



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

March 28, 2025

To: Senator Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Ways and Means Committee

From: Elaine Yamashita, Chair
Early Learning Board

Re: HB692 HD1 SD1 support

Aloha, Honorable Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the Senate Way and Means 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 ELB supports HB 692 HD1 SD1, which would allow families with children ages two up to kindergarten entry to apply for Preschool Open Doors (POD) subsidies. This expansion of state subsidies will greatly benefit Hawai'i's working families.

POD subsidies to families support families who need care and education for their child beyond the school day and school year. Consistency and routine help optimize each child's development, and being able to stay in the same program year round, with caring teachers, provides that.

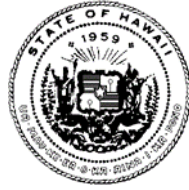
While the Dept. of Human Services will still provide accreditation support, allowing all licensed early learning programs to receive POD funding regardless of accreditation status will help more families access the subsidy.

The Early Learning Board oversees the EOEL, and both ELB and EOEL have a responsibility to coordinate the many systems that make up early learning opportunities in our state. Support of the expansion of POD funding is one of the ways the board can support all children in Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your consideration of this bill.

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

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

March 28, 2025

TO: The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 692 HD1 SD1 – RELATING TO PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM.**

Hearing: Tuesday, April 1, 2025, at 10:01 a.m.
Conference Room 211 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the bill and provides comments.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this bill is to expand the Preschool Open Doors Program's eligibility criteria. Repeals the requirement that Preschool Open Doors Program providers be accredited. Effective 7/1/2026. (HD1).

The House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness amended this measure (HD1) as follows:

- (1) Clarifying that the Preschool Open Doors Program shall continuously serve children who are in the three years prior to kindergarten entry until they enter kindergarten;
- (2) Clarifying the types of child care programs that are eligible to participate in the Preschool Open Doors Program;
- (3) Specifying that a parent or guardian of a child enrolled in the Preschool Open Doors Program may share in the costs of the Program through a copayment based on need, rather than an amount of up to one dollar;
- (4) Changing the effective date to July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion; and

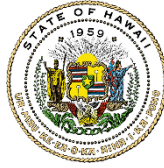
- (5) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

The Senate Committee on Health and Human Services further amended this measure (SD1) as follows:

- (1) Inserting an effective date of July 1, 2026; and
- (2) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

The Department requests consideration of the effective date of July 1, 2025. This will enable the Department to serve the proposed expanded age group for the upcoming 2025-26 Preschool Open Doors program year.

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



STATE OF HAWAII
Executive Office on Early Learning

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

TO: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

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

SUBJECT: Testimony on H.B. No. 692, S.D. 1 – RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM.
Committee: WAM
Date: Tuesday, April 1, 2025
Time: 10:01 a.m.
Location: Conference Room 211

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

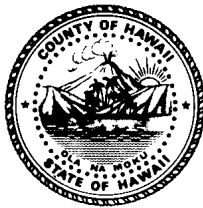
The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) offers the following comments in support of H.B. No. 692, S.D. 1 and defers to the Department of Human Services (DHS) regarding implementation and funding.

The Preschool Open Doors program plays a crucial role in helping families afford quality child care. This legislation will expand access to early learning opportunities for Hawai'i's families by expanding eligibility for the Preschool Open Doors program to include 2-year-olds (children three years prior to kindergarten entry) and by repealing the accreditation requirement for program providers.

Community-based early learning providers are vital to a strong, mixed-delivery early learning system, offering families flexibility in choosing care that best meets their needs. Many of these providers also have the capacity to offer full-day and year-round care, which is not offered by most free public prekindergarten programs but is essential for many working families.

Reducing financial barriers to community-based early learning programs also enables more parents and caregivers to participate in the workforce while ensuring their children receive the early childhood development and learning experiences critical to lifelong well-being.

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 H.B. No. 692, S.D. 1.



HAWAI'I COUNTY COUNCIL - DISTRICT 2

25 Aupuni Street • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

DATE: March 27, 2025

TO: Senate Committee on Ways & Means

FROM: Jennifer Kagiwada, Council Member
Council District 2

SUBJECT: HB 692 HD1 SD1

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the Committee,

I am writing to you in strong support of HB 692 HD1 SD1, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill. This bill enhances access to childcare opportunities for families with young children and continuously serves keiki who are three years old up to kindergarten.

Childcare in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford acceptable childcare or cannot afford it at all. HB 692 would help working families afford necessary childcare. The POD program benefits our economy because families that can access childcare have more work opportunities and stability. This program is also a meaningful public-private partnership that shows mutual benefit.

Please support this program by passing this bill.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jenn Kagiwada", written in a cursive style.

Jenn Kagiwada

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

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

RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR
MEIA



ANTON C. KRUCKY
DIRECTOR
PO'O

AEDWARD LOS BANOS
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
HOPE PO'O

March 31, 2025

The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
The Honorable Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
And Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means
State Capitol, Conference Room 211
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Dela Cruz

And Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means:

SUBJECT: Measure H.B. No. 692 H.D. 1 S.D. 1 – Relating to the
Preschool Open Doors Program

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H.B. No. 692 H.D. 1 S.D. 1
and respectfully request a minor amendment to the effective date.

As it stands, the Preschool Open Doors Program (POD) is a vital resource for families with 3- and 4-year old children, offering much-needed financial assistance to make child care more affordable and accessible. By expanding eligibility to include 2-year olds, this bill acknowledges the importance of early childhood development during these formative years and addresses a substantial gap in child care support for families with younger children.

We respectfully request the effective date be amended to July 1, 2025. This change would ensure more families access to POD and provide much-needed financial relief, helping to mitigate the high cost of child care more expeditiously.

We also strongly support efforts to enhance quality in early learning programs. The Department of Human Services recently established an accreditation program to promote accreditation and other quality improvement measures. The City will continue to work with the State to support quality improvement efforts, ensuring that expanded access is not done at the expense of quality.

The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
The Honorable Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
And Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means
March 31, 2025
Page 2

This bill reflects a balanced approach to supporting families by addressing affordability, expanding access and ensuring quality remains uncompromised. By removing barriers, this bill will open doors for more families to access affordable and reliable care while creating better economic opportunities. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

Sincerely,

Anton C. Krucky
Director



Kamehameha Schools®

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Time: 10:01 a.m.

Date: April 1, 2025

Where: Conference Room 211

TESTIMONY

By Dr. Wai‘ale‘ale Arroyo
Kamehameha Schools

RE: HB 692, HD1, SD1, Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program

E ka Luna Ho‘omalua Dela Cruz, ka Hope Luna Ho‘omalua Moriwaki, a me nā lālā o ke Kōmike o nā Loa‘a a me nā Ho‘olilo o ka ‘Aha Kenekoa, aloha nui kākou! My name is Dr. Wai‘ale‘ale Arroyo, Vice President of Hi‘ialo at Kamehameha Schools.

Kamehameha Schools **supports** HB 692, HD1, SD1, which expands the eligibility for the Preschool Open Doors (POD) Program making it easier for Hawai‘i’s families to access early learning opportunities.

