



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 549 HD1
RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM

House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness
Hawai'i State Capitol

February 11, 2025

9:45 am

Conference Room 329

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds and Committee Members,

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) submits this testimony in **SUPPORT of HB 549 HD1**, which proposes establishing an early learning apprenticeship grant program. This bill is a critical and timely initiative that addresses the shortage of qualified early learning professionals in Hawai'i, and its benefits will be especially impactful for Native Hawaiian children and families.

We acknowledge the recent amendments made in HB 549 HD1, which include the declaration of the program as a matter of statewide concern. This strengthens the bill's intent and underscores the importance of investing in early childhood education for the benefit of all children across Hawai'i.

As we know, early childhood education is crucial for the long-term academic and life success of our keiki. During the early years of life, a child's brain development is most rapid, and the experiences and education they receive during this time can shape their future. Quality early learning programs provide a foundation for later success, and by supporting these programs, HB 549 HD1 makes a transformative investment in Hawai'i's future.

The bill also directly addresses the shortage of qualified early learning professionals, a challenge that significantly limits access to quality early education, especially in underserved areas. The proposed apprenticeship model is a proven pathway to equip educators with both practical experience and academic knowledge, ensuring they are well-prepared to meet the diverse needs of our keiki.

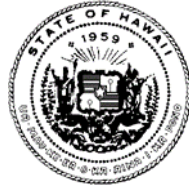
Furthermore, HB 549 HD1 recognizes the importance of providing fair and competitive wages for early learning professionals. **In Native Hawaiian communities, where economic disparities have historically created barriers to success, offering fair compensation is essential to attracting and retaining high-quality educators.** By aligning

salaries with industry standards, this bill ensures that early learning professionals are not only well-prepared but also fairly compensated for their important work.

This bill directly aligns with OHA's Mana i Maui Ola Strategic Educational Pathways, which focuses on culturally grounded and equitable learning opportunities for Native Hawaiian children. By supporting the training, recruitment, and retention of skilled early learning professionals, we contribute to the success of Native Hawaiian students and ensure that they receive a culturally relevant education that will empower them to thrive academically, socially, and culturally.

We strongly urge the **Committee to pass HB 549 HD1**, this important bill and look forward to its positive impact on our keiki and communities. Mahalo nui loa for your time and consideration.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



RYAN I. YAMANE
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 LAWE LAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

February 8, 2025

TO: The Honorable Representative Lisa Marten, Chair
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 549 HD1 – RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM.**

Hearing: February 11, 2025, 9:45 a.m.
Conference Room 329 & Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this measure and defers to the University of Hawaii. DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation not reduce or replace a priority identified in the executive budget.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this measure is to establish 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. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

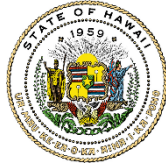
The House Committee on Higher Education (HD1) amended the measure by:

- (1) Amending the preamble to declare that the establishment of an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program is a matter of statewide concern;
- (2) Changing the effective date to July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion; and
- (3) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the amendment to the preamble that establishing an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program is a statewide concern since the recruitment, retention, and professional development of early learning professionals in the field have been difficult, resulting in a continuous shortage of qualified caregivers and staff in early learning programs.

DHS supports the apprenticeship grant program, which aims to increase the number of qualified early learning professionals and expand the existing child care capacity.

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



STATE OF HAWAII
Early Learning Board
2759 South King Street, Room C6
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

February 8, 2025

To: Representative Marten, Chair
Representative Olds, Vice-chair
Members of the Human Services and Homelessness Committee

From: Elaine Yamashita, Chair
Early Learning Board

Re: HB549 HD1 support

Aloha, Honorable Chair Marten, Vice-chair Olds, and the members of the Human Services and Homelessness committee:

The Early Learning Board (ELB) formulates statewide policy relating to early learning, as well as directing the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL).

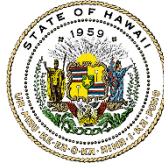
The Early Learning Board supports HB 549, which will expand the current early childhood registered apprenticeship program. This directly affects and supports much needed expansion of the early childhood workforce. Recruitment and retention of our important early educators is key to providing high quality care and education for our youngest keiki.

It is a specialized body of knowledge and experience based on child development and effective relationships, and apprenticeships provide both. The bill would also allow community-based providers resources to provide incentives for apprentices to continue and for the program as a whole.

Mahalo for your consideration and support of this bill.

Sincerely,

Elaine Yamashita
Early Learning Board Chair
elb@eoel.hawaii.gov



STATE OF HAWAII

Executive Office on Early Learning

Ke'ena Ho'okele Ho'ona'auao Pae Kamali'i o Hawai'i Moku'āina
2759 South King Street, Room C6
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

TO: Representative Lisa Marten, Chair
Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

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

SUBJECT: Testimony on H.B. No. 549, H.D. 1 – RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING
APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM.

Committee: HSH
Date: Tuesday, February 11, 2025
Time: 9:45 a.m.
Location: Conference room 329

Executive Office on Early Learning Position: **SUPPORT**

The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) offers the following comments in support of H.B. No. 549, H.D. 1, and defers to the University of Hawai'i regarding implementation and funding.

Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Programs (ELRAPs) create structured pathways for aspiring early childhood professionals to gain hands-on experience, earn credentials, and achieve career advancement through apprenticeships that integrate employer-paid classroom learning with on-the-job training and comprehensive wraparound support.

This bill creates a grant program to mitigate financial barriers to participation in state-approved or federally approved ELRAPs for licensed or registered early learning program service providers, with priority given to infant and toddler programs.

