

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

February 2, 2025

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

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

The ELB supports HB 692, 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.

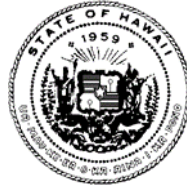
While EOEL classrooms are expanding to more schools, these free school-day programs may have a negative impact on the local community based provider(s), who must charge tuition from families to stay open. POD subsidies to families support families who need care and education for their child beyond the 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.

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.

/s/Elaine Yamashita  
Chair, Early Learning Board  
[elb@eoel.hawaii.gov](mailto: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 LAWE LAWE KANAKA  
Office of the Director  
P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

February 2, 2025

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

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

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

Hearing: February 4, 2025, 9:30 a.m.  
Conference Room 329, State Capitol & Video Conference

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the bill's intent, provides comments, and requests amendments.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this bill is to expand the Preschool Open Doors Program's eligibility criteria. Repeals the requirements that Preschool Open Door program providers be accredited.

The Department recommends maintaining group child care centers as the type of care for the Preschool Open Doors program. The Preschool Open Doors program is an investment in early learning that provides children the opportunity to experience a structured preschool environment so that they are better prepared for kindergarten. Group child care centers offer the most comparable experience for the child prior to their kindergarten entry as care services are provided in a classroom setting led by a qualified teacher, and enrollment consists of children of the same age. If this measure is passed to add accredited family child care, the Department recommends amending the term "accredited family child care center" on page 4, line 1, to "accredited family child care home," which exists in current law.

The department respectfully recommends the following amendments:

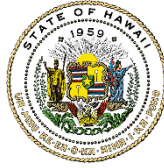
- Section 2, paragraph (b), on page 2, lines 11 and 12, to read: Subject to the availability of funds, the program shall continuously serve [~~three-and-four-year-old~~] children who are in the [~~two~~] three years prior to kindergarten entry until they enter kindergarten pursuant to section 302A-411...
- Section 2, paragraph (c) (3), on page 4, lines 1 to 3, deleting the entire paragraph,
- Section 2, paragraph (c) (4), on page 4, lines 4 to 5, to read: An exempt center-based provider that meets the requirements of section 346-152.5.
- Section 2, paragraph (d), on page 4, line 6, to read: Participation in the program shall not require group child care centers or group child care homes to be accredited by an approved accredited body.
- Section 2, paragraph (e), on page 4, line 10, to read: Enrollment in the program shall be voluntary. A parent or guardian of a child enrolled in the program [~~shall~~] may 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.

Regarding accreditation addressed in Section 4, currently, there are 144 out of 455 group child care centers and infant and toddler centers that are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA). Though the Department recognizes and supports the added quality that accreditation adds to the care a child receives at a group child care center, the Department also recognizes that accreditation is a costly and lengthy endeavor for group child care center operators. As the number of child care centers has been declining since prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, at this time, the mandatory accreditation requirement for the centers for families to receive Preschool Open Doors subsidies will likely have a negative impact on the available inventory of preschools that families could select from.

The average cost for the initial fees to obtain NAEYC accredited status is \$4,155, and fees for initial NECPA accredited status are \$2,331. These costs may vary depending on the licensed capacity of the group child care center. These fees are the accrediting organization's fees for processing and assessing an applying group child care center's request for accreditation.

Notably, these accreditation fees do not include additional costs that a group child care center may incur to meet the accrediting organization's standards. Once accredited, both organizations have annual fees to maintain their accreditation.

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'āina  
2759 South King Street, Room C6  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

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

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

SUBJECT: Testimony on H.B. No. 692 – RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM.

Committee: HSH  
Date: Tuesday, February 4, 2025  
Time: 9:30 a.m.  
Location: Conference Room 329

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

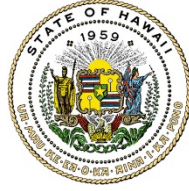
The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) offers the following comments in support of H.B. No. 692 and defers to the Department of Human Services (DHS) regarding implementation and funding.

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 extending the program to cover a broader range of community-based providers licensed by DHS.

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 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. Expanding access to these opportunities will yield long-term benefits for children, families, and the broader community.

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.



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

The 33<sup>rd</sup> Legislature, State of Hawaii  
House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness  
February 4, 2025

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

Chair Marten, Vice-Chair Olds, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of H.B. 692** which 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 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 are critical to ensuring we have enough affordable classrooms for all keiki.

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

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RICK BLANGIARDI  
MAYOR  
MEIA



ANTON C. KRUCKY  
DIRECTOR  
PO'O

AEDWARD LOS BANOS  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
HOPE PO'O

January 31, 2025

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

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

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

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

As it stands, the POD program 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.

Child care expenses are one of the largest financial burdens for families on O'ahu, with some households paying upwards of 48 percent of their income on child care tuition. Expanding the POD program to include 2-year-olds will help alleviate these pressures, allowing families to remain in the workforce, achieve greater economic stability, and provide a strong foundation for their keiki to grow and thrive.

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. Since the POD program is vital in expanding family access to early learning opportunities, we support removing the accreditation requirement in this bill. Other complementary programs are already in place to support quality improvement efforts, ensuring that expanded access is not done at the expense of quality.



The Honorable Lisa Marten, Chair  
The Honorable Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair  
And Members of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness  
January 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 submit testimony in support of this measure.

Sincerely,

Anton C. Krucky  
Director Designate

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 9:02:31 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Yvette Kay	Indivisible Hawai'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

Aloha Chair and committee members,

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 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.

As it stands, the POD program 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. The bill will also 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, often exceeding housing or other essential needs. Expanding the program to include 2-year-olds will alleviate financial pressures, 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 believe accreditation is a valuable marker of quality and the Department of Human Services recently establish 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 City appreciates this balanced approach of this bill, which reflects a commitment to expanding access to early learning programs. By removing barriers, this bill will open doors for more families to access affordable and reliable care and better economic opportunities. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this measure. Please support this bill.



Hearing Date: **Tuesday, February 4, 2025, 9:30 AM, Conf. Rm 329**

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

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

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

Members of AAUW of Hawaii thank you for this opportunity to testify in **strong support of HB 692, Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program** which will:

- Expand eligibility to include children ages 2-5 years old.
- Expand eligibility to include Family Child Care Centers.
- Allow for continuous eligibility until kindergarten entry.
- Remove the accreditation mandate (but does continue to require licensure).

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.