The expansion to 2-year-olds will allow all families, including Native Hawaiian families, to access early learning opportunities earlier, essentially giving keiki three years of preschool preparation. We also commend the adjustments to the administration of the child care provider accreditation program. These additions minimize costs, giving providers a supportive pathway to achieve accreditation.

Founded in 1887 by the legacy of Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop, Kamehameha Schools (KS) is a private, educational, charitable trust committed to improving the capability and well-being of Native Hawaiian people through education. KS envisions a thriving lāhui where learners, grounded in Christian and Hawaiian values, grow into ‘ōiwi leaders who inspire and contribute to their communities, both locally and globally.

‘A‘ohe ‘ulu e loa‘a i ka pōkole o ka lou. There is no success without preparation.



**International Union of Painters and Allied Trades
District Council 50**

2240 Young Street
Honolulu, HI 96826

Phone
808.941.0991

Fax
808.955.9091

Email
info@dc50.org

Website
www.dc50.org

PAINTERS
808.941.0991

GLAZIERS,
ARCHITECTURAL
METAL AND
GLASSWORKERS
808.946.3329

CARPET, LINOLEUM
AND SOFT TILE
808.942.3988

DRYWALL TAPERS,
FINISHERS
808.946.6621

March 28, 2025

Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Hawaii State Capitol, Rm 208

Re: House Bill 692, HD1, SD1
Hearing date: April 1, 2025
Hearing time: 10:01 a.m.

Chair Dela Cruz and Committee Members:

Thank you for hearing this bill and for this opportunity to testify in **support** of House Bill 692, HD1, SD1.

The International Union of Painters and Allied trades, District Council 50, is an organization that consists of five (5) local unions: the Painters, Local 1971; the Glaziers Architectural and Glass Metal Workers, Local 1889; the Carpet Linoleum and Soft Tile, Local 1926; the Drywall, Tapers Finishers, Local 1944; and the Pearl Harbor Metal Trades Specialty Workers, Local 1941 – in all, approximately two thousand (2000) members statewide.

Our members start work very early in the day and continue to face serious challenges with finding affordable childcare and education. We have members who dropped out of work simply because they had no childcare options available to them.

This bill expands the number of children who will be eligible for the Preschool Open Doors program by lowering the minimum age limit for the program, removing economic restrictions and increasing the number of community-based child-care providers.

The expanded child-care opportunity created by this measure will be a great aid to our members, allowing them to continue their careers in the construction workforce without interruption as well as preparing their children for future success.

We therefore ask for your support in passing House Bill 692, HD1, SD1. Thank you again for this opportunity to voice our **support** for this measure.



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

ParentsAndChildrenTogether.org

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 692 HD1 SD1 RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM

TO: Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Moriwaki, & Members,
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
FROM: Ryan Kusumoto, President & CEO
DATE: April 1, 2025 at 10:01 AM

Parents and Children Together (PACT) supports HB 692 HD1 SD1 Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program, which expands the program's eligibility criteria, resulting in more local keiki being able to access early learning services at a younger age.

Research continues to show that—despite the expansion of state-funded early learning services and programs—less than 40% of 4-year-olds and less than 15% of 3-year-olds are enrolled in state-funded programs—clearly demonstrating a continued lack of access for many children and families. The bill will reduce the significant financial burden many families face regarding child care expenses. The cost of child care is one of the largest expenses for many families on Oahu and across the State, often exceeding housing or other essential needs.

While family child care providers are generally limited in their inclusion in state-funded early learning offerings and programs, research indicates that they can play an outsized role in a community's overall early learning framework. Studies have also found that family child care providers are an important option. Low-income families, those with non-regular work hours, and ethnic or racial minorities are likely to utilize family child care providers. Making family child care providers eligible for POD funding would result in immediate growth in the number of available early learning slots for local keiki.

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

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



Hearing Date: **Tuesday, April 1, 2025, 10:00 AM, Conf. Rm 221**

To: Committee on Ways and Means
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Re: **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 692, HD1, SD1, Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program**

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and the Members of the Committee,

Members of AAUW of Hawaii thank you for this opportunity to testify in **strong support of HB 692, HD1, SD1, Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program** which will expand eligibility criteria and remove the accreditation mandate, but will continue to require licensure. This measure has no appropriation and requires no additional funding.

Hawai'i is experiencing a child care crisis. The demand for available, quality, and affordable child care far exceeds the current capacity in Hawaii. There is only one opening for every four children ages six and below. The situation is even worse for those seeking a child care space for infants and toddlers with only one opening for every 37 children. This leaves families, and single parent households in particular in a bind. Without available child care services, many parents end up in a no-win position. They can either stay home with their young children and face increasing economic hardship or be stuck scrambling to find someone to "watch" their children. These informal child care settings often do not provide the necessary early childhood educational and developmentally appropriate activities which lead to a child being ready to enter kindergarten.

In Hawai'i, family members, especially grand parents have often stepped in to provide child care. Unfortunately, kupuna are finding it financially necessary to remain in, or return to, the workforce in order to make ends meet in our ever increasing expensive state.

In addition, having children actually penalizes women in the workforce. The Institute for Women's Policy Research reports 50.5% of households with children in Hawai'i have mothers who are the main source of family income. However, women working full time experience what's known as the "Motherhood Penalty". Working mothers make only \$.74 for every dollar working fathers make in Hawaii while the overall gender wage gap in Hawai'i where working women make \$.84 for every dollar a working man make. The cost of licensed child care ranges from approximately \$13,000 to \$23,000 per year depending on the age of the child. The median income for a single parent family is

\$43,050, which means that child care for an infant would use up over 50% of the salary; leaving little left over to pay for transportation, parking, food, housing and taxes.

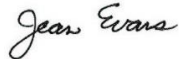
One of the major obstacles preventing mothers from securing a well-paid, stable job is finding and retaining available, affordable, quality childcare.

For future legislative consideration, we believe that in order for Preschool Open Doors to be the most impactful to families in Hawaii, Family Child Care centers should be included as an option to families. This alternative child care setting is especially important to families in rural areas where center-based services are few and far between and provide quality care.

This bill, in its current form, is an important step in increasing the availability and access to the quality and affordable early child care which is so important for early childhood development and also allows parents the stability to continue in the workforce to provide for their family.

Please pass this measure and mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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

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

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) of Hawaii is an all-volunteer, statewide chapter of a national organization and is made up of six branches: Hilo, Honolulu, 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: March 29, 2025

To: Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Moriwaki, Vice Chair

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: Support for **HB692 HD1 SD1**, Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program



Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS) is a statewide cross-sector collaborative designed to improve the system of care for Hawai'i's youngest children and their families. ECAS partners work to align priorities for children prenatal to age eight, streamline services, maximize resources, and improve programs to support our youngest keiki.

ECAS strongly supports, with an amendment request to the start date, HB692 HD1 SD1, which would expand the Preschool Open Doors program's eligibility criteria and significantly increase access to early learning programs for young children and their families. *No appropriation is requested as part of this measure.*

High-quality early learning programs provide children with the experiences and environments that are pivotal to school readiness and lead to improved educational, economic, health and well-being outcomes for children, lasting into adulthood. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program currently provides key financial assistance to families to facilitate access for 3 and 4-year-old children to these child care and early learning programs. The POD program changes proposed in this measure would expand eligibility to 2-year old children and decrease some of the additional barriers that have restricted and/or are projected to limit full uptake of the assistance available to, and critically needed by families.