EOEL is committed to improving the recruitment, retention, and career pathways for our early learning workforce, and recognizes that our capacity to expand access to early learning opportunities for Hawai'i's keiki is dependent on our ability to grow and support our workforce. ELRAPs can enhance the sustainability and capacity of the workforce by:

- Addressing workforce shortages in the early childhood field by supporting recruitment and retention;
- Providing competitive compensation and benefits to ensure employees are valued; and

- Improving opportunities for professional advancement.

EOEL would be happy to collaborate with the University of Hawai'i to develop the award criteria for this grant program, as directed in this bill.

We appreciate the Legislature's continued investment in our youngest keiki and their families. Thank you for the opportunity to share these comments in support of this bill.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA LAWELawe KAIĀULU
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

925 DILLINGHAM BOULEVARD, SUITE 200 • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96817
PHONE: (808) 768-7762 • FAX: (808) 768-7792 • WEBSITE: honolulu.gov/dcs

RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR
MEIA



ANTON C. KRUCKY
DIRECTOR
PO'O

AEDWARD LOS BANOS
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
HOPE PO'O

February 10, 2025

The Honorable Lisa Marten, Chair
The Honorable Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair
And Members of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness
State Capitol, Conference Room 329
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Marten and Vice Chair Olds
And Members of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness:

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 549 H.D. 1 – Relating to an Early Learning
Apprenticeship Grant Program

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H.B. No. 549 H.D. 1.

Our State faces a critical shortage of affordable, high-quality child care options. Families are struggling to secure the care they need to support their children's development while maintaining economic stability. This bill offers a tangible solution to this urgent issue by:

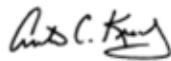
- 1. Supporting the Early Learning Workforce:** The grant program will fund training and professional development opportunities for over 500 existing early learning professionals. This investment will enhance the quality of care, improve retention in a historically low-paying field, and address turnover rates by offering pathways for career advancement.
- 2. Increasing the Supply of Child Care Slots:** By incentivizing individuals to enter and advance in the field, this program has the potential to create 100- 150 additional slots for infants and toddlers under the age of three, or up to 200 slots for three- and four-year-olds. These added slots will help families currently on waiting lists and those forced to make difficult compromises between work and caregiving.
- 3. Creating Sustainable Career Pathways:** Funding apprenticeship programs will also attract new talent into the early learning profession, while offering structured pathways for career growth. This approach builds a sustainable pipeline of high-quality child care professionals, many of whom reflect the diverse communities they serve.

The Honorable Lisa Marten, Chair
The Honorable Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair
And Members of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness
February 10, 2025
Page 2

4. Strengthening Economic Stability: The child care industry generates over \$300 million in revenue for the State, despite only servicing 30% of early learners in the State. Many of those not currently serviced, represent a segment of working age adults that are missing from our workforce – victims of the lack of affordable, reliable child care alternatives. This program helps to strengthen Hawai'i's economy by generating revenue, increasing Hawai'i's workforce and creating new jobs, while laying the foundation for our future.

This legislation aligns with our shared vision of prioritizing early learning as a cornerstone of Hawai'i's future. By investing in this apprenticeship grant program, we address immediate workforce while laying the foundation for long-term, systemic improvement in field. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anton C. Krucky".

Anton C. Krucky
Director Designate



Hearing Date: **Tuesday, February 11, 2025, 9:45 AM, Conf. Rm 329**

To: Committee on Human Services and Homelessness
Rep. Lisa Marten, Chair
Rep. Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

**Re: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 549, HD1 Relating to Early Learning
APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM**

Dear Chair, Marten Vice Chair Olds, and the Members of the Committee,

Members of AAUW of Hawaii thank you for this opportunity to testify in **strong support of HB 549, HD1** which 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.

Hawaii has a shortage of qualified child care employees to fill these many vacant, but critical positions. Early childhood care and educational professionals are undervalued in Hawaii, averaging just \$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.

Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Programs (ELRAP) are a proven recruitment and retention strategy, offering apprentices higher compensation and valuable on-the-job learning experiences as they work towards earning a higher education degree. AAUW of Hawaii supports this measure that 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. An important feature in this bill will provide funding to eligible providers participate in state- or federally-approved ELRAPs to adequately compensate these workers in training as well as allow providers to pay their existing staff higher wages, ensuring that wages are comparable to federal wage requirements or prevailing industry standards.

Please pass this important 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, Kaua'i, Kona, Maui, and Windward Oahu. AAUW's mission is to advance gender equity through research, education, and advocacy. Our goal is economic security for women and their families.

Date: February 7, 2025

To: Representative Lisa Marten, Chair
Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair
House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

From: Riz Almagro
Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers

Subject: HB549 – RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM.

Testimony in Strong Support of HB549

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members,

I am testifying in support of this bill, which would incentivize early learning employers in Hawai'i to participate in HB549 Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program.

To ensure families have access to high quality early childhood care and education from birth to kindergarten, we must fairly compensate our early care and education workforce and provide them with opportunities for professional advancement. Early learning registered apprenticeship programs are a proven recruitment and retention strategy, offering apprentices higher compensation and valuable on-the-job learning experiences as they work towards earning a higher education degree. ELRAPs have also been successful at increasing the quality of early learning programs as they develop a well-prepared, well-supported, and well-compensated ECE workforce.

However, many early learning providers are unable to participate in ELRAPs because they cannot afford to pay the higher wages of apprentices and ensure wage parity for existing staff. The ELRAP grant would remove this financial barrier by providing funding for eligible providers to participate in state- or federally-approved ELRAPs. The grant would also allow providers to pay their existing staff higher wages, ensuring that wages are comparable to federal wage requirements or prevailing industry standards.