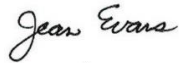
One of the major obstacles preventing mothers from securing a well-paid, stable job is finding and retaining available, affordable, quality childcare.

Also, be aware that Federal funds support large portions of Hawaii's child care programs. The new administration has promised spending cuts. Hawaii must prepare for such cuts by funding these important programs with State funds.

This measure increases 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,



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.*



To: COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS (HSH)

Hearing Date/Time: Tuesday, February 4, 2025, 9:30am

Place: Hawaii State Capitol, Room 329

Re: Testimony in **SUPPORT of HB692**

Dear Chair Lisa Marten, Vice Chair Ikaika Olds, the members of HSH Committee,.

Child Care is the second largest expense after housing for working parents and often will be the deciding factor in whether or not women can participate in the work force. Additionally, access to quality child care will provide more children with a strong developmental start and a solid foundation for their educational journey.

Please pass HB692.

Sincerely,  
Indivisible Hawai'i Working Families Team

*We're a grassroots movement of thousands of local Indivisible groups with a mission to elect progressive leaders, rebuild our democracy, and defeat the Trump agenda. In Hawai'i, we have ten groups across four islands, representing over a thousand pro-democracy citizens.*



Date: February 2, 2025

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

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

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

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

**ECAS strongly supports passage of HB692**, 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.

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.

Approximately 16% of Hawai'i's licensed, preschool center enrollment is composed of 2-year old children. By expanding POD 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. The bill will also reduce the significant financial burden many families face regarding child care expenses. 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, and reduction to the parent co-payment share in the costs of the program, will all alleviate financial pressures, 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.

Finally, expansion of the child care settings in which POD assistance may be applied, will be instrumental to increasing children's access to early learning opportunities. Inclusion of family child care homes, and 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 family choice and access posed by an accreditation *requirement*.

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

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 7:13:48 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carol Wear	PATCH People Attentive to Children	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill as it expands available access to quality early childhood education for more families. Removing the accreditation requirement for providers increases the availability of preschool options while still oversight and quality standards are monitored through DHS. This change helps working families and strengthens our commitment to early learning.



COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS

Chair Representative Martin

Vice Chair Representative Olds

BILL HB692

POSITION: SUPPORT with COMMENT

Hearing Date: Wednesday, February 4, 2025 9:30am, Room 329

Aloha Chair Martin, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members:

**Aloha United Way and the ALICE Initiative support HB692**, which expands the preschool open door program's eligibility criteria.

Childcare costs and a shortage of seats create an economic drag on our State. The quickest solution to address this is to help working families with the cost. We would add comment that while Page 2, lines 6 and 7 has been struck, we support a continued provision to **"Give Priority to children from low and moderate income families,"** or similar, to ensure funds reach the families where such support makes the greatest difference in accessing childcare.

The new **2024 State of ALICE in Hawaii report found that 50% of our State's residents with children are ALICE families.** ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. This is a full 10% higher than the general population of 40% who are ALICE. ALICE are our households who are employed but whose incomes are not sufficient to meet basic costs, and child care costs are often one of the key drivers of that gap.

The reality is childcare is critical for families to earn the two incomes often needed to survive in Hawaii. Yet the childcare that makes this possible is financially inaccessible to many households in the state. The Preschool Open Doors program provides significant cost relief to families.

It will also help Hawai'i's economy, which loses up to \$476 million annually due to insufficient child care programs and options, to grow and to provide more workers to help our businesses address the workforce shortage.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your support for HB692 to strengthen Preschool Open Doors and to help more ALICE families with children return to work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michelle Bartell".

Michelle Bartell  
President & CEO  
Aloha United Way

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

Suzanne Skjold  
Chief Operating Officer  
Aloha United Way



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

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

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 692 – Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

Hearing: Tuesday, February 4, 2025, at 9:30 AM, Conference Room 329

**POSITION: STRONG SUPPORT**

Aloha e Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and members of the committee:

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **STRONG SUPPORT of H.B. No. 692**, which expands the eligibility criteria for the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program and removes the requirements that POD providers be accredited. This measure is essential in increasing access to early learning for families across Hawai'i, particularly those with young children who face financial barriers to participation.

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 significantly impact a child's future achievements and overall well-being. Providing subsidies for families with younger children would allow more parents/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 a costly and time-consuming process 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, thereby expanding options for families in need. 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 that families have a broader selection of preschools to choose from without limiting access due to accreditation requirements.

By passing **H.B. No. 692**, the Legislature can take a crucial step toward making early learning more accessible and affordable for Hawai'i's families. I respectfully urge you to support this bill to 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**.

## Sample Testimony

Date: February 3, 2025

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

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

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

### **Department of Community Services Position: Strong Support**

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 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.

As it stands, the POD program 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.

The bill will also 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, often exceeding housing or other essential needs. Expanding the program to include 2-year-olds will alleviate financial pressures, 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 believe accreditation is a valuable marker of quality and the Department of Human Services recently establish 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 City appreciates this balanced approach of this bill, which reflects a commitment to expanding access to early learning programs. By removing barriers, this bill will open doors for more families to access affordable and reliable care and better economic opportunities.

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

Date: February 3, 2025

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

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

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

**Department of Community Services Position: Strong Support**

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 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.

As it stands, the POD program 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 childcare support for families with younger children.

The bill will also reduce the significant financial burden many families face regarding childcare expenses. The cost of childcare is one of the largest expenses for many families on O'ahu and across the State, often exceeding housing or other essential needs. Expanding the program to include 2-year-olds will alleviate financial pressures, 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 believe accreditation is a valuable marker of quality and the Department of Human Services recently establish 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 City appreciates this balanced approach of this bill, which reflects a commitment to expanding access to early learning programs. By removing barriers, this bill will open doors for more families to access affordable and reliable care and better economic opportunities.

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

February 3, 2025

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members for hearing HB692.

As the committee is aware, childcare is the second largest expense for Hawaii's local families. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program continues to be a successful public-private partnership following its recent broadening of qualifying criteria. If those criteria were expanded further, the already successful program could serve even more hardworking families. Please support expansion of this program to support even more working parents and increase the access to child care services in our state.