Hawai'i has some of the highest child care tuition rates in the nation, with expenses for families comparable to, and at times even exceeding, housing costs. Assistance for 2-year olds, as well as the proposed adjustment to continuous services will significantly reduce the financial burden of child care expenses for our youngest, enabling families to remain in the workforce and achieve greater economic stability, while simultaneously laying a strong foundation necessary for our keiki to grow and thrive. *We respectfully request the effective date be amended to July 1, 2025, to enable immediate expansion of services to these children and families for the 2025-2026 program year.*

Expansion of the child care settings in which POD assistance may be applied, will also be instrumental to increasing children's access to early learning opportunities. Specifically, removal of the accreditation requirement for child care centers will significantly increase the availability of child care seats for children in the current landscape where capacity and vacancies are highly limited. We strongly encourage the continued promotion of program quality through the accreditation support programs recently established by the Department of Human Services, and the rate incentives embedded in the POD payment structure, without the limitations to choice and access posed by an accreditation requirement.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **HB692 HD1 SD1**.



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB692 HD1 SD1, RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

April 1, 2025

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Ways & Means Committee:

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i **SUPPORTS** HB692 HD1 SD1, RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM. Pursuant to the Platform of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i, we are committed to supporting early childhood education programs.

Expanding the Preschool Open Doors program to include children aged two to five years old is a crucial step in ensuring that all children in Hawai'i have access to quality early childhood education. By supporting families in accessing early learning services, this bill addresses the needs of our youngest residents and contributes to their physical, cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional development. The Democratic Party of Hawai'i believes that the future of our state depends on an educated and knowledgeable citizenry. This bill advances that goal by ensuring early childhood education is both accessible and affordable for all families, irrespective of their financial circumstances. It also aligns with our commitment to providing resources at every level of education, from preschool through higher education, including life-long learning. Furthermore, the repeal of the accreditation requirement for providers will encourage more child care centers to participate in the program, thereby increasing the availability of early learning services. This change will help ensure that all children, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to benefit from high-quality early education.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify in support of HB692 HD1 SD1, RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM. Should you have any questions or require further information, please contact the Democratic Party of Hawai'i at legislation@hawaiidemocrats.org.

DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII

PO Box 2041 • Honolulu, HI 96805 • www.hawaiidemocrats.org



April 1, 2025

Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means:

Chair Donovan M. Dela Cruz

Vice Sharon Y. Moriwaki

Sen. Henry J.C. Aquino

Sen. Lynn DeCoite

Sen. Brandon J.C. Elefante

Sen. Troy N. Hashimoto

Sen. Lorraine R. Inouye

Sen. Dru Mamo Kanuha

Sen. Michelle N. Kidani

Sen. Donna Mercado Kim

Sen. Chris Lee

Sen. Glenn Wakai

Sen. Kurt Fevella

Re: HB692 HD1 SD1; RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM.

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means:

The Hawai'i State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (HSCADV) addresses the social, political, and economic impacts of domestic violence on individuals, families, and communities. We are a statewide partnership of domestic violence programs and shelters.

On behalf of HSCADV and our 25 member programs statewide, I respectfully submit testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT of HB692 HD1 SD1**. This measure, as amended, would increase access to essential childcare opportunities for all families with young children by making such care and early childhood education affordable. This would ensure the children of Hawai'i have the best opportunities for a strong start to their education and provide families with life-changing support in their children's development.

As it stands, childcare is financially inaccessible to many households in the state. The POD program significantly relieves some of the financial burden imposed on these families. Annually, Hawai'i's economy loses up to \$476 million due to insufficient childcare programs and options. This bill also addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for survivors of domestic violence - childcare access. Survivors cite housing and access to childcare as the top two reasons they stay with an abusive partner, especially if the partner's family is providing childcare. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide much-needed assistance to hardworking families.

Please support this program expansion to support survivors and increase childcare services in our state. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Sincerely,
Angelina Mercado, Executive Director

To: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

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

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 692 H.D. 1, S.D. 1 – Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program

Hearing: Tuesday, April 1, 2025, at 10:01 AM, Conference Room 211



POSITION: STRONG SUPPORT

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, 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. 692 H.D. 1, S.D. 1**, which expands the eligibility criteria for the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program and removes the requirement that POD providers be accredited. This measure is essential in increasing access to early learning opportunities for families across Hawai'i, particularly those with young children who face financial barriers to participation. ***The proposed expansion of the POD program requires no additional funding, as existing funds have already been allocated within the base budget; as such, this bill requests no appropriation.***

1. **The Need for Subsidies for Families with Two-Year-Olds** – The early years of a child's life are crucial for cognitive, social, and emotional growth. However, the cost of early learning remains a significant burden for many families. Expanding POD eligibility to include two-year-olds ensures that more children receive the early learning experiences necessary for future success, reducing long-term disparities in opportunities.

Research consistently shows that early intervention and structured environments have a significant impact on a child's future achievements and overall well-being. Providing subsidies for families with younger children would enable more parents and guardians to enter or remain in the workforce, ultimately strengthening Hawai'i's economy while ensuring children receive the foundational experiences they need.

2. **Removing Accreditation Requirement to Increase Accessibility** – Currently, a limited number of group child care centers and infant-toddler centers in Hawai'i hold accreditation from organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA). While accreditation is one indicator of standards, it is costly and time-consuming

for providers. The high costs associated with accreditation, which can exceed \$4,000 for initial fees alone, often create barriers for smaller, community-based child care centers.

Since the number of child care centers in Hawai'i has been declining, removing the accreditation requirement will allow more providers to participate in the POD program, expanding options for families. Many non-accredited centers still maintain strong care and development programs, but cannot afford the financial and administrative burden of accreditation. This change will ensure families have a broader selection of preschools without limiting access due to accreditation requirements.

3. **Including Family Child Care Homes** – In addition to expanding eligibility, it is crucial that family child care homes be included as providers under the POD program. Family child care homes offer a nurturing and flexible environment that many working families rely on. These providers often serve smaller groups, allowing for individualized attention and care that supports early development. By ensuring family child care homes are eligible for participation in the POD program, the state can broaden the options available to parents and caregivers, making early learning more accessible to families in urban and rural communities. We respectfully urge the legislature to continue considering the inclusion of Family Child Care Homes in POD subsidies.

We respectfully request that the effective date be amended to July 1, 2025. This adjustment would enable more families to access the Preschool Open Doors program sooner, providing critical financial relief and addressing the high cost of child care in an expeditious manner. Additionally, after discussions with the Department of Human Services, we understand that they agree with this proposed effective date.

By passing **H.B. No. 692 H.D. 1, S.D. 1**, the Legislature can take a crucial step toward making early learning more accessible and affordable for Hawai'i's families. HCAN Speaks! respectfully urge you to support this bill, which would expand early learning opportunities and strengthen our state's commitment to the well-being and future success of our keiki.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of **H.B. No. 692 H.D. 1, S.D. 1**.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 6:35:35 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I **STRONGLY SUPPORT** HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the preschool open doors eligibility to more working families and keiki (kids). This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (ALICE) families need.