This bill would give priority to licensed and/or regulated child care providers serving infants and toddlers (I/T) due to the greater challenges families face in accessing high-quality, affordable I/T care. I/T care and education has the highest unmet need among all early learning services in Hawai'i. Starting with our I/T child care providers will help families access quality care from the time babies need it most.

In short, ELRAPs are a proven recruitment and retention strategy for the early care and education workforce. This grant would enable more providers to participate, benefiting Hawai'i's children, families, and early education professionals. Additionally, it would support businesses by helping employees with young children—particularly mothers—stay in the workforce, addressing the common challenge of inaccessible and unaffordable child care.

Please support this measure.

Mahalo,
Riz Almagro
Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 3:53:46 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
CHENTIRA F FINK-AJALA	Keiki O Ka Aina Family Learning Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Date: February 7, 2025

To: Representative Lisa Marten, Chair

Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

From: Chentira Fink-Ajala

Keiki O Ka ‘Āina Family Learning Centers

Subject: Measure HB549 – RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM.

Testimony in Strong Support of HB549

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Please support this measure.

Mahalo,

Chentira Fink-Ajala

Keiki O Ka ‘Āina Family Learning Centers

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 4:28:02 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jaimie Inamine	Keiki O Ka 'Aina	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Date: February 7, 2025

To: Representative Lisa Marten, Chair

Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

From: Jaimie T. Inamine

Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers

Subject: HB549 – RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM.

Testimony in Strong Support of HB549

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members,

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In short, ELRAPs are a proven recruitment and retention strategy for the early care and education workforce. This grant would enable more providers to participate, benefiting Hawai‘i’s children, families, and early education professionals. Additionally, it would support businesses by helping employees with young children—particularly mothers—stay in the workforce, addressing the common challenge of inaccessible and unaffordable child care.

Please support this measure.

Mahalo,

Jaimie Inamine

Keiki O Ka ‘Āina Family Learning Centers

Date: February 7, 2025

To: Representative Lisa Marten, Chair
Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair
House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

From: Michael A. Peloso
Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers

Subject: HB549 – RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM.

Testimony in Strong Support of HB549

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members,

I am testifying in support of this bill, which would incentivize early learning employers in Hawai'i to participate in HB549 Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program.

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In short, ELRAPs are a proven recruitment and retention strategy for the early care and education workforce. This grant would enable more providers to participate, benefiting Hawai'i's children, families, and early education professionals. Additionally, it would support businesses by helping employees with young children—particularly mothers—stay in the workforce, addressing the common challenge of inaccessible and unaffordable child care.

Please support this measure.

Mahalo,
Michael A. Peloso
Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers



February 11, 2025

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice-Chair Olds, and committee members,

I am testifying in strong support of this bill, which would incentivize early learning employers in Hawai'i to participate in Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Programs (ELRAPs).

To ensure families have access to high quality early childhood care and education from birth to Kindergarten we must fairly compensate our early care and education workforce and provide them with opportunities for professional advancement. Early learning registered apprenticeship programs are a proven recruitment and retention strategy, offering apprentices higher compensation and valuable on-the-job learning experiences as they work towards earning a higher education degree. ELRAPs have also been successful at increasing the quality of early learning programs as they develop a well-prepared, well-supported, and well-compensated ECE workforce.

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Please support this measure.

Mahalo,

Melodie Vega, MAEd
Chief Early Education Officer
Keiki O Ka Aina Family Learning Centers

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 6:08:12 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Momi Akana	Keiki O Ka Aina Family Learning Centers	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Date: February 7, 2025

To: Representative Lisa Marten, Chair

Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

From: Momi Akana

Keiki O Ka ‘Āina Family Learning Centers

Subject: HB549 – RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM.

Testimony in Strong Support of HB549

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members,

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In short, ELRAPs are a proven recruitment and retention strategy for the early care and education workforce. This grant would enable more providers to participate, benefiting Hawai‘i’s children, families, and early education professionals. Additionally, it would support businesses by helping employees with young children—particularly mothers—stay in the workforce, addressing the common challenge of inaccessible and unaffordable child care.

Please support this measure.

Mahalo,

Momi Akana

Keiki O Ka ‘Āina Family Learning Centers



Date: February 8, 2025

To: House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness
Rep. Lisa Marten, Chair
Rep. Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: Support for **HB549 HD1**, Relating to An Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

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 HB549 HD1, which would provide financial support for early learning employers to participate in Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Programs (ELRAPs).

High-quality early learning programs are fundamental to thriving children, flourishing families, and a robust economy. An effective, well-trained, early learning workforce is the backbone of these programs. Chronic issues related to poor compensation and limited professional advancement opportunities, however, pose huge barriers to workforce recruitment and retention.

Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Programs offer new early learning professionals appropriately-scaled, higher compensation, and valuable on-the-job learning experiences as they work towards earning college degrees. ELRAPs have proven to be an effective recruitment and retention strategy, facilitating a pipeline of new employees into early learning programs and providing the compensation and career pathways instrumental to retaining professionals in the field.

However, many early learning providers are unable to participate in ELRAPs because they cannot afford to pay the higher wages of apprentices and ensure wage parity for existing staff, as well as support the training and mentoring activities associated with apprenticeship. By providing key grant funding, this measure would help close budget shortfalls and remove the financial barriers impeding the participation of eligible early learning providers in state- or federally-approved ELRAPs.

