



**TESTIMONY OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA  
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2025**

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**ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**

H.B. NO. 549, RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM.

**BEFORE THE:**

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**DATE:** Friday, January 31, 2025

**TIME:** 2:15 p.m.

**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 309

**TESTIFIER(S):** Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or  
Candace J. Park, Deputy Attorney General

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Chair Garrett and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments.

The purpose of this bill is to establish an early learning apprenticeship grant program to be administered by the University of Hawaii.

Article X, section 6, of the Hawai'i Constitution gives the Board of Regents of the University of Hawai'i "exclusive jurisdiction over the internal structure, management, and operation of the university." Section 6 further provides: "This section shall not limit the power of the legislature to enact laws of statewide concern. The legislature shall have the exclusive jurisdiction to identify laws of statewide concern." If the Committee decides to pass this bill, we recommend an amendment that adds a statement identifying this bill as a law of statewide concern.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Higher Education  
Friday, January 31, 2025 at 2:15 p.m.

By  
Nathan Murata, Dean  
College of Education  
And  
Michael Bruno, PhD  
Provost  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

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

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of HB 549, 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:

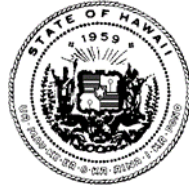
1. **Supporting the Early Learning Professionals:** The grant program will provide funding to support over 500 existing early learning professionals, helping them access critical training and professional development opportunities. This investment will not only enhance the quality of care but also improve 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.

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

TRISTA SPEER  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

January 29, 2025

TO: The Honorable Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair  
House Committee on Higher Education

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

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

Hearing: January 31, 2025, 2:15 p.m.  
Conference Room 309, 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 bill 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.

A registered apprenticeship program is one strategy that provides opportunities to support the recruitment, retention, and professional development of early learning professionals in a career field that has been experiencing a continuous shortage of qualified caregivers and staff for early learning programs. Providers are incentivized to participate in a registered apprenticeship program through awarded grants which may be used to cover providers' expenses.

January 29, 2025

Page 2

DHS supports the apprenticeship grant program aimed 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

January 30, 2025

Aloha, Honorable Chair Garrett, Vice-chair Amato, and the members of the Education 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.

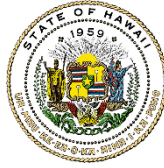
It is a specialized body of knowledge and experience based on child development and effective relationships, and apprenticeships provide both. The bill would also allow community-based providers resources to provide incentives for apprentices to continue and for the program as a whole.

Mahalo for your consideration and support of this bill.

Sincerely,

*/s/Elaine Yamashita*

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



**LATE**

**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 Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair  
Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Higher Education

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

SUBJECT: Testimony on H.B. No. 549 – RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP  
GRANT PROGRAM.  
Committee: HED  
Date: Friday, January 31, 2025  
Time: 2:15 p.m.  
Location: Conference room 309

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 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.



**LATE**



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

House Committee on Higher Education

January 31, 2025

2:15pm

Conference Room 309

Dear Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato and members of the House Committee on Higher Education:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) submits this testimony in **Support of HB 549** which proposes establishing an early learning apprenticeship grant program. This bill represents an important step forward in addressing the critical shortage of qualified early learning professionals in Hawai‘i and will provide significant benefits for all of our keiki, especially Native Hawaiian children and families.

The Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program acknowledges that early childhood development is foundational for long-term success. The early years of a child’s life are when brain development occurs most rapidly, making access to quality early learning not just beneficial but transformative. By supporting early learning programs, we are investing in Hawai‘i’s future and ensuring our keiki have the tools they need to thrive.

This bill directly tackles the shortage of qualified early learning professionals, a challenge that limits access to quality early education for many families across the state. Apprenticeship programs are a proven solution, combining hands-on experience with classroom instruction to ensure educators are well-prepared to meet the diverse needs of our keiki.

Additionally, HB 549 recognizes the need for fair and competitive wages for early learning professionals. Ensuring salaries align with industry standards is key to attracting and retaining high-quality educators, particularly in Native Hawaiian communities where economic disparities and limited access to services have historically been barriers to success.

