcare workers, but helps ensure families have access to quality and affordable child care.

This bill is important to me because I was able to secure affordable child care that I needed to maintain my job.

Thank you for listening and allowing me to share my support of bill SB2603.

Mahalo,

Shantell Calarruda

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 9:22:25 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dena Akiu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members Keohokalole, Shimabukuro, and Awa,

I am writing in strong **SUPPORT** of **SB 2603 RELATING TO EARLY CHILD CARE.**

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.

The long-term benefits and supports that quality early learning programs provide are crucial in a young child's most formative years. I've experienced these positive impacts in each of my roles as a mother, grandmother, and an early childhood educator. In strengthening the early childhood educator workforce, we strengthen our youngest learners by building their brain development and instilling a positive disposition for life-long learning.

Please support this measure.

Mahalo,

Dena Akiu

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 10:32:48 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ciara Lindsey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou,

With over two decades of experience in providing early childhood care. For the past seven years I have been immersed in the classroom environment, my focus is on nurturing the development of three to five-year-olds. Balancing this role with being a full-time wife, mother, tūtū, and online college student pursuing my Bachelors in Early Childhood Education, life sometimes finds us navigating the challenges of living paycheck to paycheck.

My passion lies in teaching and guiding our keiki towards the joy of learning, emphasizing play-based education infused with the rich tapestry of our Hawaiian culture. While the allure of relocating to alleviate financial strains has crossed my mind, my profound love for Hawai‘i and its keiki keeps me firmly rooted here.

Despite our dedication, the financial aspect remains a concern. As educators, we invest not only our time but also our personal resources in the classroom. Often, I find myself spending my own money on materials for my keiki without reimbursement. Additionally, the extra hours we dedicate go unnoticed, as they aren't reflected in our clocked hours. Yet, we persevere because our passion for educating Hawai‘i's keiki drives us.

In advocating for fairness, I wholeheartedly support Senate Bill SB2603, aiming to address the concerns faced by early childhood educators. Together, let us work towards creating an environment where our dedication is met with equitable compensation and acknowledgment.

Me ke aloha,

Ciara Lindsey

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 11:24:24 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Axel Beers	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee Chair, Committee Vice Chair, and Members,

I am writing in support of SB2603 to establish a pilot program that will adequately fund and compensate the early childcare workforce.

I used to be a classroom teacher in a public school. During that time I had many colleagues who worked multiple jobs. In the end, despite the great need for qualified educators and the meaningful nature of working with students, I left that profession because the pay was not adequate to match the cost of living.

I understand that early childhood education and child care are different from K-12 teachers in public school, but the point I am trying to make is that qualified educators and caregivers will leave the profession, or move to other locations where the profession pays better related to the cost of living, unless we compensate workers adequately for the true value of their labor. Unfortunately, despite caregiving, early childhood education, and education being essential to the functioning of our society, the wages do not reflect their value.

A study by the Hawai‘i Early Childhood Educator Excellence and Equity Project recently showed that wages and salaries for early childhood educators in Hawai‘i are not competitive with jobs requiring similar levels of education or experience, with median hourly wages estimated at approximately \$13 to \$17 an hour, which is below the livable wage for a single adult in the County of Maui.

From 2017 to 2019, Hawai‘i lost 20 percent of its early childhood educator workforce, going from 4,260 total employees to 3,410, according to the University of California at Berkeley’s Center for the Study of Child Care Employment’s latest reports.

A 2022 survey of 82 Hawai‘i early childhood education programs, homes, and centers conducted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (“NAEYC”) found that 62.2 percent of them are experiencing staffing shortages, with many serving fewer children as a result. The NAEYC survey also found that in Hawai‘i and nationally the “number one thing needed” for early childhood workers to stay at their jobs is “competitive wages”.

A 2022 Aloha United Way study found 52 percent of households in Maui County are living below the federal poverty line or are asset limited, income constrained, and employed, meaning they live below the average income needed to afford the household survival budget.