By building the supply of highly-skilled and well-compensated early learning professionals, expansion of ELRAP participation, via the support of grants, would ultimately increase the number and seat capacity of early learning programs, as well as enhance the quality of care provided by programs.

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 **HB549 HD1**.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

To: Representative Lisa Marten, Chair
Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

From: Chevelle Davis, MPH - Director of Early Childhood & Health Policy
Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 549 H.D. 1 – Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

Hearing: Tuesday, February 11, 2025, at 9:45 AM, Conference Room 329

POSITION: STRONG SUPPORT

Aloha e Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, 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 H.B. No. 549 H.D. 1**. The proposed Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program is a critical step toward stabilizing our early learning system and ensuring all keiki across Hawai'i access early learning services. Families across Hawai'i are facing a severe shortage of affordable, early learning options, making it increasingly difficult for parents/guardians to balance work and their children's early development. This bill presents a meaningful solution by:

1. **Investing in the Early Learning Workforce** – Early learning starts with well-trained and supported educators. This grant program will provide professional development and training for over 500 early learning professionals, improving the quality of care, reducing turnover, and creating pathways for career advancement in a historically underpaid field. When we invest in our educators, we invest in better outcomes for our keiki.
2. **Increasing Supply of Child Care Spaces** – By supporting workforce growth and retention, this program will help create 100-150 new slots for infants and toddlers under the age of three and up to 200 additional slots for three- and four-year-olds. These additional spaces will help alleviate long waitlists and provide much-needed relief for working families who struggle to find care.
3. **Building Sustainable Career Pathways** – This bill establishes structured apprenticeship opportunities, recruiting new professionals into the field while ensuring they receive hands-on training and mentorship. We can create a lasting, sustainable pipeline of early childhood educators by fostering a strong, well-trained workforce that reflects the diverse communities they serve.

4. **Supporting Hawai'i's Economic Stability** – The child care sector generates over \$300 million in revenue for the state and is an essential component of our economy, enabling parents/guardians to participate in the workforce. With Hawai'i's high cost of living, reliable child care is essential for families striving to maintain financial stability. This program strengthens our economy by supporting businesses, creating jobs, and ensuring that parents/guardians have the ability to work while knowing their children are safe.

This measure aligns with our collective vision of prioritizing early learning as a foundational investment in Hawai'i's future. By supporting this apprenticeship grant program, we take a critical step in addressing our child care crisis while laying the foundation for a stronger, more resilient early learning system.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong support** of **H.B. No. 549 H.D. 1**.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness
Tuesday, February 11, 2025 at 9:45 a.m.

By

Nathan Murata, Dean
College of Education

And

Michael Bruno, PhD
Provost

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 549 HD1 – RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of HB 549 HD1, which establishes an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant program to be administered by the University of Hawai'i to provide financial support for early learning program service providers in the State to participate in state- or federally-approved early learning apprenticeship programs.

Families across our state are struggling to find affordable, high-quality early learning programs that support their young children's development while families maintain their own economic stability. At the same time, there is a desperate need to support the recruitment, retention, and stabilization of our specially trained early learning workforce.

This bill offers a tangible solution to these pressing issues by:

1. **Supporting the Early Learning Professionals:** The grant program will provide funding to support over 500 existing early learning professionals, helping them access critical training and professional development opportunities. This investment will not only enhance the quality of care but also improve recruitment and retention in the early care and education field that has historically faced high turnover due to low wages and limited growth opportunities.
2. **Increasing the Supply of Early Learning Slots:** By incentivizing individuals to enter and advance in the field, this program has the potential to add up to 75 additional slots for infants and toddlers under the age of three, and up to 200 slots for three and four-year

olds. These additional slots will directly benefit families who are on waiting lists or forced to make difficult compromises in their work and other responsibilities.

3. **Creating Career Pathways:** By funding apprenticeships, the program will offer a structured pathway for career entry and advancement, that will enhance the recruitment of new individuals into the early learning profession. This is especially important in creating good jobs for individuals who reflect the diverse communities they will serve.
4. **Strengthening Economic Stability:** For families in Hawai'i who struggle with the high cost of living, access to reliable child care is often the key to maintaining stable employment and achieving economic security. The proposed program will play a critical role in ensuring parents can participate fully in their jobs and careers, knowing their children are in safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate settings.

This legislation aligns with our shared vision of prioritizing early learning as a cornerstone of our state's future. By investing in the apprenticeship grant program, we are not only addressing immediate needs but also laying the groundwork for long-term systemic improvements in early care and education for our young children's success in school and in life.



Our Mission

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



Steering Committee

City and County of Honolulu

Justina Acevedo-Cross
Greg Auberry
Chiyomi Chow
Kanoë Enos
JoAnn Farnsworth
Jordana Ferreira
Nadia Garcia
Danny Goya
Alex Harris
Sakinah Harrison
Erin Henderson
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Ryan Kusumoto
Ka'iulani Laehā
Lynelle Marble
Megan McCorriston
Marty Oliphant
Cherilyn Shiinoki
Laurie Tochiki
Sunshine Topping
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Maui County

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

Kaua'i County

Sarah Blane
Alice Luck

Hawai'i County

Sulma Gandhi
Kahi Moreman
Angela Thomas



Contact Info

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

info@committokeiki.org
CommitToKeiki.org

Date: February 11, 2025

To: Representative Lisa Marten, Chair
Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

From: Commit to Keiki

RE: House Bill 549 HD1, Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

Commit to Keiki is a statewide, non-partisan, public-private collaborative to ensure a brighter start for Hawai'i's youngest keiki. Led by a diverse Steering Committee, Commit to Keiki's mission is to increase Hawai'i's investments in its youngest keiki by collaborating with elected officials and serving as a trusted partner and reliable resource for information on issues related to early childhood.