HB 549 represents an opportunity to strengthen Hawai‘i’s early learning workforce while ensuring Native Hawaiian families and communities benefit from a high-quality, culturally relevant education system. This aligns with OHA’s *Mana i Maui Ola* Strategic Educational Pathways Strategic Outcomes, which emphasize culturally grounded, equitable learning opportunities. By supporting the training and retention of early learning

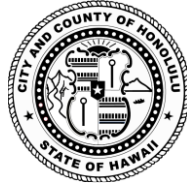
professionals, we foster an environment where all children—especially those from Native Hawaiian backgrounds—can succeed academically, culturally, and socially.

OHA appreciates the opportunity to share our mana‘o and strongly urges the Committee to **pass HB 549**. Mahalo nui loa for your time and consideration.

**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](http://honolulu.gov)

RICK BLANGIARDI  
MAYOR  
MEIA



ANTON C. KRUCKY  
DIRECTOR  
PO'O

AEDWARD LOS BANOS  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
HOPE PO'O

January 29, 2025

The Honorable Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair  
The Honorable Terez Amato, Vice Chair  
And Members of the House Committee on Higher Education  
State Capitol, Conference Room 309  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Garrett and Vice Chair Amato  
And Members of the House Committee on Higher Education:

SUBJECT: Testimony - Measure H.B. No. 549; Relating to an Early  
Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

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

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.

The Honorable Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair  
The Honorable Terez Amato, Vice Chair  
And Members of the House Committee on Higher Education  
January 29, 2025  
Page 2

3. **Creating Sustainable Career Pathways:** Funding apprenticeship programs will recruit 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.
4. **Strengthening Economic Stability:** The child care industry generates over \$300 million in revenue for the State. In addition, access to reliable child care is critical for families in Hawai'i where the high cost of living makes workforce participation a necessity. This program helps to strengthen Hawai'i's economy by generating revenue and creating new jobs, while also supporting families in securing employment opportunities.

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 improvements in the field. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

Sincerely,

Anton C. Krucky  
Director Designate

January 29, 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

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

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

Aloha,

My name is Dr. Terry Lock. Currently, I am the Director of the Hawai'i Early Childhood Educator Excellence and Equity (ECE<sup>3</sup>) 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 ECE<sup>3</sup> 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 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 your support of H. B. No. 549.

To: Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair  
Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Higher Education

From: Lehua Kaulukukui, Chair  
Puakalehua Early Learning Consortium

Subject: Measure H.B. 549 – Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

**Position: Strong Support**

Aloha Chair Garrett , Vice Chair Amato, and committee members,

**I am testifying in strong support of 549, 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,

Lehua Kaulukukui, Chair  
Puakalehua Early Learning Consortium  
<https://www.puakalehua.org>





January 28, 2025

Aloha Chair Garrett and committee members,

**I am testifying in 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.

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 childcare 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 childcare.

Please support this measure.

Mahalo,

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



Hearing Date: Thursday, January 31, 2025, 2:15 PM , Rm. 309

To: Committee on Higher Education  
Re. Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair  
Rep. Terez Amato, Vice Chair

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

Dear Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and the Members of the Committee,

Members of AAUW of Hawaii thank you for this opportunity to testify in **strong support of HB 549** 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: January 28, 2025

To: House Committee on Higher Education  
Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair  
Rep. Terez Amato, Vice Chair

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

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

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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**, 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. This measure would remove this financial barrier by providing grants to help close the funding shortfalls 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 childhood 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**.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 6:24:45 PM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Momi Akana	Keiki O Ka Aina Preschool, Inc.	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

Aloha Chair Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice Chair Terez Amato, and committee members,

I am testifying in 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 successfully increased the quality of early learning programs as they develop a well-prepared, well-supported, and well-compensated ECE workforce.

However, many early learning providers cannot 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 childcare 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,

Momi Akana

Keiki O Ka Aina



**Parents And  
Children Together**  
BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIPS  
THAT MATTER MOST

ParentsAndChildrenTogether.org

## **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 549 Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program**

**TO:** Chair Garrett, Vice-Chair Amato & Members,  
House Committee on High Education  
**FROM:** Ryan Kusumoto, President & CEO  
**DATE:** January 31, 2025

**Parents and Children Together (PACT) supports HB 549, Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program**, which will incentivize early learning employers in Hawaii to participate in a specialized apprenticeship program.