Mahalo!

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 6:36:48 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lina Marie Rosa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I **STRONGLY SUPPORT** HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the preschool open doors eligibility to more working families and keiki (kids). This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (ALICE) families need.

Mahalo!

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 6:55:54 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mariely Estoque	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I **STRONGLY SUPPORT** HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the preschool open doors eligibility to more working families and keiki (kids). This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (ALICE) families need.

Mahalo!

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 7:00:59 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cheryl Ho	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

Child care in Hawai‘i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the preschool open doors eligibility to more working families and keiki (kids). This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (ALICE) families need.

As a former preschool teacher, and grandmother of 8, I know how very important it is for community pre-schools to be available and affordable for all families. In this modern world, and especially as families struggle under the reduced provisions of government, it is absolutely crucial that young children receive early childhood education. Their parents are often so busy working to provide financially for the family, that they are exhausted and find it hard to provide effective, stimulating resources for their toddlers and young children. Without this early nurturing, confidence building attention and services, our children will be deprived of opportunities to develop to their full potential when they enter elementary school.

Mahalo nui for voting to expand eligibility for Preschool Open Doors!

Cheryl Ho, Nu‘uanu

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 7:02:04 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
J. Kehau Lucas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Strong Support of HB692 – Preschool Open Doors Expansion

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I **STRONGLY SUPPORT** HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill, which would increase access to early childhood education for Hawai‘i’s working families.

Child care in Hawai‘i is among the most expensive in the nation, creating a significant barrier for many families. According to the **Hawai‘i Early Learning Needs Assessment (2020)**, the average annual cost of preschool in the state exceeds **\$12,000 per child**, making it unaffordable for many working parents. The **United Way ALICE Report (2022)** highlights that **44% of Hawai‘i households** are classified as ALICE—Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, and Employed—meaning they struggle to cover basic necessities, including child care.

HB692 is a **cost-effective and critical solution** that requires no additional state appropriation while expanding POD eligibility to include more working families and their keiki. Research from the **National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER)** confirms that access to high-quality preschool programs improves children's cognitive and social-emotional development, setting the foundation for long-term academic success and economic mobility. Moreover, increasing child care access allows parents to remain in the workforce, strengthening Hawai‘i’s economy.

By expanding eligibility for the POD program, we take a necessary step toward ensuring that all keiki—regardless of their family's financial status—have access to early learning opportunities. I urge you to support this bill to invest in Hawai‘i’s future.

Aloha ‘Āina,

J. Kēhau Lucas

Wailuku, Maui

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 7:07:15 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Silvia Sharrar	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I **STRONGLY SUPPORT** HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the preschool open doors eligibility to more working families and keiki (kids). This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (ALICE) families need.

Mahalo!

Silvia Sharrar

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 7:17:20 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

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

Comments:

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB692 HD1 SD1

TO: Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee of Ways and Means,

RE: SUPPORT FOR HB692 HD1 SD1 - RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM

My name is Teri Kia Savaiinaea, and I am writing to express my **strong support** for HB692 HD1 SD1, which expands the eligibility criteria for the Preschool Open Doors (POD) Program and removes the requirement that POD providers be accredited.

As a community member/parent/educator/advocate, I have seen firsthand how critical access to early childhood education is for our keiki, especially in underserved communities like those on the Leeward Coast. Expanding the eligibility criteria for the Preschool Open Doors Program will help ensure more families can benefit from quality early learning opportunities. This is especially important for working families who may not meet the previous criteria but are still in need of support to afford preschool services.

I can personally attest to the importance of programs like Open Doors, as my family once relied on such assistance to afford childcare when my children were young. Both my husband and I worked full-time, and programs like this made it possible for us to ensure our children had access to safe, quality early learning opportunities. Without programs like Open Doors, many families in similar situations will struggle to afford childcare, potentially forcing parents to make difficult decisions about their employment or leave their children in less-than-ideal care environments. For working families, especially those in lower-income communities, programs like this are a lifeline that enables parents to provide for their children while ensuring they receive proper care and education.

The requirement for POD providers to be accredited has unintentionally limited the number of eligible providers, reducing options for families in rural and underserved areas. Removing this requirement will increase the availability of preschools that can participate in the program, ensuring greater access for families who may otherwise struggle to find affordable early learning opportunities.

Quality early education programs are vital to preparing our keiki for future success. By expanding eligibility and removing the accreditation barrier, HB692 HD1 SD1 will better serve families throughout Hawai‘i, especially in communities like Wai‘anae, where resources are often limited.

I urge the Committee to **pass** HB692 HD1 SD1 to improve access to early learning opportunities for all of Hawai‘i's children. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this important measure.

Respectfully submitted,

Teri Kia Savaiinaea

Wai'anae resident, District 45

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 7:34:36 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noelle Lindenmann	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I **STRONGLY SUPPORT** HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the preschool open doors eligibility to more working families and keiki (kids). This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (ALICE) families need.

Mahalo!

Noelle Lindenmann, Kailua-Kona

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 7:35:01 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I **STRONGLY SUPPORT** HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the preschool open doors eligibility to more working families and keiki (kids). This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (ALICE) families need.

Mahalo!

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 7:40:07 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shay Chan Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I **STRONGLY SUPPORT** HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the preschool open doors eligibility to more working families and keiki (kids). This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (ALICE) families need.

Mahalo!

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 7:42:15 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

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

Comments:

Hello Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I **STRONGLY SUPPORT** HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai‘i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the preschool open doors eligibility to more working families and keiki (kids). This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (ALICE) families need.

me ke aloha ‘āina,

Nanea Lo

Mō‘ili‘ili, HI 96826

Sierra Club of Hawai‘i Executive Committee Member

Board Member, Hawai‘i Workers Center

Kanaka Maoli/Lineal Descendant of the Hawaiian Kingdom

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 8:13:57 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kanani Higbee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a parent leader and Maui 'oiwi.

I STRONGLY SUPPORT HB 692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) Expansion Bill.

I feel that it is extremely necessary for families to receive financial help on a sliding scale for preschool. It's extremely hard for a single parent to afford preschool without financial help. When I was a single parent of a preschooler on Maui, all families lost access to financial help for childcare during the recession. My daughter's preschool became unaffordable at 50% of my monthly income. I had to choose between us living in our car to save on rent and risking both my kids being taken by child protective services or putting my child in foster care. I was able to find family that was thousands of miles away who would keep her for 5 months until she was old enough to get into subsidized summer day camp and then kindergarten. But do you see the struggles that Hawaii families face when they lack a sliding scale for preschool? It was very hard to have to send my daughter away because I couldn't afford her childcare.

As long as housing in Hawaii costs so much, Hawaii will continue to have a working class that struggles to make ends meet. It's unfortunate that for people to have children, they cannot afford to be with their kids because they must work themselves so much to make ends meet. We need to help out these families by helping them with preschool costs so children can develop properly at the very least.