Commit to Keiki strongly supports passage of House Bill 549 HD1, which would establish the Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program at the University of Hawai'i and provide financial support to early learning employers who participate in the program.

The importance of high-quality early learning opportunities cannot be overstated. Providing our community's youngest keiki with access to programs of this nature is critical to their overall development and has positive impacts on both the wellbeing of their families and our local economy.

It is impossible to provide these high-quality opportunities without a workforce of highly prepared educators.

For years, the field of early learning has struggled with numerous issues including low compensation and limited opportunity for professional advancement. This has propped up significant barriers for individuals who are looking to enter the workforce and resulted in a limited number of available slots at a limited number of early learning programs.

The Early Learning Apprenticeship Program would provide those studying to become early learning educators with higher compensation and applicable, on-the-job experience while they are still completing their undergraduate coursework. Similar apprenticeship programs around the country have proven to be successful in both recruitment and retention of individuals who are interested in joining the early learning workforce, and it is our position that the program laid out in this measure would enjoy similar success.

For these reasons, CTK strongly supports HB549 HD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 4:55:57 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ellen Awai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support of HB549 HD1. Children as soon as they can crawl, need early learning assistance. Many parents are too busy surviving in our community to be able to juggle both work and home taking care of the children in usually a single parent household. Also, early entrance into colleges are also necessary to assist those that are far too gifted and talented in high school, where teachers are only concerned about disciplining them instead of seeing their potential, even those attending public schools. Work apprenticeship programs are also necessary for those that can work with their hands better than their minds, thus the loi programs for youth are successful for those students who seemed bored confined in a classroom. Charter schools do work if tailored appropriately for the students in mind. Please support this bill.

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 9:31:37 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caroline Kunitake	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 549 HD1

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 9:47:30 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christy MacPherson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds and members of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness,

I am in strong support of HB549 HD1. In order to help our keiki grow and thrive in their formative educational years, we need more well-equipped early care and education providers. This apprenticeship program makes a **WHOLE** lot of sense- a win-win-win for employers, our keiki, and people who are wanting to enter the ECE workforce.

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 11:51:18 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alexandria Sisson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chair Marten and the HSH Committee, and mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB549.

Our state's families are struggling to find affordable and high quality child care to support their young children's development across all islands. HB549 addresses one of the most pressing challenges faced by Hawai'i's early childhood care and education sector: the recruitment and retention of a well-trained workforce. This bill incentivizes providers to join apprenticeship models, invest in their staff and communities, and retain qualified and committed staff within their programs— all of which directly contribute to the stabilization and affordability of Hawai'i's ECCE sector, and benefit:

1. Early Learning Providers: By providing financial support to providers who otherwise would not be able to participate, this program offsets operational costs and allows providers to increase staff wages and retention, allowing for more funds to be invested in program quality and preventing program closures in our already-limited market. Currently, there is only 1 licensed ECCE seat available for every four young children in Hawai'i, with demand only growing.
1. ECE Workers: This program provides an “earn while you learn” workforce pathway that allows apprentices to retain full-time employment. This increases accessibility of ECCE credentials and workforce entry, as well as provides wage parity for existing staff, in turn reducing inequities and chronic turnover in the field and negatively impacting the number of child care slots available.
1. Children and Families: By investing on well-trained and well-compensated staff, this program allows for providers to develop high-quality programming and keeps more programs open with lower tuition, allowing for families to access the high-quality care their children deserve. This bill prioritizes the infant and toddler care market, which suffers the smallest capacity— 11%— of licensed child care slots per child across the

islands. As of 2022, only 12% of Hawai'i's 1- to 2-year olds are served and 3% of infants.

1. Employers: Child care shortages directly and negatively impact workforce participation. This program supports parents in staying in or returning to the workforce by increasing options for accessible child care.

This bill provides a vital step towards strengthening Hawai'i's ECCE landscape and the overall wellbeing of our families. Through this legislation, we provide support to directly impact our early learning providers, invest in our vital ECCE workforce, and lay the foundation for a greater system of sustainable care for our families and children. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of HB 549.

February 7, 2025

To: The Honorable Lisa Marten, Chair
The Honorable Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair
and members of the House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

Hawai'i State Capitol
415 South Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 549 HD1– Relating to the Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H. B. No. 549 HD1.

Aloha,

My name is Dr. Terry Lock. Currently, I am the Director of the Hawai'i Early Childhood Educator Excellence and Equity (ECE³) Project at the University of Hawai'i Mānoa College of Education. For almost 50 years I have been in the field of early childhood education. I am also a parent of three adult children and grandparent of six grandchildren.

Many parents with young children in Hawai'i are struggling to find affordable, reliable high-quality early learning programs that support their young children's development and help them to work and achieve economic security. At the same time, there is a desperate need to support the recruitment, retention, and stabilization of our specially trained early learning workforce.

This proposed Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program offers a tangible solution to these pressing issues by:

1. **Supporting the Early Learning Professionals:** The grant program will provide funding to support over 500 existing early learning professionals, helping them access critical training and professional development opportunities. This investment will not only enhance the quality of care but also improve recruitment and retention in the early care and education field that has historically faced high turnover due to low wages and limited growth opportunities.
2. **Increasing the Supply of Early Learning Slots:** By incentivizing individuals to enter and advance in the field, this program has the potential to add up to 75 additional slots for infants and toddlers under the age of three, and up to 200 slots for three and four year olds. These additional slots will directly benefit families who are on waiting lists or forced to make difficult compromises in their work and other responsibilities.
3. **Creating Career Pathways:** By funding apprenticeships, the program will offer a structured pathway for career entry and advancement, that will enhance the recruitment of new individuals into the early learning profession. This is especially important in creating good jobs for individuals

who reflect the diverse communities they will serve.