Humbly submitted,

Jeanne Wilks



**Jeanne Wilks**

Head of Holy Nativity School  
(808) 373-3232

5286 Kalaniana'ole Hwy. Honolulu, Hawai'i 96821

[www.holynativyschool.org](http://www.holynativyschool.org)



**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:27:58 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vanessa Cummings	Bright Beginning Learning Center Hauula, Teacher	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chairperson and Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support of Bill HB692, which seeks to expand the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program. As a community member, I recognize the profound impact early childhood education has on a child's lifelong success. The Preschool Open Doors program has already demonstrated its value by providing affordable access to quality early education for families across the state, and this proposed expansion is an essential step toward ensuring that all children have the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their family's economic background.

Access to preschool is not just a luxury but a necessity for children, especially those from low-income households, who may not otherwise have the resources to enroll in high-quality programs. By expanding the POD program, we are addressing disparities in educational opportunities, giving children a solid foundation that can shape their cognitive, social, and emotional development in ways that will benefit them throughout their academic careers.

Early learning has been proven to close achievement gaps, particularly for children from underserved communities. Expanding POD will help level the playing field, providing children with the skills and confidence they need to enter kindergarten ready to learn. This not only benefits the children, but the entire community, as an educated and prepared workforce is key to our state's future prosperity.

Moreover, the expansion of this program will relieve financial burdens for many families, allowing parents to remain in the workforce without the worry of exorbitant childcare costs. By investing in early childhood education, we are making an investment in the long-term health and success of our society.

I strongly encourage you to pass Bill HB692, as it represents a critical step toward ensuring that every child in our state has access to the best possible start in life.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Cummings, Kumu (Bright Beginning Learning Center Hauula)

Date: February 3, 2025

To: Representative Lisa Marten

From: Melodie Vega  
Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers

Subject: HB692 Preschool Open Doors Expansion

Aloha Chair Marten and Members of the Human Services 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 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. As it stands, the POD program 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.

The bill will also 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, often exceeding housing or other essential needs. Expanding the program to include 2-year-olds will alleviate financial pressures, 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.

Finally, we believe accreditation is a valuable marker of quality and the Department of Human Services recently establish 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.

By removing barriers, this bill will open doors for more families to access affordable and reliable childcare and improving economic opportunities.

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

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



**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 3:16:41 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Julia Ah You	BBLC	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this Bill!

Date: February 3, 2025

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

From: Shani Simeona  
Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers

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

**Department of Community Services Position: **Strong Support****

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 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.

As it stands, the POD program 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.

The bill will also 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, often exceeding housing or other essential needs. Expanding the program to include 2-year-olds will alleviate financial pressures, 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 believe accreditation is a valuable marker of quality and the Department of Human Services recently establish 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 City appreciates this balanced approach of this bill, which reflects a commitment to expanding access to early learning programs. By removing barriers, this bill will open doors for more families to access affordable and reliable care and better economic opportunities.

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

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 4:13:10 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kealani Makaiwi	Keiki o Ka ‘Aina	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Kealani Makaiwi

91-1023 Kamaaha Ave #803

Kapolei, HI 96707

Subject: Support for HB692 & SB712 Expanding the Preschool Open Doors Program

Aloha mai kākou,

I am writing as a dedicated preschool teacher and a proud resident of Hawai'i to express my strong support for HB692 and SB692, which seeks to expand the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program to serve three-five year-old children. This bill is a crucial step toward increasing access to early childhood education, especially for local families who struggle to afford quality preschool programs.

As an educator, I witness firsthand the profound impact that early learning experiences have on a child's development. The first five years of life are critical for cognitive, social, and emotional growth, laying the foundation for future academic success and well-being. By expanding POD eligibility to include three-year-olds, we can ensure that more keiki receive the essential early learning opportunities they need to thrive.

For many families in Hawai'i, the high cost of preschool is a significant barrier. Without financial assistance, many parents are forced to delay or forgo early education for their children, putting them at a disadvantage when they enter kindergarten. HB692 and SB692 would help

bridge this gap by making preschool more accessible and affordable, particularly for Native Hawaiian and underserved communities who are often disproportionately affected by these financial barriers.

Investing in early childhood education benefits not only our keiki but also our entire state. Studies consistently show that children who attend preschool are more likely to succeed in school, graduate, and contribute positively to society. Expanding the POD program will strengthen our communities, support working families, and build a brighter future for Hawai'i.

I urge you and your colleagues to pass HB692 and SB692 and help ensure that all children in Hawai'i have the opportunity to access high-quality early education. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

Kealani Makaiwi

Kumu and Site Coordinator

Keiki O Ka 'Āina FLC

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 7:05:04 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lara E. Wasson	Bright Beginning Learning center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Our families in our preschool depend on Open Doors to be able to afford their children to get an education. We are in Hauula and in an extreme poverty area. Please keep things going strong so the children are a priority and given that strong foundation to success. We are grateful for the support we were given this last year as it has been so hard since Covid. So many preschools had to shut their doors but Open Doors has kept us afloat. Thank you for your consideration, Lara Wasson



## Testimony to the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

Representative Lisa Marten, Chair

Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 4, 2025, at 9:30AM

Conference Room 329 & Videoconference

### RE: HB692 Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program

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

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports House Bill 692 (HB692), which Expands the preschool open door program's eligibility criteria, and repeals the requirement that open door program providers be accredited.

HB692 is in alignment with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Business Services. This bill promotes policies that drive economic growth, enhance workforce opportunities, and improve the quality of life for Hawaii's residents.

Preschool Open Doors provides low- and moderate-income families with the opportunity to send their children to preschool for up to two years before kindergarten and should continue to be supported. This bill expands eligibility by lowering the starting age from three to two and removing prioritization restrictions, improving access to affordable childcare. It also eliminates certain accreditation requirements, increasing provider participation and childcare availability.

Expanding eligibility supports workforce development by helping parents stay employed while ensuring quality early learning. Simplifying accreditation boosts provider participation without lowering standards. The Chamber supports this bill for its role in strengthening families, promoting economic stability, and preparing Hawaii's children for future success.

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

We respectfully ask to pass House Bill 692. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



# Kamehameha Schools®

House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Date: February 4, 2025

Where: Conference Room 329

## TESTIMONY

By Dr. Wai‘ale‘ale Arroyo  
Kamehameha Schools

### RE: **HB 692, Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program**

E ka Luna Ho‘omalū Marten, ka Hope Luna Ho‘omalū Olds, a me nā lālā o kēia Kōmike o ka Hale o nā Lunamaka‘āinana, aloha kākou. My name is Dr. Wai‘ale‘ale Arroyo, Vice President of Hi‘ialo at Kamehameha Schools.