Preschool helps children tremendously. I have worked with children at Maui Summer Pals who have not gone to preschool as well as those who have. I would say that those children who attended preschool are much more prepared for a learning environment because of the skills they learn in preschool. They learn skills such as lining up in a line to go to the cafeteria, fine motor skills like opening a crayon box, how to speak more effectively to their teacher and peers, etc. It helps the kindergarten teacher tremendously when children have these skills because she doesn't need to take the time to teach it to them. They already have a strong foundation of routine, large and fine motor skills, problem solving skills, etc. When a child hasn't gone to preschool, they come with very little skills. It's a lot more challenging and exhausting to teach these kids so they

will not be up to learning as much their first year because they need to learn the foundation. Also, it just helps set the foundation for their whole life when they are in preschool. School is so much fun for them. They love school. They aren't bored at home playing video games on the iPad. They are using real skills and challenging their young minds and enjoying the real world.

Preschool also gives the parents and caregivers a much needed break if they need that. Sometimes being at work is a break from their kid and they wouldn't be able to get that if they had to stay home with their child. It just gives families more flexibility. Families have their own unique situations in which they can make the best decision for their family if they have the help of a sliding scale for preschool costs. The kupuna may need to work on their own health and can't always watch the children. This was the case with my mom because her doctor told her the problem with her health was that she was watching kids too much, but we needed her to do it because preschool was so unaffordable.

I thank you for thinking of the children. It's important to set them up for a strong foundation because the more support they and their family get, the more they will thrive together. I love to see Hawaii families thriving. It breaks my heart to see families not be able to thrive because they don't receive the support they need. Children and families can do so much better in life if they only get the support they need. I don't want to see our local and Hawaiian families have to pack up their children and move to the mainland because they can't afford to take care of their kids here in Hawaii. I know how that is because it happened to me as a young Hawaiian girl in which my mom couldn't afford to raise me and my brothers and so we had to go on a plane and leave our home where we were born and our families lived here for thousands of years. We had to leave our culture and live in a place that wasn't where our roots were planted. We had to leave our mom because she couldn't raise her children. I see this a lot with families where they leave Hawaii because there is better support for them in the mainland. It should not be like that. We should support our families and not lose our local families and Hawaiian families and working class families because they can't make ends meet here.

With Aloha,

Kanani Higbee

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 8:16:47 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I STRONGLY SUPPORT HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the preschool open doors eligibility to more working families and keiki (kids). This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (ALICE) families need.

Mahalo!

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 8:29:59 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I **STRONGLY SUPPORT** HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the preschool open doors eligibility to more working families and keiki (kids). This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (ALICE) families need.

Mahalo!

Andrew Isoda

Lahaina, Mau'i

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 10:56:03 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I STRONGLY SUPPORT HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the POD eligibility to more working families and keiki. This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (ALICE) families need!

Mahalo!

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 12:59:53 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erica Yamauchi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair, Vice Chair and Committee Members:

Child care in Hawai‘i is increasingly expensive and very difficult to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the preschool open doors eligibility to more working families and keiki. This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our working families need.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify.

Erica Yamauchi, Kaimukī/Wilhelmina Rise

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 5:13:08 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I **STRONGLY SUPPORT** HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the preschool open doors eligibility to more working families and keiki (kids). This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (ALICE) families need.

Mahalo!

Kristy

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 7:11:00 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jordan Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

Mahalo for hearing this important bill. I want to express my strong support for HB692, which requires no appropriation while helping to increase access to early learning opportunities to Hawai'i's children and families. The POD program demonstrates the success of cost-efficient strategy and meeting an ongoing need through supplemental funding. This public-private partnership growth benefits working families and improves preschool resources. Families need access to affordable, high quality child care.

Please vote YES on HB692!

Sincerely,

Jordan Smith

Senate District: 13

House District: 26

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 8:13:27 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diana Voncina	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I STRONGLY SUPPORT HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the preschool open doors eligibility to more working families and keiki (kids). This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (ALICE) families need.

Mahalo!

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 8:36:45 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kimberly Dark	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I support this measure because child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the preschool open doors eligibility to more working families and keiki (kids). This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (ALICE) families need.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 8:44:19 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

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

Comments:

To the Members of the Committee,

I support this important legislation to increase access to childcare and early education.

With aloha,

Dave Ball, Waialae-Kahala

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 9:34:54 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sandy Ma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB692 because child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the preschool open doors eligibility to more working families and keiki. This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (ALICE) families need.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 9:42:58 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ka'ale'a Kyrstin Hanawahine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I STRONGLY SUPPORT HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the preschool open doors eligibility to more working families and keiki (kids). This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (ALICE) families need.

Mahalo!

Ka'ale'a Hanawahine

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 10:52:38 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Barbara Bumatay Picayo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure because child care in Hawai'i is SOOOO expensive and even harder to find. This island is becoming impossible for young families! I get that the culture is to use our parents to watch the little ones, but that isn't as commonly available as it used to be.

HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the preschool open doors eligibility to more working families and keiki (kids). This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (ALICE) families need.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 11:15:59 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tamara Swift	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

“I support this measure because child care in Hawai‘i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the preschool open doors eligibility to more working families and keiki (kids). This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (ALICE) families need.”

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 12:28:52 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ka`iulani Galon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am in SUPPORT of this bill. Finding childcare is a nightmare for many parents. Not so long ago, I was a mother of two children under 5 and needed to work full time alongside my husband who also worked full time. Finding a childcare resource that started as early as we needed and ended later so we did not have to cut our workdays short, was a godsend. Then, its affording it. If we didn't have KS preschool financial support, one of us would have had to rethink being a part of the workforce.

POD expansion would 100% mitigate this issue I experienced alongside many of the mothers I knew. In addition, what we found was that the certified spaces were actually much less quality and not spaces we wanted to send our children. The childcare we found was high quality and not accredited. Her thinking was that she went above and beyond and didn't need the State to limit her efforts or qualify her. I suggested many mothers go to my quality childcare, but since she couldn't accept POD, they were forced to go on a waiting list or succumb to an accredited childcare where they didn't feel their child was safe.

As a mother and community member steeped in early childhood efforts, I implore you to pass this bill. It is necessary on a level that not only encourages our workforce, but provides solace to our local families who must go to work but want their children safe. They should be allowed to choose their childcare based on their own criteria and afford it in the high cost of living in Hawaii. If we are trying to keep our local families on Hawaii soil, pass this bill to support them!

Mahalo,

Ka`iulani Galon

Mother, wife, community member, aunty, sister, friend

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 12:31:33 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support this measure because child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the preschool open doors eligibility to more working families and keiki (kids). This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (ALICE) families need

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 3:40:16 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sarah Osofsky	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Sarah Osofsky
Diamond Head, Honolulu

Dear Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee:

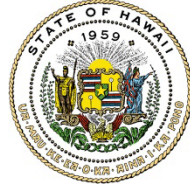
I am contacting you regarding my support for H.B. 692 RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM. My name is Sarah Osofsky, I am a single mom of two kids, and a Master of Social Work (MSW) student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I am writing in strong support of H.B. 692, which seeks to expand the eligibility criteria for the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program to increase access to affordable early childhood care for families across Hawai'i.

As both a former recipient of the Preschool Open Doors program and a parent who relied on this support to pursue my education, I can personally attest to the profound impact this program has had on my family. Without the assistance provided by POD, my children would not have been able to attend preschool, and I would not have been able to return to college to further my education.