4. **Strengthening Economic Stability:** For families in Hawai'i who struggle with the high cost of living, access to reliable child care is often the key to maintaining stable employment and achieving economic security. The proposed program will play a critical role in ensuring parents can participate fully in their jobs and careers, knowing their children are in safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate settings.

As the Director of the ECE³ Project at the UHM College of Education, I supported Honolulu Community College (HonCC) and Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers' (KOKA) in launching our state's first early childhood education (ECE) registered apprenticeship program through KOKA in the summer of 2023. Recently, I spoke to one of KOKA's apprentices. She is employed as an aide at KOKA's Ka Pua Preschool, located in Mā'ili, 'Oahu. With strong support from her husband and their four boys, ages 14, 11, 10, and 5, she enrolled in her first ECE course at HonCC in the 2023-2024 academic year. She shared, "To be in a job, while going to school, has made a huge difference. This [apprenticeship program] fits the type of learner that I am. I love that I get to apply what I learn from my mentor and my college instructors, while interacting with preschool children." She also credits her "very encouraging" instructors at HonCC. She is on target to complete her first of three milestones, a Child Development Associate (CDA), a nationally recognized credential in May 2025. Her goal is to be a preschool lead teacher or open her own day care program.

HB549 HD1 will help to grow our ECE workforce and aligns with the shared vision of prioritizing early learning as a cornerstone of our state's future. By investing in the apprenticeship grant program, we are not only addressing immediate needs but also laying the groundwork for long-term systemic improvements in early care and education for our young children's success in school and in life.

Mahalo for supporting H. B. No. 549 HD1.

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 3:53:39 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ann Sullivan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Date: February 7, 2025

To: Representative Lisa Marten, Chair

Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

From: Ann Sullivan

Keiki O Ka ‘Āina Family Learning Centers

Subject: Measure HB549 – RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM.

Testimony in Strong Support of HB549

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members,

I am testifying in support of this bill, which would incentivize early learning employers in Hawai‘i to participate in HB549 Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program.

To ensure families have access to high quality early childhood care and education from birth to kindergarten, we must fairly compensate our early care and education workforce and provide them with opportunities for professional advancement. Early learning registered apprenticeship programs are a proven recruitment and retention strategy, offering apprentices higher compensation and valuable on-the-job learning experiences as they work towards earning a higher education degree. ELRAPs have also been successful at increasing the quality of early learning programs as they develop a well-prepared, well-supported, and well-compensated ECE workforce.

However, many early learning providers are unable to participate in ELRAPs because they cannot afford to pay the higher wages of apprentices and ensure wage parity for existing staff. The ELRAP grant would remove this financial barrier by providing funding for eligible providers to participate in state- or federally-approved ELRAPs. The grant would also allow providers to pay their existing staff higher wages, ensuring that wages are comparable to federal wage requirements or prevailing industry standards.

This bill would give priority to licensed and/or regulated child care providers serving infants and toddlers (I/T) due to the greater challenges families face in accessing high-quality, affordable I/T care. I/T care and education has the highest unmet need among all early learning services in Hawai‘i. Starting with our I/T child care providers will help families access quality care from the time babies need it most.

In short, ELRAPs are a proven recruitment and retention strategy for the early care and education workforce. This grant would enable more providers to participate, benefiting Hawai‘i’s children, families, and early education professionals. Additionally, it would support businesses by helping employees with young children—particularly mothers—stay in the workforce, addressing the common challenge of inaccessible and unaffordable child care.

Please support this measure.

Mahalo,

Ann Sullivan

Keiki O Ka ‘Āina Family Learning Centers

Date: February 7, 2025

To: Representative Lisa Marten, Chair
Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair
House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

From: Puna Padayhag-Himalaya
Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers

Subject: HB549 – RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM.

Testimony in Strong Support of HB549

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members,

I am testifying in support of this bill, which would incentivize early learning employers in Hawai'i to participate in HB549 Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program.

To ensure families have access to high quality early childhood care and education from birth to kindergarten, we must fairly compensate our early care and education workforce and provide them with opportunities for professional advancement. Early learning registered apprenticeship programs are a proven recruitment and retention strategy, offering apprentices higher compensation and valuable on-the-job learning experiences as they work towards earning a higher education degree. ELRAPs have also been successful at increasing the quality of early learning programs as they develop a well-prepared, well-supported, and well-compensated ECE workforce.

However, many early learning providers are unable to participate in ELRAPs because they cannot afford to pay the higher wages of apprentices and ensure wage parity for existing staff. The ELRAP grant would remove this financial barrier by providing funding for eligible providers to participate in state- or federally-approved ELRAPs. The grant would also allow providers to pay their existing staff higher wages, ensuring that wages are comparable to federal wage requirements or prevailing industry standards.

This bill would give priority to licensed and/or regulated child care providers serving infants and toddlers (I/T) due to the greater challenges families face in accessing high-quality, affordable I/T care. I/T care and education has the highest unmet need among all early learning services in Hawai'i. Starting with our I/T child care providers will help families access quality care from the time babies need it most.

In short, ELRAPs are a proven recruitment and retention strategy for the early care and education workforce. This grant would enable more providers to participate, benefiting Hawai'i's children, families, and early education professionals. Additionally, it would support businesses by helping employees with young children—particularly mothers—stay in the workforce, addressing the common challenge of inaccessible and unaffordable child care.