Kamehameha Schools **supports** HB 692, 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 3 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.

## **Testimony in Support of HB692 (Preschool Open Doors Program; Eligibility)**

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

Aloha **HSH Chair: Lisa Marten**

My name is Dayna Teves, and I am a parent educator at Keiki O Ka 'Āina Learning Center as well as a parent who has directly benefited from early childhood programs. I am writing in **strong support of HB692**, which expands the **Preschool Open Doors** program, increasing access to preschool scholarships for families across Hawai'i.

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

Expanding this program means more children—especially those from low- and middle-income families—will have access to the same opportunities. Research shows that children who attend preschool enter kindergarten more prepared and have better long-term educational outcomes. By passing **HB692**, we are giving Hawai'i's keiki the chance to thrive and succeed.

Please support HB692 and invest in the future of our children, families, and communities.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Dayna Teves



**HB-692**

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 4:55:17 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Taylor Brack	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

I support this bill to expand access to the preschool open doors program in Hawaii. Consistent and reliable access to child care is critical to the success of working families and without adequate support from the state government, too many are left behind. Investing in the development and care of Hawaii's young children is well worth it.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 8:46:51 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Hansen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

Aloha, a major concern is that young educated working families/ couples are leaving Hawaii to move to the mainland looking for free/ reduced child care. Please support this bill which can stem this flow. Child care/ preschool in Hawaii is currently too expensive and difficult to find in Hawaii. This bill can alleviate this problem.

Mahalo

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 10:02:53 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy D Moser	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In STRONG SUPPORT of HB692.

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

This measure supports families with young children to obtain affordable childcare with early learning. Please vote YES on this measure.

Nancy Moser in Waikoloa, Hawai'i Island

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 10:12:45 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

## Comments:

Preschool Open Doors has been an invaluable support for so many families across the state. It has proven to be an excellent investment of funds, as investments in early childhood often are. Despite the many success of the Ready Keiki initiative, we still have not desired the desired level of universal access to preschool. This bill represents another important step in the correct direction.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 7:36:27 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I strongly support this measure.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 7:50:09 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Linda Morgan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a retired elementary teacher, I strongly support HB692. Every year I taught, the most successful students in my class were ones who had attended preschool. Please support this bill to make early education available to as many children in Hawaii as possible.

Mahalo!

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 8:07:04 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Denise L Martinez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I support [HB692](#) for our Keiki

**mahalo,**

**Denise Martinez**

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 9:50:31 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

## Comments:

Aloha Chair and committee members,

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 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.

As it stands, the POD program 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.

The bill will also 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, often exceeding housing or other essential needs. Expanding the program to include

2-year-olds will alleviate financial pressures, 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.

Please support HB692.

Thank you,

Noelle R Lindenmann, Kailua-Kona



**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 9:58:49 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
gabrielle davidson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear House members,

Please support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare. I don't have children myself but I see the struggle of many of my friends who both work full time and have children under 3. Let's create a society where we ARE our brother's keeper. What is good for you is good for me. Let's SUPPORT each other so everyone can thrive.

Thank you for the opportunity to have a voice in this issue,  
Gabrielle Davidson

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 11:20:59 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brenda DuFresne	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB692!

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 11:47:09 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lois Langham	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill supporting early childhood education. It makes a difference!

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 11:55:25 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deborah G. Nehmad	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

"I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare."

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 12:49:18 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support this measure because an accessible child care system is good for Hawai'i

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 12:50:45 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 1:13:01 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Doreen Akamine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

“I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.”

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 1:33:16 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
chelsea pang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure as a parent of 3 children in Kaneohe in public schools, to help all families access affordable childcare.



**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 1:56:02 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 3:04:04 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 3:08:04 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diann Karin Lynn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 3:37:06 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Belinda pate	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

I am a 59 year old Nurse, who has worked since age 28. Preschool programs were my life line, my only way to put myself through school. I was a single mom, and determined to get a better life for me and my children. My son was 2 when I began nursing school, and I could go to school knowing he was safe and learning while I was learning. Please keep affordable access to preschool in anyway there is do to this. This bill would be one way to keep access open to working families or single moms.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 4:00:47 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Juvana Soliven	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 5:15:53 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support this measure so families can claim their full tax credit.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 6:35:36 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

## Comments:

Thank you for hearing this measure. I support this measure because an accessible and affordable child care system is good for Hawaii. Some of the young people are leaving Hawaii because they cannot afford to raise children in Hawaii.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 9:40:07 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
DeWaine Tollefsrud	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare. With prices continueing to rise, working families are faceing increasing stuggles to survive and ever little bit helps!



**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 10:07:03 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Elyse Scott	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Childcare is too expensive and unavailable. Families can't survive and thrive without the support that childcare allows for parent careers. At this point, we can't let perfect be the enemy of good by keeping barriers in place of more available care.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 10:20:14 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
JANE TOLLEFSRUD	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.

Please! Help affordable childcare survive.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 10:28:48 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kerry Porter	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 11:02:04 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

The more access for our keiki to perschool the better. Please move this forward.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 11:36:26 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Philip Johnson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare

Committee on Human Services and Homelessness  
HB 692 RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM.  
Tuesday, Feb. 4, 2025 at 9:30 a.m.  
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE  
Conference Room 329  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street

## IN SUPPORT

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, Representative Amato from my home of Maui, and Committee Members,

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 two-year-olds, 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 two-year-olds will alleviate financial pressures, enabling people to start or grow families, and 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.

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

I humbly request the members of the Committee, and especially Maui Representative Amato, to support this measure.

Christine L. Andrews, JD  
Wailuku, Maui

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 1:44:44 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

## Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members for hearing HB692. This bill addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for working locals - child care access. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide more much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please support this program expansion as a way to support working parents and increase child care services in our state.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 2:04:49 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I wholeheartedly support this bill.



**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 2:33:08 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments: I support this bill and its intent to help working families. Erica Yamauchi,  
Kaimukī/Wilhelmina Rise

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

Feb. 2, 2025

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

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

I am in support of HB 692, which would allow families with keiki two years old to kindergarten entry to apply for Preschool Open Doors (POD) state subsidies. Many families need full day, year round care and education for their keiki, and being able to stay in the same program all day and year round provides important consistency. Consistency with caring teachers optimizes development for each keiki.