When my children were young, I was determined to return to school and build a better future for my family. However, the cost of preschool was beyond my financial means. The Preschool Open Doors program provided the critical support that allowed my children to attend preschool, where they thrived socially and academically. Because of this support, I was able to pursue my education, which has now led me to pursue my Master's in Social Work to continue advocating for families like mine and now have the opportunity to give back to my community as a social worker.

I strongly urge the committee to pass H.B. 692 to expand the eligibility criteria for the Preschool Open Doors program. By doing so, you will empower more families to provide their children with high-quality early education while creating opportunities for parents.

Thank you,
Sarah Osofsky



SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
Ke Ke'ena O Ka Hope Kia'āina

The 33rd Legislature, State of Hawaii
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
April 1, 2025

Testimony on
H.B. 692 – RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of H.B. 692, H.D. 1, S.D. 1 with a proposed amendment to change the effective date from July 1, 2026 to July 1, 2025.** H.B. 692, H.D. 1, S.D. 1 expands the preschool open door program's eligibility criteria to allow more keiki and their ohana to be served by this program.

Access to preschool is a social justice issue in our state and we know that children who attend high-quality preschool are much better prepared for success. H.B. 692, H.D. 1, S.D. 1 aligns with our *Ready Keiki* initiative, the Administration's multi-faceted plan to expand access to high-quality childcare and preschool. Our focus is on ensuring that our keiki are ready for Kindergarten and creating economic stability for families returning to the workforce. The success of *Ready Keiki* depends on a multi-pronged approach which includes building and refurbishing classrooms, creating teaching pathways for educators, and expanding the Preschool Open Doors program for local families. The amendments proposed in H.B. 692, H.D. 1, S.D. 1 are critical to ensuring we have enough classrooms for all keiki.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of H.B. 692, H.D. 1, S.D. 1 with a proposed amendment.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 8:28:39 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kayla Marie	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this measure

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 8:43:32 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan Stayton	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.

Thanks for your consideration,

Susan, Lawai, Kauai

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 9:23:32 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Chang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a community member, I support the expansion of the Preschool Open Doors program. Helping more families afford preschool is good for children, parents, and the whole state. Early learning helps young children grow, learn, and get ready for kindergarten.

It also helps parents keep working and supporting their families. Without help, many families cannot afford quality child care. This program is a smart way to use public funds because it helps children now and saves money in the future. Please support this bill so more families in Hawai'i can get the care and education they need.

Thank you for the chance to share my support.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 9:26:41 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

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

Comments:

Thank you for hearing HB692. Please pass this measure to make child care accessible and affordable. Some of the young people are leaving Hawai'i because they cannot afford to raise children in Hawai'i.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 9:36:27 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert A Marks	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair and members - this is an important measure to protect our keiki. p

ease pass it.

respectfully submitted,

Robert Marks

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 10:09:06 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sheila Gallien	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare. Removing accreditation requirements will allow wins on 2 fronts: more providers able to make an income, and more families able to afford childcare. Things are going to get very rough in Hawaii and all over in the coming months and years. We need to make sure people can work and keep a roof over their head, and that keiki are provided for. Homelessness is a much more terrifying outcome for children than unaccredited childcare homes, which can be regulated in simpler way. Please do EVERYTHING possible to pass this bill and expand childcare. Mahalo!

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 10:34:53 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Donna Blakemore	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

"Please fund \$3 million in family planning to ensure low-income and underinsured patients can continue accessing reproductive healthcare. Please do NOT fund \$30 million for planning the proposed new jail to replace OCCC, \$10 million for a 10-year Department of Corrections Statewide Master Plan. We should be funding healthcare, public education, free meals, and affordable housing, not a new prison.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 11:09:57 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carmen Liberatore	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 11:17:49 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gail Morrison	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 12:07:35 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Julie and Thomas Pasquale	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 12:46:46 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
KATRINA ZAVALNEY	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 12:55:39 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 1:34:22 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support this bill and I hope you do as well

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 1:51:43 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Helen Cox	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare. This is a foundational need for Hawaii's families.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 2:34:35 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Calvin Black	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 2:39:14 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lorna Farnum	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill!

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 3:03:02 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Witeck	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My wife Lucy and I strongly support this bill as a way of offering some affordable childcare options for working parents. We both have taught in public schools. Unused space in schools could be used to provide childcare for keiki. All options need to be explored & provided to help alleviate the childcare crunch and make it more affordable.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 3:47:08 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michele Golojuch	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Every dollar spent on quality Early Childhood Education is returned back to our community.
Open Doors needs to continue and is a life line to our families here in Hawaii!

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 4:40:56 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glorianne Garza	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 4:50:34 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Terri Yoshinaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 5:08:57 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

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

Comments:

Please support this bill. Thank you!

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 5:46:14 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
D. Dianne Bowen-Coleman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 6:02:53 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Monica Coutoumanos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This measure benefits all of Hawaii
pass this measure constitutes a failure to all of Hawaii

Failing to

Benefits to Business and Economy

- Hawai'i loses up to \$476 million per year due to a lack of child care according to First Five Years Fund, 2024 Fact Sheet,
- Employers rely on workers to build a stable business. Without child care the workforce is compromised and businesses suffer..
- Child care and preschools are essential infrastructure that allow businesses an economy to thrive.

Benefits to Families

- Child Care is the second largest expense after housing, expanding eligibility will allow more families to afford child care.
- Infant toddler care is expensive. Allowing families to receive funding for two year olds will relieve significant financial burden and allow more families to maintain gainful employment.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 6:20:06 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Leigh Knittle	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 7:42:04 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alice Sherer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill for preschool open door program, it will be so helpful to our families in rural, low income communities of Hawaii. Thank you for your consideration.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 8:17:30 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James E Raymond	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 7:22:25 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Kuzmier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I believe expanding the Preschool Open Doors Program to include two-year-olds is a good idea and will help many people in our state financially, especially at this time. Mahalo.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 9:55:20 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jenny Welham	Testifying for Island Pediatrics of Honolulu	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 692, which seeks to expand the eligibility criteria for the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program and increase access to child care opportunities for families in Hawaii.

As a pediatrician who has dedicated my career to supporting children's health and development, I respectfully urge the committee to vote in favor of House Bill 692, that helps address the child care crisis facing Hawaii's families.

This legislation is critical because it represents an investment rather than simply an expenditure. For every dollar invested in quality early childhood education, our community saves ~ \$7 in future costs related to remedial education, healthcare, and social services. By enabling more parents to work while their children receive quality care, we strengthen Hawaii's economy and tax base.

In my practice at Island Pediatrics of Honolulu, I regularly see the impact of early childhood education on development. Children who attend quality preschool programs demonstrate improved social skills, enhanced cognitive development, better language acquisition, and greater school readiness. Unfortunately, I also witness the struggles of many families who cannot afford the high cost of preschool in Hawaii and have to choose between working, sending their children to unlicensed childcare, or moving out of state.