Please support this measure.

Mahalo,
Puna Padayhag-Himalaya
Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 6:43:35 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members for hearing HB549 HD1.

I strongly support HB549 HD1. Our keiki need early learning to support their development, and families across the state deserve to have increased access to early learning resources. This bill would establish an apprenticeship program and support both rising professionals and existing service providers. We know that one of the barriers that stops providers from participating in apprenticeship models is pay parity. The bill proposal is designed to prevent that issue by outlining that current providers are appropriately incentivized and supported so the program can be successful.

Mahalo for your support!

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 7:01:35 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sharoldine Sisneros	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support of HB549, I would like to say our Keiki are our future. What better to invest in our families. Put what matters first to bring much needed revitalized talent, knowledge, and mo'o lelo to the future!!

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 8:54:23 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chloe Pua'ena Vierra-Villanueva	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

From: Chloe “Pua‘ena” Vierra-Villanueva

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 549 HD1 – Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

Position: Strong Support

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members,

I am testifying in strong support of HB549 HD1, which would incentivize early learning employers in Hawai‘i to participate in Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Programs (ELRAPs).

To ensure families have access to high quality early childhood care and education from birth to kindergarten, we must fairly compensate our early care and education workforce and provide them with opportunities for professional advancement. Early learning registered apprenticeship programs are a proven recruitment and retention strategy, offering apprentices higher compensation and valuable on-the-job learning experiences as they work towards earning a higher education degree. ELRAPs have also been successful at increasing the quality of early learning programs as they develop a well-prepared, well-supported, and well-compensated ECE workforce.

However, many early learning providers are unable to participate in ELRAPs because they cannot afford to pay the higher wages of apprentices and ensure wage parity for existing staff. The ELRAP grant would remove this financial barrier by providing funding for eligible providers to participate in state- or federally-approved ELRAPs. The grant would also allow providers to pay their existing staff higher wages, ensuring that wages are comparable to federal wage requirements or prevailing industry standards.

This bill would give priority to licensed and/or regulated child care providers serving infants and toddlers (I/T) due to the greater challenges families face in accessing high-quality, affordable I/T

care. I/T care and education has the highest unmet need among all early learning services in Hawai‘i. Starting with our I/T child care providers will help families access quality care from the time children need it most.

In short, ELRAPs are a proven recruitment and retention strategy for the early care and education workforce. This grant would enable more providers to participate, benefiting Hawai‘i’s children, families, and early education professionals. Additionally, it would support businesses by helping employees with young children—particularly mothers—stay in the workforce, addressing the common challenge of inaccessible and unaffordable child care.

Please support this measure.

Mahalo,

C. Pua‘ena Vierra-Villanueva

‘Ohana Leadership Council

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 9:04:43 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noel Shaw	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members for hearing HB549 HD1.

I strongly support HB549 HD1. Our keiki need early learning to support their development, and families across the state deserve to have increased access to early learning resources. This bill would establish an apprenticeship program and support both rising professionals and existing service providers. We know that one of the barriers that stops providers from participating in apprenticeship models is pay parity. The bill proposal is designed to prevent that issue by outlining that current providers are appropriately incentivized and supported so the program can be successful. Additionally, the workforce shortage in this area of early childcare provides requires innovative solutions and meaningful system changes which this bill calls for both.

Mahalo for your support!

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 9:41:11 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacob Wiencek	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

Hawaii is facing an educational outcomes crisis. Reading and math attainment is at levels comparable to *or* lower than 2015. We must do more to foster a culture and continuum of quality education to improve outcomes. I believe this program can be a good investment to improve outcomes earlier in life. I urge this Committee to **SUPPORT** this bill!

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 9:59:05 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leilani Kailiawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members for hearing HB549 HD1.

I strongly support HB549 HD1. Our keiki need early learning to support their development, and families across the state deserve to have increased access to early learning resources. This bill would establish an apprenticeship program and support both rising professionals and existing service providers. We know that one of the barriers that stops providers from participating in apprenticeship models is pay parity. The bill proposal is designed to prevent that issue by outlining that current providers are appropriately incentivized and supported so the program can be successful.

Mahalo for your support!

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 6:03:48 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
TERI SAVAIINAEA	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chsir Marten and Committee Members,

I *support* HB549 HD1.

Kind regards,

Teri Kia Savaiinaea

District 45, Wai'anae resident

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 8:19:00 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

Thank you for hearing HB549 which would increase and develop the number of childcare professionals through apprenticeship programs. This would help the shortage problem we have with childcare professionals.

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 9:31:14 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jada Rufo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members for hearing HB549 HD1.

I strongly support HB549 HD1. Our keiki need early learning to support their development, and families across the state deserve to have increased access to early learning resources. This bill would establish an apprenticeship program and support both rising professionals and existing service providers. We know that one of the barriers that stops providers from participating in apprenticeship models is pay parity. The bill proposal is designed to prevent that issue by outlining that current providers are appropriately incentivized and supported so the program can be successful.

Mahalo for your support!

Elaine Yamashita
105 Kamehameiki Rd.
Kula, HI 96790-8451
808-281-1216
elainey208@gmail.com

February 8, 2025

To: Representative Marten, Chair
Representative Olds, Vice-chair
Members of the Human Services and Homelessness Committee

From: Elaine Yamashita

Aloha, Honorable Chair Marten, Vice-chair Olds, and the members of the Human Services and Homelessness committee:

I've been an advocate for early childhood care and education since the 1980s. I am professor emerita of University of Hawai'i Maui College, where I was the program coordinator from 2000-2019. I am also the current chair of the Early Learning Board, however this testimony is my personal testimony.