Two recommendations for this bill: Please include early childhood educators as well, so that preschool teachers serving 4-year-olds may qualify. Please also set the standard of pay to be a wage that matches the self-sufficiency income standard for a single adult in the County they are located. That means that a single person working full time as a child caregiver or early childhood educator would be able to have a basic survival budget for their work. At the very least, they deserve that.

Thanks for your time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Axel Beers, M.Ed.

Kahului, Maui

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 8:59:49 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marci Whitman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Committee on Health and Human Services

SB 2603

Wednesday, January 31, 2024

1:00 PM, Conference Room 225

IN SUPPORT

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support of SB 2603.

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.

As a Director of an ECE Program on Kauai, I can speak first hand to the struggles of finding and retaining qualified staff. Without support, the field of Early Childhood Education is at risk of crumbling, leaving our communities and workforce without the quality care and education it so desperately needs.

Please support this measure.

Mahalo,

Marci Whitman

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 9:46:42 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Raya Esteban	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

Please support SB2603, 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

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 11:57:05 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Angela Thomas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee members,

I am in strong support of this measure as it will begin to stabilize the intricate balance between what parents can afford to pay for child care tuition and what the field that nurtures, cares for and educates our young children deserves. For years, providers of that care have been subsidizing the costs for families by accepting unacceptably low wages!

If as witnessed during the pandemic, these providers are seen as essential employees - part of the economic infrastructure, they are also part of the social environment that supports the brain development of our future society.

Please support this measure as the importance of early childhood and the practitioners who are in this field deserve to be recognized, and paid appropriately, for their role in the future of our country.

January 30, 2024

To: Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice-Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Subject: **Measure** – SB2603 RELATING TO EARLY CHILD CARE
Hearing Date – January 31, 2024
Time - 1:00 PM
Location - Room 225

This testimony is in strong support of SB2603.

Aloha Chair Senator San Buenaventura and committee members,

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 (ECE³) Project.

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 2603, 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.

SB2603 will provide much-needed wage supplements essential for recruiting and retaining early care and education professionals and keeping our these child care and early learning programs open. Keeping these programs open would 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. This low compensation has led to a disturbing number of early educators leaving 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 development as it encourages early educators to deepen their relationships and interactions with the children they serve, to establish secure attachments with children, and support children's ongoing developmental progress. 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.

SB2603 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.

SB2603 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 SB2603, 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

LATE

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 1:01:33 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Iris Thompson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I've been in the Early Childhood profession for 30 years, and I've worked in multiple areas of ECE. Most jobs in ECE are rigorous because we work with children, parents/family, and community services. We go out of our way to provide the necessary care and support we feel our families deserve to live in our community/Hawaii. Although our administrators recognize our diligence and dedication it's been difficult for them to compensate us for what we are worth because society views ECE professionals as "babysitters," instead of Educators. If this bill passes more people may see the value of being an ECE professional.

LATE

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 2:46:55 PM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nicole Bacdad	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this bill.

It is so important to provide quality early intervention for our keiki.

LATE

TO: COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

DATE: Wednesday, January 31, 2024

TIME: 1:00 PM

PLACE: Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

State Capitol

415 South Beretania Street

Bill: **SB 2603**

Position: **IN SUPPORT**

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and respected committee members,

Thank you for hearing **SB2603**. I am writing in **STRONG SUPPORT OF SB2603**.

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 care 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 Child Care, which supports FCC throughout the country as educators make the intentional professional choice to offer high-quality early care and education in their homes. I was recently selected for the Advancing the Early Childhood Education Profession Task Force (ECE3) to represent registered family childcare providers. As an ECE3 member, I will help shape the island's unified early childhood care and profession to improve access to high-quality early childhood care and education so that all Hawaii keiki will be well prepared for school and life.

I am an Army veteran, wife, 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 9.