Child care workers face disproportionately low wages, which contributes to high turnover rates and loss of workforce. Lack of affordable and available child care has far reaching consequences, from the individual development of children to family economic stability, to employer operations. When child care is not available, parents cannot work, triggering a cascade of problems for the family and for employers.

Early learning registered apprenticeship programs (ELRAPs) 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.

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 and allow providers to pay their existing staff higher wages, ensuring that wages are comparable to federal wage requirements or prevailing industry standards.

Founded in 1968, PACT is a statewide community-based organization providing a wide array of innovative and educational social services to families in need. Assisting more than 15,000 people across the state annually, we help identify, address, and successfully resolve challenges through our 20 programs. Among our services are early education programs, domestic violence prevention and intervention programs, child abuse prevention and intervention programs, childhood sexual abuse supportive group services, child and adolescent behavioral health programs, sex trafficking intervention, poverty prevention and community building programs.

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

To: Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair  
Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Higher Education

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

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

Hearing: Friday, January 31, 2025, at 2:15 PM, Conference Room 309

**POSITION: STRONG SUPPORT**

Aloha e Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, 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**. 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**.





LATE \*Testimony submitted late may not be considered by the Committee for decision making purposes.

# Chamber of Commerce HAWAII



**Testimony to the House Committee on Higher Education (HED)**  
**Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair**  
**Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair**

**LATE**

**Friday, January 31, 2025 at 2:15pm**  
**Conference Room 309 & Videoconference**

**RE: HB549 RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM**

Aloha e Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports House Bill 549 (HB549), 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 to participate in early learning apprenticeship programs.

HB549 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Small Business. This bill promotes policies that drive economic growth and resilience, enhance workforce development, and improve the quality of life for Hawaii's residents.

Registered apprenticeship programs are a proven strategy for developing skilled workforces that rise to meet the specific needs of in-demand industries in order to drive economic growth. These programs integrate on-the-job training with classroom instruction and create career pathways that ensure preparedness for skilled professions. By participating in registered apprenticeships, businesses gain access to a highly trained workforce, while employees benefit from fair compensation reflective of their qualifications. Additionally, these programs help develop technical expertise, enhance workforce skills, and promote a culture of lifelong learning and professional growth.

The recent launch of the first federally approved early learning apprenticeship program highlights the potential of such initiatives in addressing workforce shortages in critical sectors like early childhood education. However, the high labor costs associated with this industry often deter service providers from meeting federal compensation requirements, limiting participation in apprenticeship programs. By establishing an early learning apprenticeship grant program through the University of Hawaii, this bill presents a pathway to viably mitigate financial barriers and incentivize participation. This investment in workforce training strengthens Hawaii's economy by expanding career opportunities and increasing access to quality early learning programs—both key objectives of BP2030.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth. We respectfully ask to pass House Bill 549. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Aloha Chair Donna Mercado Kim, Chair Andrew Takuya Garret, 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

**LATE**

Aloha Chair Andrew Takuya Garret, Vice Chair Terez Amato, 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.

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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,  
Ty Tamagawa  
Keiki O Ka ' Āina Family Learning Centers

**LATE**

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 2:34:14 PM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:00:00 PM

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 – Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

**Position: Strong Support**

Aloha,

**I am testifying in strong support of HB 549, 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**

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 3:00:49 PM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Krystal Baba	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 3:01:35 PM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this bill.

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 3:06:05 PM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daphne Kahawai-Tom	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I **strongly support HB549**, 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. We need these here in our Hawaii!



January 28, 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 – Relating to the Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

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

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**

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 3:12:00 PM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato and members of the House Committee on Higher Education,

I am in strong support of HB549. 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**

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 3:19:02 PM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Staci Hanashiro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Representative Garrett, Representative Amato, and members of the Committee,

Mahalo for taking the time to read and hear our community's mana'o and 'ike on HB549 relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program. I am submitting testimony in **strong support of HB549**, as a mother of 2 (who are now 18 and 13 years old), an Infant Mental Health endorsed Family Specialist, and a social worker who has been working with pregnant mothers and parents of young keiki for the past 17 years.