I strongly support HB 549 HD1, the early childhood apprenticeship program. This would support and expand our critical early educators. Recruitment and retention of early educators, who are the heart and soul of programs, is crucial for high quality early learning programs.

Many in the early childhood community have been working together to bring apprenticeships to Hawai'i. The resources provided in this bill would allow community based providers the opportunity to host an apprentice and the incentives required for the apprentice and for the program.

Mahalo for your consideration of this important bill.

Sincerely,
Elaine Yamashita

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 11:22:25 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members for hearing HB549 HD1.

I strongly support HB549 HD1. Our keiki need early learning to support their development, and families across the state deserve to have increased access to early learning resources. This bill would establish an apprenticeship program and support both rising professionals and existing service providers. We know that one of the barriers that stops providers from participating in apprenticeship models is pay parity. The bill proposal is designed to prevent that issue by outlining that current providers are appropriately incentivized and supported so the program can be successful.

Mahalo for your support!

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 2:23:15 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carol Linde	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of this bill. We have made great strides in recent years to address the shortages in the ECE sector and need to continue to bolster it by creating pathways into the profession. As we continue to professionalize the roles of early childhood educators, we must also consider how these vital services can be financed so that the families of children do not bear undue burden and yet the professionals are paid commensurate with their training and experience. This apprenticeship program is in line with those goals. Mahalo.

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 2:39:18 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Doris Segal Matsunaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My family and I in Waimea on Hawaii Island support 549 HB RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM. We need more available and better quality childcare!

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 8:12:41 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair Lisa Marten and Vice Chair Ikaika Olds and committee members,

I strongly support HB549 HD1. Our keiki need early learning to support their development, and families across the state deserve to have increased access to early learning resources. This bill would establish an apprenticeship program and support both rising professionals and existing service providers. We know that one of the barriers that stops providers from participating in apprenticeship models is pay parity. The bill proposal is designed to prevent that issue by outlining that current providers are appropriately incentivized and supported so the program can be successful.

Mahalo for your support!

Kee Lo

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 12:21:43 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristy Arias	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members for hearing HB549 HD1.

I strongly support HB549 HD1. Our keiki need early learning to support their development, and families across the state deserve to have increased access to early learning resources. This bill would establish an apprenticeship program and support both rising professionals and existing service providers. We know that one of the barriers that stops providers from participating in apprenticeship models is pay parity. The bill proposal is designed to prevent that issue by outlining that current providers are appropriately incentivized and supported so the program can be successful.

Mahalo for your support!

February 10, 2025

To: The Honorable Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair
The Honorable Terez Amato, Vice Chair
and members of the House Committee on Higher Education
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 South Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

From: Kiyomi Umezawa

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 549 HD1 – Relating to the Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H. B. No. 549 HD1.

My name is Kiyomi Umezawa, an early childhood educator and I support this bill. Families across our state are struggling to find affordable, high-quality early learning programs that support their young children's development while families maintain their own economic stability. At the same time, there is a desperate need to support the recruitment, retention, and stabilization of our specially trained early learning workforce.

This bill offers a tangible solution to these pressing issues by:

1. **Supporting the Early Learning Professionals:** The grant program will provide funding to support over 500 existing early learning professionals, helping them access critical training and professional development opportunities. This investment will not only enhance the quality of care but also improve recruitment and retention in the early care and education field that has historically faced high turnover due to low wages and limited growth opportunities.
2. **Increasing the Supply of Early Learning Slots:** By incentivizing individuals to enter and advance in the field, this program has the potential to add up to 75 additional slots for infants and toddlers under the age of three, and up to 200 slots for three and four year olds. These additional slots will directly benefit families who are on waiting lists or forced to make difficult compromises in their work and other responsibilities.
3. **Creating Career Pathways:** By funding apprenticeships, the program will offer a structured pathway for career entry and advancement, that will enhance the recruitment of new individuals into the early learning profession. This is especially important in creating good jobs for individuals who reflect the diverse communities they will serve.
4. **Strengthening Economic Stability:** For families in Hawai'i who struggle with the high cost of living, access to reliable child care is often the key to maintaining stable employment and achieving economic security. The proposed program will play a critical role in ensuring parents can participate fully in their jobs and careers, knowing their children are in safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate settings.

This legislation aligns with our shared vision of prioritizing early learning as a cornerstone of our state's future. By investing in the apprenticeship grant program, we are not only addressing immediate needs but also laying the groundwork for long-term systemic improvements in early care and education for our young children's success in school and in life.

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 1:59:09 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 9:45:00 AM

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

Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members for hearing HB549 HD1.

I strongly support HB549 HD1. Our keiki need early learning to support their development, and families across the state deserve to have increased access to early learning resources. This bill would establish an apprenticeship program and support both rising professionals and existing service providers. We know that one of the barriers that stops providers from participating in apprenticeship models is pay parity. The bill proposal is designed to prevent that issue by outlining that current providers are appropriately incentivized and supported so the program can be successful.

Mahalo for your support!

HB-549-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 2:58:41 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Iwalani Hall	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members for hearing HB549 HD1.

I strongly support HB549 HD1. Our keiki need early learning to support their development, and families across the state deserve to have increased access to early learning resources. This bill would establish an apprenticeship program and support both rising professionals and existing service providers. We know that one of the barriers that stops providers from participating in apprenticeship models is pay parity. The bill proposal is designed to prevent that issue by outlining that current providers are appropriately incentivized and supported so the program can be successful.

Mahalo for your support!