While accreditation of the program would no longer a requirement for a program to accept children with POD subsidies, the requirement for the Dept. of Human Services (DHS) to provide accreditation support stays in place, and the early childhood community is seeing the ramp-up of these important supports. High quality programs with effective educators are what make a difference for keiki. Programs and staff do want to improve, and external resources are necessary for improvement and professional development.

Mahalo for your consideration of this bill.

Sincerely,

/s/Elaine Yamashita

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 3:11:28 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jaela Henderson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

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

I am writing in strong support of HB692, a necessary expansion of child care support for local families. Currently, Preschool Open Doors (POD) program provides some of Hawai'i's families with the critical support needed to contribute to our community and economy. However, there is still a huge and costly service gap caused by the eligibility requirements for both working families and childcare providers. As a working Native Hawaiian parent, the current requirements are not reflective of our economic reality and shared educational priorities. Many of us earn over the current income limits while still not being able to afford safe childcare options. I strongly urge you to support the expansion of the Preschool Open Doors program.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 3:19:04 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 4:32:09 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Parents need more access to affordable or free preschool so we can work and make an income to survive.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 4:42:47 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

## Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members for hearing HB692. This bill addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for working locals - child care access. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide more much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please support this program expansion as a way to support working parents and increase child care services in our state.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 5:32:06 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Support our families, support our keiki!! Childcare is one of the highest line items in family budgets and essential part of care takers ability to work in their respective fields.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 6:22:56 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Peter Arnade	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair and Commmitte members.

Aloha.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H.B. No. 692, which seeks to expand the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program.

It clear that the the POD program 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. I t

The bill will also 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, often exceeding housing or other essential needs. Expanding the program to include

2-year-olds will alleviate financial pressures, 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 believe accreditation is a valuable marker of quality and the Department of Human Services recently establish 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 City appreciates this balanced approach of this bill, which reflects a commitment to expanding access to early learning programs. By removing barriers, this bill will open doors for more families to access affordable and reliable care and better economic opportunities.



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

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 7:10:49 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

## Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members for hearing HB692. This bill addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for working locals - child care access. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide more much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please support this program expansion as a way to support working parents and increase child care services in our state.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 7:40:13 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bailey Aughe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support to increase affordable childcare

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 7:43:20 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

## Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members for hearing HB692. This bill addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for working locals - child care access. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide more much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please support this program expansion as a way to support working parents and increase child care services in our state.

Jordan Smith  
Constituent from Honolulu, 96813

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 8:53:24 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Barbara J. Service	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Marten and committee members,

I am Barbara Service and live in SB9 and HD19

Please support the expansion of Preschool Open Doors to increase child care services and relieve some of the burden on working families.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify!

Barbara J. Service MSW

Child Welfare Supervisor (ret.)

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 9:06:23 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mia Kok	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hawaii needs this support to families

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 9:26:31 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

## Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members for hearing HB692. This bill addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for working locals - child care access. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide more much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please support this program expansion as a way to support working parents and increase child care services in our state.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 9:43:52 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Charley Tockey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.



**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 9:46:44 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chloe Pua'ena Vierra-Villanueva	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

To: Representative Lisa Marten, Chair

Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

From: Chloe “Pua‘ena” Vierra-Villanueva

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

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

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 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.

As it stands, the POD program 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. My son started preschool at 2.8 years old and as a late born 3 year old, we still do not qualify for this vital support.

The bill will also 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, often exceeding housing or other essential needs. Expanding the program to include 2-year-olds will alleviate financial pressures, 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. This is especially supportive for toddler-age care which is sparse and more expensive than preschool.

The balanced approach of this bill, which reflects a commitment to expanding access to early learning programs will help to continue to remove barriers for families. This bill will open doors for more families to access affordable and reliable care and better economic opportunities.

Please support this measure.

Mahalo,

C. Pua'ena Vierra-Villanueva

‘Ohana Leadership Council

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 9:50:12 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Evelyn Aczon Hao	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 692 bill which expands Preschool Open Doors Expansion

1. pass this bill which will give more children a chance to succeed in school. School success is built on the years before kindergarten which set in place the foundation for further growth intellectually, emotionally, personally in the upper grades. So much depends on that firm foundation on the development of a fulfilled life.

Please pass this bill.

Evelyn Hao, retired teacher and school principal.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 9:57:16 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sophie Wright	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members for hearing HB692. This bill addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for working locals - child care access. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide more much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please support this program expansion as a way to support working parents and increase child care services in our state. Thank you for your time and consideration.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 10:12:28 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

## Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare. Though I do not have children, I believe it's a necessary part of working parents' lives and helps alleviate the costly financial burden this places on their ability to parent as well as focus on their jobs. As a society that values our children, it is important to support our Ohana.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 10:22:13 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

In support !!

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 10:31:29 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ted Burke	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members for hearing HB692. This bill addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for working locals - child care access. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide more much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please support this program expansion as a way to support working parents and increase child care services in our state.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 10:41:18 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support this bill.



**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 11:22:03 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Phillip Jung	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 2:34:24 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joell Edwards	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members for hearing HB692. This bill addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for working locals - child care access. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide more much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please support this program expansion as a way to support working parents and increase child care services in our state.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 5:40:24 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members for hearing HB692. This bill addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for working locals - child care access. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide more much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please support this program expansion as a way to support working parents and increase child care services in our state.

With gratitude

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 5:54:28 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shannon Oshiro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 7:25:20 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Laurie Arial Tochiki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 7:33:34 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tupu Wheeler	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

I most definately support this bill. As a preschool teacher, I have seen first hand the detrimental repercussions of students and families who are not able to afford early education for preschool. The cost of living is gigantic and our out lying communities suffer when preschool funding is limited.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 7:43:21 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bethany Albrecht	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

As a working single parent and social worker, I cannot begin to tell you how badly we need legislation that will make childcare accessible for everyone. It costs \$1000 per month for childcare! A minimum wage worker's take-home pay is \$1500 per month. How on earth can anyone afford to pay for childcare, or afford not to work?! I have a career and a master's degree and I can't afford childcare! Please pass this bill! Our community needs it more than words can say.

Mahalo,

Bethany Albrecht

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 7:51:32 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

## Comments:

The expansion of affordable child care access through HB692 is crucial for Hawaii's families. By extending eligibility to children ages 2-5 and including Family Child Care Centers, this bill would significantly increase options for working parents. The provision for continuous eligibility until kindergarten provides essential stability for both children and families, eliminating disruptive gaps in care. Removing the accreditation mandate while maintaining quality standards helps reduce barriers for providers, potentially increasing the number of available child care spots.