**I strongly support HB549**, 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.

The early years is pivotal to brain development with 90% of brain development occurring before the age of 5. Our childcare and early learning workforce plays an essential role in helping to nurture our youngest keiki's mental health which is the core of child development. As a community, my hope is that we continue to do better in compensating and growing these essential workers for the "heart work and hard work", and I believe investing into an apprenticeship grant program is a step in that direction.

Mahalo nui loa,

Staci Hanashiro, LCSW, IMH-E

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 5:33:58 PM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Molly Mamaril	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

**I strongly support HB549**, 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.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Molly Mamaril

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 8:44:14 PM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caitlin Kryss	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the Committee on Higher Education,

My name is Caitlin Kryss, and I **strongly support HB549**, 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.

Mahalo for your thoughtful consideration,

Caitlin Kryss

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 11:50:17 PM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha! I am in strong support of HB 549. Hawaii families need more child care options, and HB 549 aims to grow the early learning workforce by providing apprenticeship grants. This bill remove financial barriers, expand opportunities for providers, and strengthen our child care system. This will help build a stronger future for our keiki.

Mahalo nui loa for your time

With gratitude

Leilani Kailawa, parent and community leader/ member of Ohana Leadership Council

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 5:43:15 AM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

**Dear Chair Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice Chair Terez Amato, and the Committee on Higher Education,**

**I strongly support HB549, 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.**

**Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony. I appreciate your time and attention to this bill.**



**Mahalo,**

**Caroline Kunitake**

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 9:44:37 AM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Philamer Felicitas	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

## Comments:

Aloha Committee on Higher Education. My name is Philamer Felicitas and I'm mother and a resident of Waipahu. When I decided to move back home from the continent I was dumbfounded at how difficult it was to secure a spot for my son at any of the preschools in leeward O'ahu. I was grateful for Nā Maka Kindergarten Prep School in Waipahu who was able to take my son due to another child dropping out. I was able to work and not have to worry about bouncing my son around; family house to house and friend to friend while I worked during the day and my son was able to have stability in his schedule and enjoy quality time with his friends and caregivers who helped our family thrive during our transition. This experience was clearly due to the shortage of early learning providers. I am grateful I had a last minute option but I worry as my family considers having another child that we may not have the same luck in finding care for our child when the time comes. Please consider supporting HB549 to build up the early learning workforce and give growing working local families like mine the support and resources we need to survive in Hawai'i.

Mahalo piha,

Philamer

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 10:21:44 AM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kailialoha Dias-Blake	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Testimony in Support of HB549 – RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM**

Hearing Date: Friday, January 31st, 2025

Aloha, my name is Kā‘īlialoha Dias-Blake, and I am writing in strong support of HB549, which seeks to establish an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program administered by the University of Hawai‘i. As a mother of two young children, I understand firsthand the importance of having highly trained and well-supported early childhood educators. My eldest is currently in preschool with one more year before kindergarten, and my youngest attends an infant toddler center. Unfortunately, I have personally experienced situations where inadequately trained teachers impacted my child’s well-being. My youngest was a victim of this reality, and I can’t help but think that if those educators had access to proper, affordable training, the situation might have been prevented.

Hawai‘i’s early learning system is essential to the growth and development of our keiki, yet our workforce faces significant barriers to advancement, including financial strain and limited access to professional development. By providing financial support for early learning service providers to participate in state- or federally-approved apprenticeship programs, this measure will help strengthen our early learning workforce, improve retention, and ensure our keiki receive the best possible start in life.

For parents like myself, placing our children in early learning programs requires an enormous amount of trust. We need to feel confident that the individuals caring for and educating our keiki have the knowledge, skills, and support they need to provide a safe and nurturing learning environment. Yet, many aspiring and current early childhood educators face financial barriers to furthering their education. This apprenticeship grant program would create opportunities for professional growth while helping to alleviate the financial burden of training, ultimately leading to better outcomes for both educators and the children they serve.

Additionally, investing in apprenticeship programs creates sustainable career pathways, particularly for individuals from underserved communities who aspire to contribute to early childhood education but may lack the financial means to do so. This initiative is not just an investment in our workforce—it is an investment in Hawai‘i’s future.