Before the COVID-19 Pandemic, despite my program's essential role for families, there was not enough support to assist families in accessing available quality childcare. Before COVID-19 operational expenses were beginning to rise.

I am licensed to care for six children between 3 weeks to 14 years of age. Before COVID, I maintained a 6 - 12-month childcare waiting list for families seeking childcare. I provide childcare with help from my daughter. Mostly, I have been able to maintain payroll and my daycare expenses. I can afford to pay my additional family member a minimum wage, but not offer health benefits. My own access to health insurance is through the Veteran Administration Health Care system or my husband's medical retirement benefit and employer. Whenever the childcare program fell short, we would have to rely on other household income or supplement with an additional job. Sometimes, parents struggled to pay tuition but made too much money to qualify for subsidy. I would develop flexible payment arrangements with families to ensure their

children could remain in my program. However, I couldn't make payment arrangements for my expenses. I still had to pay for my help and buy food and supplies for my childcare program.

Family Child Care (FCC) educators disproportionately care for infants and toddlers and children from low-income families and families of color. In Hawaii, PATCH reported that 93% of PATCH clients earn less than the state median household income.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, one of my priorities was advocating for an increase in the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) reimbursement rates for providers. Before COVID, my program was at capacity; I had no families that qualified for subsidy. I wanted to care for more children on subsidy, but there were two significant challenges. First, the rates for all providers, regardless of setting, were significantly lower than the cost of providing high-quality care. Even more challenging subsidy assistance reimbursed Family Childcare providers at even lower rates set by median FCC family tuition rates. My program rates were slightly above the median rate set by the Department of Human Services, which means the subsidy difference would either be absorbed by the parents, who couldn't afford much more, or myself. Second, the subsidy payments are sometimes not made until 2 months after care starts. Once again parents could not afford to wait this long for the reimbursement. It has always been challenging to sustain our programs, but we make it work to provide the care and early learning opportunities families need.

When COVID began, childcare programs like mine struggled to stay open for families, but the historic childcare relief funds saved the sector.

Then COVID hit. We continued to stay open using the reserved cleaning supplies and paper products. We shopped in bulk but quickly ran out of supplies and needed help finding what we needed. Shopping was done early in the mornings before our programs opened, which helped us reduce the amount of contact with others in stores. I also had to help with remote learning for two school-aged children in my program. ***Many daycare facilities began to close; however, many family childcare facilities continued to operate –according to a NAFCC survey, one-third of all FCC programs remained open. We depended on one another to get information out. Family childcare providers did their best to keep their doors open and environments safe.*** The funding provided by Congress for COVID-19 relief, particularly \$50 billion since December 2020, helped me stabilize and get through without sacrificing critical services to the parents I serve. The funding helped families with the cost of childcare, allowing the state to increase income eligibility and eliminate the co-pay, which meant more families could qualify for childcare assistance. I purchased purifiers to help with airflow and individual desks to help with social distancing. I bought new, age-appropriate materials and supplies to keep children engaged. We also expanded our playground area to explore nature and enjoy the outdoors. My life during the COVID-19 pandemic was about survival, and in many ways, it still is. ***The success of the childcare funding has been remarkable, but it is crucial that we continue to build on it to ensure that all children are well-prepared, families have access to affordable care that meets their needs, and childcare providers are compensated and respected for their significant contributions to society. Despite the relief funding, the emotional, physical, and financial strains continue, and the childcare industry is facing systemic challenges.***

It is welcoming Hawaii's minimum wage will progressively increase to \$18 by 2028, however it is essential to consider its implications on childcare costs and families, especially the childcare centers, staff, and workers. ***Reasonable policy solutions are necessary, but they must be backed by additional sustained funding to work effectively.***

Childcare centers acknowledge that childcare workers deserve better compensation, but without additional funding, many centers, including home-based ones, cannot afford to pay more. The overhead costs are too high, and due to space limitations, relocation is not an option for FCC homes. ***Many family childcare providers have expressed concerns about closing their programs altogether, as they cannot charge the actual cost of care, and parents cannot afford the rate. This is particularly concerning since FCC programs are relied on by families working non-traditional hours, low-income families, and families with infants and toddlers.***

Investing in quality early childhood education is essential to laying a firm foundation for all children's futures, regardless of their socioeconomic status.