Hawaii's families face some of the nation's highest child care costs. This bill represents a practical solution to help more working parents access reliable care, contribute to the workforce, and ensure their children receive quality early education experiences. The inclusion of Family Child Care Centers is particularly important for families in rural areas or those needing more flexible care arrangements.

Supporting this measure is an investment in Hawaii's families, workforce, and future generations. I urge you to vote in favor of HB692.



**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 7:54:51 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kawehi Hopkins	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members for hearing HB692. This bill addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for working locals - child care access. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide more much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please support this program expansion as a way to support working parents and increase child care services in our state.

Kawehi

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 8:21:25 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha,

My family and I in Waimea on Hawaii Island strongly support 692 HB RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM.

We live in a Preschool and infant/toddler care dessert, and this has been tough on the health of the entire extended family.

Grandma Doris

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 8:23:07 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support this measure because an accessible child care system is good for Hawaii.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:06:41 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members for hearing HB692.

This bill addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for working locals - child care access.

The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide more much-needed assistance to hardworking families.

Please support this program expansion as a way to support working parents and increase child care services in our state.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **strong support** of HB692.

January 2, 2025

Representative Lisa Marten, Chair House Human Services and Homeless Committee  
Representative Ikaika Olds, V-Chair, House Human Services and Homeless Committee

Re: HB692

Dear Chair Marten, V-Chair Olds and Members of the Committee.

My name is Gail Breakey, and I am testifying in support of HB692, which will increase access to affordable child care for Hawaii's families. The bill expands eligibility to include children ages 2-5 years and Family Child care Centers. It allows for continuous eligibility until kindergarten entry and removes the accreditation mandate. These services are sorely needed considering that both parents usually need to work in our economy, and that around half of Hawaii Families are ALICE or living below the poverty level.

**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.
- Greater access will allow more children to get a strong start.

**Benefits to Business and Economy**

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

Clearly this legislation will benefit families as well as the economy at a time when families are experiencing severe economic hardship. Thank you for your consideration of this legislation and for the opportunity to testify

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**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:12:40 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hinarautea Doom Tonumaipea	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill. My child benefits from open door and it allows him to have the best education.  
Please keep this program going

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:12:59 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alexandra Taea	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Alexandra Taea. I have two kids that are going to preschool. One of my children is a receiptant of the Open Doors Program. Without this program my daughter wouldn't be thriving as she is now. I had to go to work as many of us parents here in Hawaii do. Without Open Doors I wouldn't be able to feed my family. My daughter learns phonics, math, Hawaiian, science, and so much more. She is going to be well equipped when Kindergarten comes around. My son is no wold enough to recieve this grant as well this year. He has made a huge different going to school. Before he couldn't speak. School has helped that. The workers that work in these schools offering this program are incredible. It is hard to teach young keiki. What is even harder is making those keiki greater than they came. That is what these programs are doing for our children. With our pay and the cost of living the program is needed. Children shouldn't be with strangers all day. They should be with well equipped teachers that are a safe space. I don't know why the keiki are the ones to suffer first but that is HEWA.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:13:09 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare



**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:18:22 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

## Comments:

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members thank you for hearing HB692. This bill addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for working locals - child care access. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide more much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please support this program expansion as a way to support working parents and increase child care services in our state.

Mahalo,

Kee Lo

February 3, 2025

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

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

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

**Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. No. 692 with comments.**

Aloha,

My name is Dr. Terry Lock. Currently, I am the Director of the Hawai'i Early Childhood Educator Excellence and Equity (ECE<sup>3</sup>) Project at the University of Hawai'i Mānoa College of Education.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. No. with comments.

HB 692 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.

As it stands, the POD program is a vital resource for families with 3- and 4-year-old children, offering much-needed financial assistance to make child care more affordable as the cost of child care is one of the largest expenses for many families on O'ahu and across the State, often exceeding housing or other essential needs.

With HB 692 the POD program will expand to add 2-year-olds. This expansion will alleviate financial pressures so more families will remain in the workforce and achieve greater economic stability, while simultaneously laying a strong foundation for their 2- year olds to grow and thrive.

In HB 692 the types of early learning programs for eligible families are listed on p. 3 from lines 16 - 21 and p. 4 from lines 1-5. I agree with licensed group child care centers, licensed group child care homes, licensed infant and toddler child care centers. **However, I recommend that “accredited family child care centers” be changed to “regulated family child care programs” (see next paragraph about program accreditation). I also recommend that “exempt center-based providers” be changed to “Hawaiian language immersion preschools”.**

I believe that all young children and their families deserve quality child care options and that early learning program accreditation is a key marker of quality. Furthermore, I commend how the Department of Human Services' (DHS) has recently established an accreditation support program for licensed child care centers and regulated family child care programs. **Because this accreditation support program is already established through DHS, I recommend changing “Participation in the program shall not require preschools or early learning programs to be accredited by an approved accredited body” which are on lines 6-8 on p. 4, to “Participation in the program shall recommend that early learning programs have a plan on how they strive to obtain or maintain accreditation by an approved accreditation**

**body”**. This will broaden families’ access to POD funds and not disrupt the complementary program through DHS which allows early learning providers to enhance quality through accreditation.

I appreciate this balanced approach of this bill, which reflects a commitment to expanding access to early learning programs. By removing barriers, this bill will open doors for more families to access affordable and reliable care and better economic opportunities.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 692 with comments.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:20:00 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jedzia Lauaki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members for hearing HB692. This bill addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for working locals - child care access. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide more much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please support this program expansion as a way to support working parents and increase child care services in our state.

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Members of the Human Services and Homeless Committee:

I am in support of HB692 relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program.

The revisions to the statute will allow for greater access and ease to support our hard-working ohana and allow for even more keiki to access early learning services in Hawai'i. By the Legislature expanding the age group from three and four year olds to two to five year olds, the participating early learning programs will be able to offer a much needed continuum of social, emotional, and intellectual services to be met prior to entry into kindergarten for Hawai'i's precious and youngest citizens; our keiki.

Additionally, by revising the statute to include participation of organizations in the program to not require preschools or early learning programs to be accredited by an approved accredited body, yet still holding standards as revised in section 2(c) (1) – (4), will allow for greater access for our keiki while having accountability of the organizations who participate in this program.