I urge you to pass this bill to support those dedicated to nurturing and educating our youngest learners. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

**Kā'ilialoha Dias-Blake**

Phone: (808) 347-9705

Email: [kailidiasblake@gmail.com](mailto:kailidiasblake@gmail.com)

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 10:22:25 AM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Malia-Blossom Cruz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of HB549 – RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING  
APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM

Hearing Date: Friday, January 31st, 2025

Aloha, my name is Malia-Blossom Cruz, and I am writing in strong support of HB549, which seeks to establish an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program administered by the University of Hawai‘i. As an advocate for early childhood education I have witnessed firsthand the critical need for increasing access to high-quality early learning opportunities and ensuring a well-supported, highly trained workforce.

Hawai‘i’s early learning system is essential to the growth and development of our keiki, yet our workforce faces significant barriers to advancement, including financial strain and limited access to professional development. By providing financial support for early learning service providers to participate in state- or federally-approved apprenticeship programs, this measure will help to strengthen our early learning workforce, improve retention, and ensure our keiki receive the best possible start in life.

Additionally, investing in apprenticeship programs creates sustainable career pathways, particularly for individuals from underserved communities who aspire to contribute to early childhood education but may lack the financial means to do so. This initiative is not just an investment in our workforce—it is an investment in Hawai‘i’s future.

I urge you to pass this bill to support those dedicated to nurturing and educating our youngest learners. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,  
Malia-Blossom Cruz  
mbmtcruz@gmail.com, (808) 938-1016

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 11:24:18 AM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael C Fahey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear committee members,

I am writing in support of capital H B 549 the childcare apprenticeship program. There is a drastic shortage of trained childcare professionals in our state. This bill would alleviate some of the pressure of finding qualified people.

Michael C Fahey

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 11:34:02 AM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gabrielle Igarta	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

Aloha, my name is Gabrielle Igarta, and I am writing in strong support of HB549, which seeks to establish an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program administered by the University of Hawai‘i. As an advocate for early childhood education I have witnessed firsthand the critical need for increasing access to high-quality early learning opportunities and ensuring a well-supported, highly trained workforce.

Hawai‘i’s early learning system is essential to the growth and development of our keiki, yet our workforce faces significant barriers to advancement, including financial strain and limited access to professional development. By providing financial support for early learning service providers to participate in state- or federally-approved apprenticeship programs, this measure will help to strengthen our early learning workforce, improve retention, and ensure our keiki receive the best possible start in life.

Additionally, investing in apprenticeship programs creates sustainable career pathways, particularly for individuals from underserved communities who aspire to contribute to early childhood education but may lack the financial means to do so. This initiative is not just an investment in our workforce—it is an investment in Hawai‘i’s future.

I urge you to pass this bill to support those dedicated to nurturing and educating our youngest learners. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,  
Gabrielle Igarta  
igarta.gabrielle@gmail.com

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 1:10:52 PM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jaicelynn Aleka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Testimony in Support of HB549 – RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM**

Hearing Date: Friday, January 31st, 2025

Aloha, my name is Jaicelynn Aleka, and I am writing in strong support of HB549, which seeks to establish an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program administered by the University of Hawai‘i. As an advocate for early childhood education I have witnessed firsthand the critical need for increasing access to high-quality early learning opportunities and ensuring a well-supported, highly trained workforce.

Hawai‘i’s early learning system is essential to the growth and development of our keiki, yet our workforce faces significant barriers to advancement, including financial strain and limited access to professional development. By providing financial support for early learning service providers to participate in state- or federally-approved apprenticeship programs, this measure will help to strengthen our early learning workforce, improve retention, and ensure our keiki receive the best possible start in life.

Additionally, investing in apprenticeship programs creates sustainable career pathways, particularly for individuals from underserved communities who aspire to contribute to early childhood education but may lack the financial means to do so. This initiative is not just an investment in our workforce—it is an investment in Hawai‘i’s future.

