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## A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1       SECTION 1. The legislature finds that quality learning  
2 experiences during a child's earliest years improve long-term,  
3 multi-general outcomes and contribute to a strong, skilled  
4 workforce. High-quality early learning programs support the  
5 growth and development of children, a working family's ability  
6 to secure and sustain employment and economic vitality, promote  
7 the creation of jobs and workforce support, and generate  
8 substantial revenue for the State.

9       The legislature notes that despite the growing demand for  
10 well-trained early learning professionals, the field is  
11 experiencing a shortage of qualified and well-compensated  
12 workers. Therefore, the legislature recognizes that it is  
13 necessary to support the recruitment, retention, and  
14 professional development of early learning professionals as an  
15 investment in the workforce that supports the State's youngest  
16 children and working families, which will contribute to the  
17 current and future prosperity of the State.



1       The legislature further finds that registered  
2   apprenticeship programs are proven models which create skilled  
3   workforces tailored to the specialized needs of their respective  
4   industries while fostering economic growth. Registered  
5   apprenticeship programs are high-quality, industry-driven career  
6   pathways that combine on-the-job training with classroom  
7   instruction to prepare workers for skilled careers. Registered  
8   apprenticeship programs ensure businesses have access to  
9   well- trained and qualified employees while also ensuring that  
10   employees are fairly compensated commensurate to the necessary  
11   qualifications. Furthermore, apprenticeship programs offer an  
12   accessible pathway to stable careers, assist in developing  
13   technical skills, upskill the existing workforce, and encourage  
14   a culture of lifelong learning and continuous professional  
15   development.

16       The legislature also finds that the first  
17   federally-approved early learning apprenticeship program  
18   recently launched to serve as a critical recruitment and  
19   retention pathway for prospective early learning professionals  
20   and increase access to early learning opportunities. However,  
21   the legislature recognizes that due to the significant labor



1 costs required of the industry, many early learning program  
2 service providers have difficulty maintaining the federal  
3 compensation requirement and therefore, are disincentivized in  
4 participating in an early learning apprenticeship program.

5 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish an  
6 early learning apprenticeship grant program, to be administered  
7 by the university of Hawaii, to assist publicly- or  
8 privately-run early learning program service providers  
9 participating in state- and federally-approved early learning  
10 apprenticeship programs.

11 SECTION 2. Chapter 304A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
12 amended by adding a new section to subpart M of part IV to be  
13 appropriately designated and to read as follows:

14 "§304A- Early learning apprenticeship grant program;  
15 established. (a) There is established an early learning  
16 apprenticeship grant program to be administered by the  
17 university to provide financial support for early learning  
18 program service providers in the State to participate in early  
19 learning apprenticeship programs.

20 (b) The university shall award grants to an early learning  
21 program service provider licensed or registered to provide child



1 care in the State that participates in a state- or  
2 federally-approved early learning apprenticeship program as an  
3 employer or sponsor; provided that priority shall be given to an  
4 early learning program service provider that:

5 (1) Is licensed or registered to provide care for infants  
6 and toddlers; and

7 (2) Enrolls children under the age of three.

8 (c) The university shall award the grant amount per  
9 license; provided that the university shall consider the  
10 following factors when determining the grant amount:

11 (1) The size of an early learning program service provider  
12 participating in a state- or federally-approved early  
13 learning apprenticeship program as an employer;

14 (2) The difference between the statutorily-required wage  
15 rates or prevailing industry standard wage rates,  
16 whichever is higher, and the early learning program  
17 service provider's current wage rates; and

18 (3) Other factors, including but not limited to stipend  
19 bonuses or wage supplements.



1        (d) The university shall award grants based on criteria  
2        developed by the university in consultation with the executive  
3        office on early learning.

4        (e) The grant program shall provide financial assistance  
5        to eligible early learning program service providers to cover  
6        the costs associated with their participation in a state- or  
7        federally-approved early learning apprenticeship program,  
8        including but not limited to:

9            (1) Personnel expenses and wages;  
10          (2) Training expenses;  
11          (3) Mentorship stipends;  
12          (4) Administrative costs; and  
13          (5) Wage or salary increases, wage supplements, or other  
14          compensation enhancements as needed to attract and  
15          retain qualified employees within the state- or  
16          federally-approved apprenticeship framework, including  
17          apprentice and other early learning employees;  
18        provided that the wages shall match statutorily-required wage  
19        requirements or prevailing industry standards, whichever is  
20        higher.



1        (f) The university may cooperate with the counties to  
2        administer the grant program.

3        (g) The university shall submit a report of its findings  
4        and recommendations, including any proposed legislation  
5        regarding the grant program to the legislature, no later than  
6        twenty days prior to the convening of each regular session. The  
7        report shall include at minimum:

8            (1) The number of early learning program service providers  
9            receiving grants pursuant to the program;

10          (2) The number of apprentices hired by early learning  
11          program service providers receiving grants under the  
12          program;

13          (3) Total amount of funds awarded to early learning  
14          program service providers pursuant the program; and

15          (4) The purposes for which the early learning program  
16          service providers used the awarded grants, including  
17          documentation on wages paid or wage increases given to  
18          qualified employees within the state- or  
19          federally-approved apprenticeship framework, including  
20          apprentices and other early learning employees.

21        (h) For the purposes of this section:



1       "Early learning" has the same meaning as defined in section  
2       302L-1.

3       "Early learning program" means a publicly- or privately-run  
4       program within the State's early learning system governed  
5       pursuant to chapter 302L. "Early learning program" includes  
6       center-based programs, family child care programs, family-child  
7       interaction learning programs, and home-based instruction  
8       programs.

9       "Grant program" means the early learning apprenticeship  
10       program."

11       SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general  
12       revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$                or so  
13       much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and  
14       the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal  
15       year 2026-2027 for the university of Hawaii to implement and  
16       administer the early learning apprenticeship grant program.

17       The sums appropriated shall be expended by the university  
18       of Hawaii for the purposes of this Act.

19       SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

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INTRODUCED BY: \_\_\_\_\_



JAN 17 2025



# H.B. NO. 549

**Report Title:**

UH; Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program; Childcare;  
Early Learning Opportunities; Professions and Occupations;  
Reports; Appropriations

**Description:**

Establishes an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program to be administered by the University of Hawaii to provide financial support for early learning program service providers in the State to participate in state- or federally-approved early learning apprenticeship programs. Requires an annual report to the Legislature. Appropriates funds.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