Thank you very much for allowing me to provide this testimony in support of this bill.

Sincerely,

Susan H. Kitsu

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:28:25 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joanne Amberg	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Invest in our keiki. Preschool is evidence based for supporting the success of children and families.

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare."

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:30:50 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members for hearing HB692.

This bill addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for working locals - child care access. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide more much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please support this program expansion as a way to support working parents and increase child care services in our state.

My family has benefitted from this program and without it, we would not be able to send our children to preschool. Not only did this help with our childcare but our children are thriving and learning so much at preschool. They're also able to interact with other children their age and creating friendships. Please support this program so other families can also benefit from this and provide assistance and support working parents!

Mahalo for your time.

Carol Yuen

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:33:09 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cheyenne Fakatou	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill



**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:40:09 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support this bill

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:51:55 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Summer Grace	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I SUPPORT HB692

## Sample Testimony

Date: February 3, 2025

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

From: Ty Tamagawa  
Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers

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

### **Department of Community Services Position: Strong Support**

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 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.

As it stands, the POD program 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.

The bill will also 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, often exceeding housing or other essential needs. Expanding the program to include 2-year-olds will alleviate financial pressures, 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 believe accreditation is a valuable marker of quality and the Department of Human Services recently establish 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 City appreciates this balanced approach of this bill, which reflects a commitment to expanding access to early learning programs. By removing barriers, this bill will open doors for more families to access affordable and reliable care and better economic opportunities.

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

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:05:31 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tiani pasi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:10:19 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lilia kaka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support bill HB692

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

**I am testifying in support of this bill, which would expand preschool open door eligibility criteria in Hawai'i to participate in HB692 Preschool Open Doors Program.**

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

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

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

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

Please support this measure.

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

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:22:11 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hokukapuuwailani Jenkins	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:23:55 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jaclyn Ah You	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I fully support bill HB692. It has made it possible for my three year old to attend Bright Beginnings Pre School and the amount of growth and learning we've seen in him in just the past few months has been amazing. Please pass this bill.



**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:24:27 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I Support this Bill

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:26:14 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Yanique Simpson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members for hearing HB692. This bill addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for working locals - child care access. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide more much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please support this program expansion as a way to support working parents and increase child care services in our state.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:45:08 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I Support This Bill

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:51:36 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victoria Mafi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 692. As a parent and mother of our rising generation keiki, we need to invest in our keiki education and funds from open doors allows this! I've been the recipient of the open doors program as my son was able to receive preschool education. He is excelling in elementary today and I stork fly believe it is because of early education he received through the open doors funds. Let's help our families flourish so our keiki and future can flourish!

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:59:22 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Maile Makuaole	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:07:06 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hans Brown	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a lifelong resident of the beautiful state of Hawaii, these are types of programs we cannot cut. The future of our island home is the children. I support HB692 for allowing opportunities for those of us who are not sport of the financially elite (most of Hawaii) to give our children a fighting chance at education. Please consider voting for this bill to allow for earlier chances to correct and educate our children to enable less broken individuals later in life.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:15:32 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kawelina Gilman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB692

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:24:11 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support this



**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:28:58 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kathryn Escalante	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:37:15 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

With four keiki under the age of five and planning for another, we are a growing family trying to strive here on Oahu. Where do we live? With my parents, with my dad's sister, her husband and a cousin who is planning for marriage. I love my home, I love the friends and families I have here, I love the memories and childhood I had growing up here. I want my children to be able to experience the same aloha that raised me right. With a father who failed to graduate high school and college, he stressed the importance of finishing school and getting a degree. I want my kids to be able to recieve more opportunities, because they are educated. Anything and everything sucessful always has a beginning, the time my son has had in Bright Beginnings in Hauula- I have never seen him shine so much with the friends he has made, the knowledge he is learning, with the school lessons he is retaining and with the creativity that is coming out of him at every corner! He is striving and I love to see him succeed in his early stages of life!! But what about my other 3 children, soon to be other 4? The finances for our growing family is tight. My husband works 3 jobs and like Saturday night? He didn't come home until 7:30 am Sunday morning. We like many other growing families want our children to explore their creativity alongside other little ones- striving to explore theirs. There's a beginning and HB692 is their opportunity for a beginning.

I am a non-Hawaiian local, born and raised on the North Shore side of Oahu. Many scholarship requirements here on Hawai'i are for native-Hawaiians. I've done nothing but love my Hawaiian friends and families and have always tried my best to support them. I've never desecrated any sacred Hawaiian sites and have always chosen to malama and kokua whenever I find myself outside our home. I always choose to respect any and all kupuna I come across. My 5 year old has a portion of his school time dedicated to Hawaiian History. I mean he came home Thursday singing the Hawaiian colors!

What about us?

What about us who do nothing, but love everything Hawai'i and Hawaiian? Always on your side. Who is on ours? Do I have to uproot myself and my family to move to the mainland to find

suitable scholarships for my non-Hawaiian children? Do those even exist? Polynesian scholarships? Will my children be able to gain an education or will they grow up with the shorter end of the stick?

I was born and raised here, but I feel like I'm walking on eggshells. Who will support the group of non-Hawaiian locals that my family and I are in?

I support HB692. This is their beginning.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:41:41 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha, I am writing to you in support of HB 692. Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members for hearing HB692. This bill addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for working locals - child care access. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide more much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please support this program expansion as a way to support working parents and increase child care services in our state. Mahalo for your time!!

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:59:34 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emily Beatty	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:05:07 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ashlee Wong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I Support This Bill

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:33:24 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sanoe Marfil	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members for hearing HB692. This bill addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for working locals - child care access. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide more much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please support this program expansion as a way to support working parents and increase child care services in our state. Mahalo nui.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:59:12 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members for hearing HB692. This bill addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for working locals - child care access. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide more much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please support this program expansion as a way to support working parents and increase child care services in our state.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Caitlin Kryss, Mountain View, Hawaii



**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:01:31 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support Bill HB692

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:28:26 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sonya Zabala	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, 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 reduce significant barriers to accessing child care for families across our state, while establishing a strong foundation for the future success of our youngest keiki.

The POD program is an essential resource for families with 3- and 4-year-old children, offering vital financial assistance to make child care more affordable and accessible. By expanding eligibility to include 2-year-olds, this bill recognizes the critical role of early childhood development during these formative years and addresses a substantial gap in child care support for families with younger children.