I urge you to pass this bill to support those dedicated to nurturing and educating our youngest learners. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,  
**Jaicelynn Aleka**



**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 1:42:27 PM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Paula Yanagi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support bill HB549. This is much needed for the early childhood workforce, as the field is crucial for our communities. This bill will help bring qualified people to the field, sustaining the workforce with more qualified staff, as there is a current teacher shortage in early Childhood Education. This bill will give incoming teachers ongoing education and training to sustain the workforce of early childhood education.

Please pass this bill, I am in full support of HB549

Thank you, Paula Yanagi

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 3:00:39 PM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kailey Lapenia	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

Aloha, my name is Kailey Lapenia, and I am writing in strong support of HB549, which seeks to establish an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program administered by the University of Hawai‘i. As an advocate for early childhood education I have witnessed firsthand the critical need for increasing access to high-quality early learning opportunities and ensuring a well-supported, highly trained workforce.

Hawai‘i’s early learning system is essential to the growth and development of our keiki, yet our workforce faces significant barriers to advancement, including financial strain and limited access to professional development. By providing financial support for early learning service providers to participate in state- or federally-approved apprenticeship programs, this measure will help to strengthen our early learning workforce, improve retention, and ensure our keiki receive the best possible start in life.

Additionally, investing in apprenticeship programs creates sustainable career pathways, particularly for individuals from underserved communities who aspire to contribute to early childhood education but may lack the financial means to do so. This initiative is not just an investment in our workforce—it is an investment in Hawai‘i’s future.

I urge you to pass this bill to support those dedicated to nurturing and educating our youngest learners. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Kailey Lapenia

[kaileyl@inpeace.org](mailto:kaileyl@inpeace.org)

808-895-8823

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 7:09:53 PM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:15:00 PM

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**

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 9:45:44 PM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deanna Espinas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this important measure. Thank you!

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 9:17:21 AM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alec Marentic	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my support for HB549, which seeks to establish an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program to be administered by the University of Hawai‘i. This proposed program will provide essential financial support to early learning service providers who participate in state- or federally-approved apprenticeship programs. Its passage would mark a critical step forward in ensuring that Hawai‘i’s early education workforce is equipped to deliver high-quality early learning experiences to our youngest children.

Research consistently demonstrates the long-term benefits of high-quality early childhood education. One of the most compelling arguments for investing in early learning comes from the work of Nobel Laureate economist James Heckman. The "Heckman Equation" emphasizes that investments in early childhood education yield significant returns, both economically and socially. High-quality early learning programs foster cognitive and emotional development, increase school readiness, and improve lifetime outcomes for children—especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Heckman’s research shows that every dollar invested in high-quality early childhood education programs for children from birth to age five can yield a return of up to 13% per year through improved education, health, and economic outcomes. This is particularly important as it highlights how early learning programs not only benefit children directly but also reduce the need for remedial education, lower crime rates, increase workforce productivity, and foster healthier, more resilient communities.

By establishing this apprenticeship grant program, Hawai‘i would be investing in the future of both our children and our economy. The financial support provided to early learning service providers will help build a skilled and dedicated workforce, which in turn will improve the quality of early childhood programs throughout the state. Well-trained educators are the foundation of high-quality early learning environments, and this bill would ensure that more individuals have access to the training and development opportunities necessary to excel in this critical field.

Additionally, the requirement for an annual report to the Legislature ensures accountability and allows for the continuous evaluation of the program’s effectiveness. This transparency will

ensure that funds are being used wisely and that the program is delivering on its promise to strengthen early childhood education in Hawai‘i.

In conclusion, the Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program represents a sound investment in the future of our keiki and our state. I respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB549 and support this effort to improve educational outcomes, reduce inequality, and strengthen our communities.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Alec Marentic  
Nationally Certified School Psychologist  
Resident, Hawai‘i County

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 9:47:20 AM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB426 (or 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. S.B. No. 426 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 S.B. No. 426.



**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 10:23:33 AM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Toni Fujimoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

To guarantee families access to high-quality early childhood care and education from birth to kindergarten, we must ensure fair compensation for our early care and education workforce while providing meaningful opportunities for professional growth. Early learning registered apprenticeship programs (ELRAPs) have proven to be an effective strategy for both recruitment and retention. These programs offer apprentices higher wages and hands-on learning experiences as they pursue higher education degrees. Additionally, ELRAPs enhance the quality of early learning programs by cultivating a well-prepared, well-supported, and fairly compensated ECE workforce.