The evidence supporting expanded access to early childhood education is overwhelming:

- Research from the Harvard Center on the Developing Child demonstrates that quality early childhood education programs deliver a 13% return on investment through improved outcomes in education, health, and economic productivity
- Children who attend preschool are 24% more likely to attend a four-year college and earn 23% higher wages as adults
- Hawaii has one of the highest costs of living in the nation, yet our eligibility thresholds for programs like POD have not kept pace with these economic realities
- The gap between families who qualify for assistance and those who can comfortably afford preschool continues to widen, leaving many working families without options

If we fail to expand the POD program, thousands of Hawaii's children will continue to miss critical early educational opportunities widening achievement gaps that start in Kindergarten and

persist throughout K-12 education. This leads to increased costs for remedial services in our school system and students failing to graduate. The impact on families who have to choose between working and preschool has already started to have long-term economic impacts on our workforce and economy.

The expansion of the Preschool Open Doors program will support our keiki, strengthen Hawaii's families, and create lasting positive impacts for the future of our entire community.

Mahalo,

Dr. Jenny Welham

Pediatrician and Owner Island Pediatrics of Honolulu

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 9:59:20 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eve Furchgott	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The more we can make pre-school available to HI keiki the better! Please support.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 10:02:30 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Donna Mae Buscemi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Good Day All,

I am writing in support of this bill, child care is far too expensive and removing the criteria for certification will help be allowing more people to service the keiki here in our home. This will bring the cost of child care down. We should be obligated to do everything we can to support the next generations.

Sincerely,

Donna Buscemi

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 10:02:40 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
G L Hutchinson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

“I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare

To: Hawaii State Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Hearing Date/Time: Tuesday April 1, 2025, 10:01am

Place: Hawaii State Capitol, CR211 & Videoconference

Re: Judith Ann Armstrong supports HB692 SD1 RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM

Dear Chair Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki and members of the Committee on Ways and Means

I, Judith Ann Armstrong, support HB692, which will increase access to affordable childcare for Hawai'i's families.

I strongly urge the committee to pass HB692.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Judith Ann Armstrong

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 11:48:36 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Reed Bertollette	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 12:26:49 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
MANDY CHUN	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare

Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Hearing
Tues. April 1, 2025 at 10:01 a.m.

Conference Room 225 & Videoconference
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

RE: HB692 - RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM.

IN SUPPORT

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H.B. No. 692, which seeks to expand the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program and to reduce significant barriers to accessing child care for families across our state while laying a strong foundation for the future success of our youngest keiki.

While my children are now grown, in graduate school and college on the mainland, I remember how hard it was to obtain and afford preschool placement for them. I remember having to camp out overnight on New Year's Day to get a space in line on the first business day of the year to place my daughter for fall school year preschool admission. The crazy things parents have to do to secure child care they can, hopefully, afford. When my youngest was a toddler, I placed her in an in-home child care in my neighborhood that I found by word of mouth. I was lucky that our family owned our own business, so I had the flexibility to work around my child care needs and still afford housing. That was back in the early 2000's when housing was not crazy like it is now, especially on Maui. Not everyone is as fortunate today as I was when my kids were young. Families are having to forego having children or move to the mainland. Hawai'i's families deserve more from our communities, and that is why I am submitting this testimony in support of HB692.

By expanding POD eligibility to include children in the three years prior to kindergarten, this bill acknowledges the importance of early childhood development during these early childhood years and addresses a substantial gap in child care support for families with younger children. The bill will also reduce the significant financial burden many families face regarding child care expenses. Expanding the program to include children in the three years prior to kindergarten will alleviate financial pressures, enabling people to start or grow families, and to remain in the workforce in Hawai'i rather than being forced to move to the mainland.

There is a shortage of childcare options for younger children. Removing the accreditation requirement in this bill broadens family access to early learning opportunities like the one my youngest daughter participated in. By removing barriers, this bill will open doors for more families to access affordable and reliable care and better economic opportunities.

I humbly request the members of the Committee to support this measure.

Christine L. Andrews, JD
Wailuku, Maui

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 2:59:38 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tanya Dean	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha and thank you for supporting this measure that will improve access to childcare in Hawai'i. I am in full support of the expansion of childcare as outlined in this legislation because our family experienced the hardship of trying and failing to find adequate daycare when our children were young and, as a community college professor, I see students every semester who cannot find, afford, or rely on childcare providers for their young children.

This disproportionately affects the young mothers who (remarkably) find their way to community college when their keiki 2-3 year olds. These motivated, capable, determined women are inspired to return to school for their A.A. degrees but often cannot persist with their studies because of the lack of childcare support. It is heartbreaking to see them struggle. We need these young parents to become the teachers, nurses, scholars, social workers, etc. that they dream of being. However, we leave them unsupported. Hawai'i continues to lose out when parents cannot advance in their higher education and careers because of the lack of childcare.

Mahalo for funding this measure!

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 3:21:59 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
tia pearson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This bill would expand the eligibility criteria for POD and increase access to child care opportunities for families. My kids & grandkids benefitted tremendously from access to early educational opportunities.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 3:32:26 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Beth Anderson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I strongly support HB692 and hope you do too because Hawaii family's desperately need affordable child care. Child care is the second largest expense after housing for families. Prices are increasing on almost everything making every added expense for families tremendous financial burden. Opening and expanding child care eligibilty to include children ages 2-5 years old is critically needed.

Expanding eligibility, as Bill 692 does, will allow more families to afford child care and consequently, will allow more families to maintain gainful employment. Keeping people employed will benefit our state's economy and benefit businesses who need stable employees. Child care is essential infrastructure for a healthy economy and community.

According to the First Five Years Fact Sheet, Hawaii loses up to \$476 million per year due to lack of child care. Not enough acces is hurting our economy, our families, and our keiki.

The bill recognizes the importance of early childhood development during thes formative years. It will give keiki a good start laying a strong foundation that is necessary for our keiki to grow and excel. This vitally important for the future of our state.

Please support and pass this measre.

Mahalo,

Beth Anderson

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 3:48:24 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dorothy Zipp Malinski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We need more accessible childcare for all! I support this bill!

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 4:24:00 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcia A Armstrong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure because child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the preschool open doors eligibility to more working families and keiki (kids). This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (ALICE) families need.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 5:42:27 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Karen A Valasek	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare. It is especially important now to support our families who are our future.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 7:12:36 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelly Ciurej	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.

March 30, 2025

To: Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Morawaki, Vice Chair
and members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 692 HD 1 SD 1– Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program

Aloha,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H.B. No. 692 HD 1 SD 1.

My name is Dr. Terry Lock, Director of the Hawai'i Early Childhood Educator Excellence and Equity (ECE³) Project at the University of Hawai'i Mānoa College of Education.

HB 692 HD 1 SD1 seeks to expand the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program to more young children of Hawaii's families and reduce one of the barriers for families to access POD programs. This measure lays a strong foundation for the future success of more of our youngest keiki.

With HB 692 HD 1 SD 1, the POD program, subject to availability of funds, will continuously serve young children within their three years prior to kindergarten. The POD program will lay a strong foundation for young children, from 2-5 years old; alleviate financial pressures off of families so they will remain in the workforce and achieve greater economic stability.

Furthermore, I am in support of ensuring that the program expands to licensed group child care centers and licensed group child care homes under section 346-161, and exempt center-based providers that meet the requirements of section 346—152.5.