This expansion will also help alleviate the significant financial burden many families face with child care expenses. For many families across O’ahu and the state, child care is one of the largest expenses, often surpassing housing costs or other essential needs. Including 2-year-olds in the POD program will ease this financial strain, allowing families to remain in the workforce, achieve greater economic stability, and provide a strong foundation for their keiki to grow and thrive.

We also believe that accreditation is an important marker of quality, and appreciate that the Department of Human Services has established an accreditation program to support the pursuit of quality improvement. By removing the accreditation requirement in this bill, we open doors for more families to access early learning opportunities while also allowing providers the flexibility to enhance quality through other complementary programs.

We commend this balanced approach, which reflects a commitment to expanding access to early learning programs. By removing barriers, this bill will ensure that more families have access to affordable, reliable care and better economic opportunities for themselves and their children.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of this important measure.

Mahalo Ke  
Akua,  
Keiki O Ka ‘Āina Family Learning Centers

Sonya Zabala



**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:43:28 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Karen L Worthington	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

Please support the passage of HB692. This bill addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for Hawai‘i families with young children—child care access. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide more much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please support this program expansion as a way to support working parents and increase child care services in our state.

Best regards,

Karen Worthington, Kula, Hawai‘i

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 2:05:09 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnetta Jordan-Piper	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my strong support for HB692, which seeks to expand the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program. As a former preschool educator and special education teacher who has recently transitioned out of registered family childcare, I have seen firsthand the pressing need for affordable and accessible childcare in our communities.

The POD program has been a successful public-private partnership that provides essential assistance to hardworking families. By expanding this program to include subsidy assistance for children aged 2-5, we can significantly alleviate the financial burdens faced by parents striving to provide the best for their children while maintaining their employment.

However, I want to highlight a critical issue with the current system regarding accreditation for childcare providers. The existing accreditation process can take nearly two years to complete and often entails additional oversight that can be burdensome for both providers and families. This lengthy process can deter many quality home-based childcare providers from participating, ultimately limiting access for families in need.

I believe that Hawaii should prioritize the development of a quality rating and improvement system before mandating accreditation. By establishing a comprehensive quality rating system, we can create a framework that supports childcare providers in delivering high-quality services without the overwhelming pressures associated with accreditation. This approach allows providers to focus on enhancing the quality of care they offer while ensuring that families have access to safe and nurturing environments for their children.

Once we have a robust quality rating system in place, we can then encourage community care providers to pursue accreditation at their discretion. This phased approach will foster a culture of continuous improvement in our childcare system without creating unnecessary barriers for families seeking care.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly support the expansion of the Preschool Open Doors program as a means to support working parents and increase childcare services in our state. This initiative is not just about providing financial assistance; it is an investment in our children's future and the overall well-being of our families.

Thank you for considering my testimony, and I sincerely hope you will support HB692.



**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 2:19:52 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments: 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 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. As it stands, the POD program 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. The bill will also 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, often exceeding housing or other essential needs. Expanding the program to include 2-year-olds will alleviate financial pressures, 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 believe accreditation is a valuable marker of quality and the Department of Human Services recently establish 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 City appreciates this balanced approach of this bill, which reflects a commitment to expanding access to early learning programs. By removing barriers, this bill will open doors for more families to access affordable and reliable care and better economic opportunities. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this measure. Mahalo, Ann Sullivan

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 2:56:24 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Mahalo Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and committee members for hearing HB692.

I am writing in support of HB692. This bill addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for working locals - child care access. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide more much-needed assistance to hardworking families.

Child care is financially inaccessible to many households in the state and the POD program provides significant cost relief to families. Additionally, Hawai'i's economy loses up to \$476 million annually due to insufficient child care programs and options.

Please support this program expansion as a way to support working parents and increase child care services in our state.

Thank you for your consideration,

Molly Mamaril



**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 3:09:48 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Renee Fonoimoana	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

**HB-692**

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

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jill Bleazard	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Open Doors allows my son and many children his age (who have social and developmental delays as a result of the quarantining of COVID) attend preschool and make strides to overcome the challenges they were presented at a young age. My son had speech delays. His pediatrician said this was very common for COVID babies because they didn't spend time around a variety of children their own age. Since he has begun attending preschool through the Open Doors program, his speech has improved rapidly. Without the Open Doors program, my family could not afford to have him attend preschool. This program has allowed him a chance to prepare for kindergarten and become successful in life. Please keep the Open Doors program funded! Hawaii's families and keiki depend on this program for a chance at success.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 3:36:56 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Date: February 3, 2025

To: Representative Lisa Marten, Chair

Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

From: SheriAnn Hinano Maxwell

Keiki O Ka ‘Āina Family Learning Centers

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

**Department of Community Services Position: Strong Support**

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 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.

As it stands, the POD program 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.

The bill will also 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, often exceeding housing or other essential needs. Expanding the program to include 2-year-olds will alleviate financial pressures, 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 believe accreditation is a valuable marker of quality and the Department of Human Services recently establish 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 City appreciates this balanced approach of this bill, which reflects a commitment to expanding access to early learning programs. By removing barriers, this bill will open doors for more families to access affordable and reliable care and better economic opportunities.

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

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 4:00:08 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

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

From: Chentira Fink-Ajala  
Keiki O Ka ‘Āina Family Learning Centers

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

**Department of Community Services Position: Strong Support**

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 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.

As it stands, the POD program 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.

The bill will also 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, often exceeding housing or other essential needs. Expanding the program to include 2-year-olds will alleviate financial pressures, 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 believe accreditation is a valuable marker of quality and the Department of Human Services recently establish 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 City appreciates this balanced approach of this bill, which reflects a commitment to expanding access to early learning programs. By removing barriers, this bill will open doors for more families to access affordable and reliable care and better economic opportunities.

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

Chentira Fink-Ajala

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 4:32:22 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ayesha Fitisemanu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I SUPPORT HB692!

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 4:32:47 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Valerie Grace	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB692.

Please help our keiki to get the head start they will need to be successful in life.



**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 8:24:26 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support HB 692!! This helps a lot of local families here in HI and my family.

**HB-692**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:13:05 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/4/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carissa Tafuna	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Preschool open doors had been a huge benefit to my child and family. I strongly support its continuation for future preschool children. Mahalo!