Committee on Human Services  
Chair Kim, Chair Kidani  
Date: Friday, January 29, 2025  
Time: 2:15pm  
Place: Conference Room 309 Via Videoconference  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street

Bill: **HB 549**  
Position: **IN SUPPORT**

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Johnnetta Jordan-Piper. I am honored to submit written testimony in **strong support of HB 549**.

For **over three decades**, I have devoted my life to **early childhood education**, serving as a **center-based provider, classroom teacher, and home-based family childcare provider**. Each stage of my career has deepened my understanding of the **profound impact** that quality early care has on **children, families, and communities**. When I officially opened my **family childcare business in 2018**, it was not just a professional decision—it was the **fulfillment of a lifelong calling**. **Nurturing and educating young children has never been just what I do; it is who I am.**

Despite this commitment, I have witnessed **firsthand the struggles** early learning professionals face. Many passionate and dedicated colleagues have been forced to leave the field—not by choice, but because they **could no longer afford to stay**. Infant and toddler care is exceptionally scarce, and without **a sustainable workforce**, families will continue to face **limited options, rising costs, and inconsistent care for our youngest children**.

I have seen too many **talented, experienced professionals** struggle under the weight of financial instability, physical and emotional exhaustion, and a lack of systemic support. I have watched them work long hours for wages that do not reflect the value of their work. Like myself, some have experienced health decline, and many have carried the guilt of **not being able to do more for the children and families who depend on them**.

We are now at a breaking point. **Families are struggling, children are missing out on crucial early learning experiences, and dedicated professionals are being pushed out of the field.**

This is why **HB 549 is so crucial**. The **Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program** will not only help **recruit new early learning professionals** but also ensure they are supported to **stay**. I was fortunate to have mentors who guided and nurtured my passion for this field. However, **mentorship alone is not enough**—we must provide **financial stability, professional development, and clear career pathways** to build and sustain a thriving workforce.

This bill provides **a real solution**. By supporting **apprenticeship programs**, we are investing in **a new generation of early learning professionals** who will enter the field equipped with **hands-on experience, academic knowledge, and a sustainable wage**. Importantly, this bill also supports **existing providers**, ensuring they are not left behind as we work to grow and strengthen the workforce. **Without retention, recruitment is meaningless.**

I have spent my life caring for and educating children. I was **groomed by some of the best in this field**, and I have carried that responsibility with me every day. But **who will replace us?** Who will step in to care for the next generation if we do not **invest in the workforce now?**

This bill is **not just about funding**—it is about **valuing the essential work of early childhood professionals**. It is about recognizing that **quality early learning does not happen without qualified, well-supported, and fairly compensated educators**. And it is about ensuring that **families—especially those with infants and toddlers—have access to the care they need when they need it most.**

I urge you to **pass HB 549**. This is **our opportunity** to make a lasting difference for **Hawai'i's children, families, and the early childhood workforce behind ALL workforces.**

**Mahalo for your time and consideration.**

**Johnnetta Jordan-Piper**

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 11:19:07 AM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Star Kemfort	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

I strongly support HB549, which would incentivize early learning employers in Hawai‘i to participate in Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Programs (ELRAPs). When going to school to receive my certificate in Early Childhood Education practicumd were assigned that gave students on hands training in classrooms with early educators. This is another way that those earning a higher degree can earn funds to pay for furthering their education while considering their individual financial obligations. Furthermore why I support HB549 is that it allows working family's to know they are receiving high quality early childhood care from birth to kindergarten. I have personally worked with organizations such as Family Hui Hawaii that promotes the capacity in which community efforts can support families.

The quality of learning therefore can be a community effort because of this type of equal access to quality care. In my opinion when individuals seeking career advancement allow this type of support to keep educators well-prepared, well-supported, and well-compensated in the ECE workforce success for all families can be achieved.