It is crucial to support our Early Childhood Educators and the families they serve by providing additional sustainable funding options. The benefits of investing in early childhood education are numerous and long-lasting, including children's development of critical life skills, such as conflict resolution, empathy, love, and self-control. **Therefore, it is imperative to vote in favor of SB2603 to ensure that all children have access to quality early childhood education, and Early Childhood Educators and families have the necessary support to provide it. As you consider, please keep my story in mind.**

Thank you for this opportunity.

LATE

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 8:58:14 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacquelyn B Ching	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

January 31, 2024,

Aloha,

I appreciate the ability to testify and ask for your support of bill [SB2603](#) co-sponsored by State senator Joy San Buenaventura. It is time to pass legislation supporting and honoring Early Childhood Educators. Since 1975 I have been an early childhood educator because progressive programs made possible by President Jimmy Carter enable me to attend college locally. I was able to earn my Child Development Associate Degree (CDA). I continued my education and hold a master degree in Human Development with a speciality in infant /toddler development. In other words, I understand early brain development and how critical quality relationship-based education and care is for our most vulnerable citizens.

Childcare and preschools are essential infrastructure. Hawai'i's early childhood care and education professionals provide a public good that mandates public investment.

- Early childhood care and education professionals help mold the minds of infants and young children during the time in their lives when their brains are developing most rapidly.
- They are some of the first to help shape the next generation into responsible, curious and engaged citizens.
- They come to their work with training and degrees that are specialized so that they can work with young children to grow and learn in developmentally appropriate ways.
- They allow parents and caregivers to go to work and attend to other kuleana.
- This benefits employers whose employees often depend on child care.
- **Early childhood care and education professionals are the workforce behind other workforces**

Ultimately BILL [SB2603](#) serves us all. I urge you to vote YES.

Our future depends on our children.

Mahalo,

Jacquelyn Benton Ching, M.A.

LATE

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 10:14:20 AM

Testimony for HHS on 1/31/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gary Emelle	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Committee: Health & Human Services

Bill: SB 2603

Time: Wednesday, January 31, 2024

Room: CR 225 & Videoconference 1p.m.

In Support

Aloha & Thank you Chair San Buenaventura &

Vice Chair Aquino for the opportunity to write testimony in support of SB 2603.

Families need access to quality early childhood care & education from birth to kindergarten. In order to provide quality care & education we must improve the pay for Early Childhood Education professionals who are the heart of the classrooms.

Please support the creation of a child care worker subsidy and bonus program as a step toward improving wages for early childhood care and educational professionals.

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

After 22 years, now retired male DOE preschool teacher & administrator , I understand firsthand the ongoing need for public investment in early childhood education (ECE).

As a former teacher, I worked (2-3) jobs to pay for my (2) Masters Degrees in order to have an adequate salary, & adequate time in the classroom to provide quality education to our students.

My colleagues were family caregivers while attending school at night for advanced degrees to improve their salaries and pay for childcare when attending school during day & night.

Early childhood care & educational professionals are workforce behind other workforces (after school care for doctors, lawyers, business people, all those working 9 to 5 are beyond), we need safe , quality people caring for our youngest population.

Our Early Childhood Professionals are often forgotten when reviewing fare wages.

Nationally, as of January 2023, 7.5 percent of childcare workers has yet to return.

Hawai'i lost 20 percent childcare workforce from 2018-2020.

Federal American Rescue Plan (ARPA) COVID funds are no longer available to stabilize childcare.

The state must create immediate long term solutions.