Participation in the program shall not require group child care centers or group child care homes to be accredited by an approved accredited body. [(c)-] (e) Enrollment in the program shall be voluntary. A parent or guardian of a child enrolled in the program [shall] share in the costs of the program through a copayment according to a sliding fee scale that is based on need pursuant to rules adopted by the department.

At the same time, I believe that all young children and their families deserve high quality early learning programs that are accredited using industry standards of quality, therefore, I appreciate the inclusion of SECTION 3. Section 346-188, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by amending subsection (b) to read as follows:

"(b) The department shall develop standards, policies, and procedures for the administration of the child care accreditation program, which shall, at minimum:

(1) Provide upfront grant funding to cover the cost of accreditation by one of the national early learning accrediting organizations, as approved by the director;

(2) Provide grant funding for technical assistance to assist an eligible child care provider through the accreditation process; and

(3) Be available to licensed group child care centers, licensed group child care homes, licensed infant and toddler child care centers, and registered family child care homes."

Again, mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of HB 692 HD 1 SD1.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 9:19:25 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Justin Hughey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 10:05:03 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hope Bennett	Testifying for Honolulu County Committee on the Status of Women	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Honolulu County Committee on the Status of Women strongly supports HB692. This Committee's responsibilities include addressing women's issues in the County and advancing the status of women "through education, awareness, development, and training."

Access to affordable, high quality childcare is essential in supporting the needs of our local families. Far too many women in our state find themselves in the impossible situation of having to care for their young children and simultaneously provide economic support for their families. They deserve more options. By expanding the Preschool Open Doors Program (POD), HB692 aids in both preparing keiki for a successful educational journey and allowing parents to maintain their jobs and contribute to their family's economic stability.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of HB692.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 6:24:49 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sarah Burns	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing to express my support for this measure to increase access to affordable childcare. This would benefit families at a time where it is incredibly difficult to survive in our community. I know many of my peers struggle with the decision to return to work or to forgo a salary and stay home, as daycare costs often rival the cost of one's salary. That is simply not a condition with which we can have healthy communities and families.

Some points that exemplify my support are listed below:

- Child Care is the second largest expense after housing, expanding eligibility will allow more families to afford child care.
- Infant toddler care is expensive. Allowing families to receive funding for two year olds will relieve significant financial burden and allow more families to maintain gainful employment.
- Greater access will allow more children to get a strong start.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,

Sarah Burns

96816

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 7:10:57 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lily N	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 7:57:21 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jermy Domingo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I am writing in **strong support of HB692**, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

As a mother of a child who greatly benefits from the special education preschool program at our local public school, I have seen firsthand how critical preschool is in supporting the developmental, emotional, and social needs of our keiki. Every child deserves this strong start—not just those whose families can afford it.

Preschool lays the foundation for future learning and success, and it should not be a privilege reserved for the wealthy. **Hawai‘i’s ALICE families**—those who are Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, and Employed—often fall through the cracks. These hardworking families earn too much to qualify for many public assistance programs, but not enough to afford the high cost of child care in our state. Expanding access to POD will help close this gap.

HB692 is a cost-effective way to make preschool more accessible to the families who need it most, without requiring an additional appropriation. It supports working parents and helps ensure that all children, regardless of income, have the opportunity to thrive.

Please support HB692 and stand with Hawai‘i’s families and keiki.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit a written testimony,

Jermy Domingo

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 8:43:15 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I **STRONGLY SUPPORT** HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the preschool open doors eligibility to more working families and keiki (kids). This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (ALICE) families need.

Mahalo!

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 10:39:11 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elba Reyes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Children need a start this program would help parents & their children, pls 🙏 vote yes don't leave our children behind.

Mahalo

Elba Reyes

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 11:22:19 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sara Tomonari	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HB2549 needs a hearing as this bill will develop the early learning workforce through an apprenticeship program. We desperately need more early learning providers so that all keiki can have opportunities to learn!

In strong support for **HB692**

March 31, 2024

Senator Donovan M. Delacruz, Chair Senate Ways and Means Committee,
Senator, Sharon Y. Moriwaki, V-chair Senate Ways and Means Committee

Re: **HB692** RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM.

Expands the Preschool Open Doors Program's eligibility criteria. Repeals the requirement that Preschool Open Doors Program providers be accredited.

Dear Chair Delacruz, V-Chair Moriwaki and Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee

My name is Gail Breakey, I am testifying **in strong support of HB692**, which expands the Preschool Open Doors Program's eligibility criteria and repeals the requirement that Preschool Open Doors Program providers be accredited. Hawaii's families are in desperate need of childcare considering that most families must work at least two jobs to survive.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation and for allowing me to testify in support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gail Breakey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gail Breakey, RN, MPH

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 11:55:11 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha All,

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.

Mahalo for all you do,

Ann V Saffery

Honolulu, HI

LATE

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 2:08:48 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and committee members,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H.B. No. 692. This bill does not require an appropriation. HB 692 will expand access to the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program reducing significant barriers to accessing child care for families across our state. This bill will help more families to enter and remain in the workforce and support Hawai'i's economy.

The bill helps to reduce the significant financial burden many families face regarding child care expenses. The cost of child care is one of the largest expenses for many families on O'ahu and across the state, causing many families to leave the workforce or choose between childcare and other essential needs. It is estimated that Hawaii loses upwards of \$476 million dollars per year due to the impacts of a lack of childcare.

Many rural areas in Hawaii are considered child care deserts, where there is little or no access to childcare, this is especially true for families with younger children. Expanding the program to include 2-year-olds and utilizing family child care homes will significantly expand access to childcare and help to alleviate financial pressures for families with young children, helping families across the state achieve greater economic stability.

We believe accreditation is a valuable marker of quality. However, requiring accreditation reduces the number of available seats due to the lower ratios required for accreditation than what is required by the Department of Human Services. The Department of Human Services recently established an accreditation program to support the pursuit of accreditation and other quality improvement measures. Removing the accreditation requirement in this bill broadens family access to early learning opportunities while allowing providers to enhance quality through other complementary programs.

The POD program provides a cost-efficient strategy while still meeting the need through supplemental funding. It's a public-private partnership that grows government's reach in a cost-effective and meaningful way. By removing barriers, this bill will open doors for more families to access affordable and reliable care and better economic opportunities.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this measure.

Mahalo,

Raya

LATE

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 3:09:05 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jaimie Inamine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I **STRONGLY SUPPORT** HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 requires no appropriation and expands the preschool open doors eligibility to more working families and keiki (kids). This proposed cost-effective expansion will increase child care access, which our asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (ALICE) families need.

Mahalo!

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 6:03:39 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
CRISTINE NATIVIDAD	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please consider HB692- Adequate childcare is a big problem in Hawaii. People need this resource in order to help children with early development and is necessary for working parents. I am a single mother with an 18 year old son. When my son was a young boy, I relied on preschool subsidies to help me pay for the cost of childcare. With my much needed benefit, I was able to secure employment and attend college. Now I have a degree in business and I am self sustainalbe. I am truely greatful for the all the social programs which were offered me, They helped shape me into the person I am today, and gave my family the opportunity to thrive in Hawaii's economy. Please consider bill HB692.

HB-692-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 7:24:30 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcela Montalto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This bill is important for families and keiki