Mahalo,

Star Kemfort

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 12:01:31 PM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:15:00 PM

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

## Comments:

Aloha, my name is Kristy Arias. As a mom of a child with disabilities, I wholeheartedly support apprenticeship for early childhood. Children especially Tourette syndrome which my son has, shows signs at a very early age. Most neurological disorders do. We need more education and support to help parents diagnose their kids IF symptoms arise. I believe in learning hands on. This program will do just that. We need educational programs more than ever. Please support hb549, mahalo nui

Elaine Yamashita  
105 Kamehameiki Rd.  
Kula, HI 96790-8451  
808-281-1216  
[elainey208@gmail.com](mailto:elainey208@gmail.com)

January 30, 2025

Aloha, Honorable Chair Garrett, Vice-chair Amato, and the members of the Education 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, 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,  
/s/ Elaine Yamashita

**LATE**

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 4:58:08 PM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kealakai Hammond	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

**I strongly support HB549**, 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.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Kealakai Hammond,

Honolulu, HI

**LATE**

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 11:17:26 PM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aisley Dela Rosa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Representative Donna Mercado Kim, Chair  
Representative Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Higher Education

From: Aisley Dela Rosa

Subject: Measure S.B. No. 426 – Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

Position: Strong Support

Aloha Chair Mercado Kim , Vice Chair Kidani, and committee members,

I am testifying in strong support of SB 426, 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,  
Aisley Dela Rosa

**LATE**

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 9:33:18 AM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christen Zulli	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members,

I strongly support HB549 because I found it incredibly difficult to find any early childcare programs and most of the programs I learned about were either a full capacity or would not allow children who were not fully potty trained- let alone find a place that aligned with our safety standards. I watched spaces close because they were unable to find staff with the exact credentials need for the school's licensure. We ended up finding an unregistered, unlicensed in home program far away from our home that turned out to be a nightmare where our daughter was left in her diaper the entire day while playing with a visibly very sick other child. We lost money, sleep, and a lot of time as a result. HB549 would give families a much better choice in where and with whom they leave their children by opening up access to job opportunities for hopeful, new early childhood educators. We can keep our educators here- on our island and in our State- where we need them the most.

Mahalo for your time,

Christen Zulli

**LATE**

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 12:06:27 PM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, 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 T Sullivan*

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 12:14:51 PM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
CHENTIRA F FINK-AJALA	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**LATE**

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, 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.

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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!

Chentira Fink-Ajala

**LATE**

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 12:18:26 PM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sheri Maxwell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, 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.

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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

SheriAnn Hinano Maxwell



**LATE**

Aloha Chair Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Andrew Takuya Garret, 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.

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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,  
Renata Laupola-Ah Kuoi  
Keiki O Ka Aina Preschool Inc.

**LATE**

**HB-549**

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 1:12:10 PM

Testimony for HED on 1/31/2025 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Ines-Kapua	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**I am testifying in support of this bill, which would incentivize early learning employers in Hawai'i to participate in 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.

**LATE**

## HB549 Testimony

Aloha Chair Andrew Takuya Garret and Vice Chair Terez Amato 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

## Testimony in Support of HB549 – Preschool Open Doors Expansion

Submitted by Dayna Teves, Parent Educator & Beneficiary of Early Childhood Programs

Aloha Andrew Takuya Garret Chair and Terez Amato the Vice Chair,

My name is Dayna Teves, and I am a parent educator at Keiki O Ka 'Āina Learning Center as well as a parent who has directly benefited from early childhood programs. I am writing in **strong support of HB549**, which expands the **Preschool Open Doors** program, increasing access to preschool scholarships for families across Hawai'i.

For many families like mine, the cost of preschool is a major barrier to ensuring our children receive high-quality early learning experiences. The **Preschool Open Doors program** made it possible for my children and grandchildren to attend a preschool or afford daycare that nurtured their growth, prepared them for kindergarten, and gave them a strong foundation for lifelong learning. Without financial assistance, these opportunities would have been out of reach for our family.

Expanding this program means more children—especially those from low- and middle-income families—will have access to the same opportunities. Research shows that children who attend preschool enter kindergarten more prepared and have better long-term educational outcomes. By passing **HB549**, we are giving Hawai'i's keiki the chance to thrive and succeed.

Please support HB549 and invest in the future of our children, families, and communities.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Dayna Teves

**LATE**