Please support this measure,

LATE

From: [Shana Wailana Kukila](#)
To: [Elizabeth Rush](#)
Subject: Re: SB2603 Testimony: January 31, 2024
Date: Wednesday, January 31, 2024 3:51:58 PM

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January 31, 2024

Correction to written testimony RE: SB2603 Relating to Childcare

Position: Support

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To provide more context for my oral testimony from today's hearing, I am writing in full support of this measure, and hope that the budgetary issues raised in the hearing will be resolved this session and funded as soon as possible so that hard working families can return to full time work post-pandemic. We also should support our essential childcare workers as an overall strategic plan to build up our local workforce infrastructure across the state with quality childcare providers who deserve increased wages and incentives.

Government employment should be accessible to all residents across the state, especially for A.L.I.C.E. (Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed) families, with higher populations of these families living on the neighbor islands, particularly single mothers with young children. Since it is abundantly clear that telework options for non-public facing positions are not fully **supported** by state leadership, neighbor island A.L.I.C.E. families have limited options in working at a state job due to the lack of childcare, stable housing, and reliable public transportation, all which are critical workforce infrastructure components.

This lack of a solid workforce infrastructure is unfortunate because it greatly impacts neighbor island residents who would like to work for the state, but do not have the financial means to fly to and from Oahu for work every day, especially if they are parents of young children or have other caregiving responsibilities at home after their work day. There are little to no state jobs like office assistants and other entry and mid level positions on the neighbor islands, especially for those who may want to work at the State Capitol. For those positions, candidates must live on Oahu or pay their own way to commute. While elected officials from the neighbor islands are afforded a monthly travel stipend to fly to Honolulu for work, state legislative employees who are from the neighbor islands are not provided with the same benefit, which is also unfortunate. This should change if the state is serious about filling positions in the legislature with a wider array of candidates who have a broader perspective on issues that affect their own hometowns, and who are not just focused on Oahu-centric perspectives and agendas. The "neighbor islands" are part of the state, too, and should be

afforded more opportunities to engage in state government through greater employment supports.

As we all know, the shortage of staffing is impacting the entire labor force across the State of Hawai'i and is troubling, especially in the government sector. This is why I propose that childcare be added to a list of government-subsidized benefits to allow parents to return to full time work and to fill the many vacancies which are critical services provided through state and county positions within all departments. Similar to the Seagull Schools in Honolulu, I propose that all counties have this model and subsidize these childcare centers with elective payroll deductions along with private, federal, and nonprofit seed funding. These would be specifically for state and county workers to bring their children to while they work on their own island, even if they telework in an Oahu position. In Hawai'i County, there could be one on the East Side and one on the West Side for any government employees, whether state or county. This could be in tandem with government subsidized transportation to the childcare center and worksite(s) for those without a vehicle and who live in remote areas inaccessible to public transit routes. Perhaps a pilot project could be proposed for Hawai'i County to see if any of these ideas would work as a state/county partnership?

To summarize, if the legislature wants to support our struggling local working families and fill the long list of government vacancies, they must meet the needs of the labor force where they are, and do what it can to get them back to work. If workers need childcare, provide it, or provide telework options if they do not have a public-facing position that requires a warm body on the job. Many private sector companies provide childcare and telework options, and it's time the State of Hawai'i provide a more effective and long-term investment into our local government workforce in the same way, thus keeping our local workforce home to serve in their own home and not be forced to leave the state for greener pastures. There are many proven ways to increase our state's government workforce and lower the amount of the state's A.L.I.C.E. families at the same time, but it will take more of these kinds of investments into our communities through creative solutions like government subsidized childcare for state (and county) employees as well as other hard working local families working within the private sector.

Mahalo for your time and consideration for my personal testimony.

Respectfully,
Shana W. Kukila
Hilo, HI
(808) 494-9448
slogan808@gmail.com

On Wed, Jan 31, 2024 at 3:47 PM Shana Wailana Kukila <slogan808@gmail.com> wrote:

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