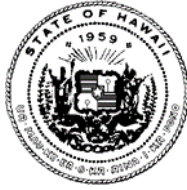


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



RYAN I. YAMANE
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWE LAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

February 8, 2025

TO: The Honorable Senator San Buenaventura, Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 712 – RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM.**

Hearing: Monday, February 10, 2025, Time 1:20 p.m.
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference, State Capitol

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

DHS 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, lines 6 to 8, 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, lines 9 to 13, 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.

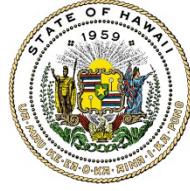
Regarding accreditation addressed in Section 4, currently, there are 144 out of 455 group child care centers and infant and toddler centers that are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA). Though DHS recognizes and supports the added quality that accreditation adds to the care a child receives at a group child care center, DHS 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.



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

The 33rd Legislature, State of Hawaii
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
February 10, 2025

Testimony on
S.B. 712 – RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of S.B. 712** which expands the Preschool Open Doors program's eligibility criteria to allow more keiki and their ohana to be served by this important program.

Access to preschool is a social justice issue in our state. Research shows that children who attend high-quality preschool are far better prepared for future success. S.B. 712 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 fostering 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 to serve more local families. The amendments proposed in S.B. 712 are critical to ensuring we have enough classrooms for all keiki.



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

February 8, 2025

To: Senator San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice-chair
Members of the Health and Human Services Committee

From: Elaine Yamashita, Chair
Early Learning Board

Re: SB 712 support

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice-chair Aquino, and members of the committee:

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

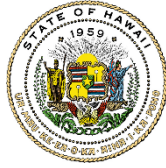
The ELB supports SB 712, which would allow families with children ages two up to kindergarten entry to apply for Preschool Open Doors (POD) subsidies. This expansion of state subsidies will greatly benefit Hawai'i's working families.

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

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

Mahalo for your consideration of this bill.

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



STATE OF HAWAII
Executive Office on Early Learning

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

TO: Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

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

SUBJECT: Testimony on S.B. No. 712 – RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS
PROGRAM.
Committee: HHS
Date: Monday, February 10, 2025
Time: 1:20 p.m.
Location: Conference Room 225

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

The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) offers the following comments in support of S.B. No. 712 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 community-based early learning programs also enables more parents and caregivers to participate in the workforce while ensuring their children receive the early childhood development and learning experiences critical to lifelong well-being.

We appreciate the Legislature's continued investment in our youngest keiki and their families. Thank you for the opportunity to share these comments in support of S.B. No. 712.

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

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

RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR
MEIA



ANTON C. KRUCKY
DIRECTOR
PO'O

AEDWARD LOS BANOS
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
HOPE PO'O

February 5, 2025

The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
And Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
State Capitol, Conference Room 225
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair San Buenaventura and Vice Chair Aquino
And Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

Subject: Measure S.B. No. 712 – Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program (POD)

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of S.B. No. 712.

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 Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
And Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
February 5, 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



Date: February 8, 2025

To: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: Support for **SB712**, Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program

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

ECAS supports, with amendments, SB712, which would expand the Preschool Open Doors program's eligibility criteria and significantly increase access to early learning programs for young children and their families. *No appropriation is requested as part of this measure.*

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

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 family co-payment to a maximum share of one dollar, 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.

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

We would like to especially highlight the inclusion of family child care providers as a much-needed option for local families to access early learning opportunities for their children. Family child care providers can often better meet the needs of families with non-traditional parental work hours, match the cultural and linguistic preferences of families, and are often found in rural communities in which larger child care centers cannot be sustained. Enacting policy that recognizes family child care providers as eligible for POD funding would result in immediate growth in the number of available early learning slots for local keiki.

Related to quality practices that promote school readiness, we would also like to note that high quality early learning experiences that prepare children for kindergarten can be made available to children as much in family child care settings as in formal child care center classroom settings.

To proactively address any potential concerns regarding inclusion of family child care homes as eligible POD providers, we respectfully recommend the following amendments to Section 2, subsection (c), subsection (3), page 4, lines 1-3:

(3) ~~An accredited family child care center~~ A family child care home that is registered by the department in accordance with section 346-171~~+~~, provided that they meet at least one of the following quality standards:

- i. is accredited through the National Association for Family Child Care or National Early Childhood Program Accreditation;
- ii. participates in a partnership program that aligns with federal Head Start or state prekindergarten program standards; or
- iii. demonstrates adherence to evidence-based practices that support child development or school-readiness as approved by the department.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **SB712**.



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

ParentsAndChildrenTogether.org

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 712 RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM

TO: Chair San Buenaventura, Vice-Chair Aquino, & Members,
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Ryan Kusumoto, President & CEO

DATE: February 10, 2025 at 1:20 PM

Parents and Children Together (PACT) supports SB 712 Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program, which expands the program's eligibility criteria.

SB 712 expands access to early learning services to keiki as young as two years old by amending the existing statute in several ways, including: the removal of the accreditation requirement; the inclusion of family child care providers as eligible for the POD program; and the capping of a family's copayment at one dollar. These changes will result in more local keiki being able to access early learning services at a younger age.

Research continues to show that—despite the expansion of state-funded early learning services and programs—less than 40% of 4-year-olds and less than 15% of 3-year-olds are enrolled in state-funded programs—clearly demonstrating a continued lack of access for many children and families.

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

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

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



To: Senator San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: Testimony in Support of SB 712

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura and Vice Chair Aquino,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. As the Preschool Director & Head of School at ROOTS School, a preschool-5th grade independent school. I am deeply committed to providing high-quality educational experiences to the keiki and families we serve and if this passes, we will see our incoming preschoolers school ready. I am in strong support of expanding the Preschool Open Doors program (POD) to 2 year olds, expanding family child care as an allowable setting to receive POD funding, and the provision that caps families copay to no more than \$1.

I am here to highlight the measures **all** early childhood educators do to ensure the highest standards of care and to emphasize the importance of supporting family child care providers in our community.

1. Commitment to Health and Safety:

At Roots School, we adhere to rigorous state health and safety guidelines to create a safe, nurturing environment for every child. Our space is regularly inspected, and we prioritize hygiene, childproofing, and safety protocols to ensure children are protected while they learn and grow.

2. Continuous Professional Development:

We recognize the critical role that early childhood education plays in a child's development. To ensure we are providing the best possible care, we actively participate in professional development opportunities. We stay current with best practices in early learning, child development, and safety through workshops, certifications, and ongoing training.

3. Student Driven Curriculum:

We tailor our curriculum/daily activities to foster growth in cognitive, emotional, and social areas, helping each child develop at their own pace while preparing them for school readiness.



4. Strong Family Partnerships:

We believe that quality care is built on strong relationships with families. We maintain open lines of communication with parents and teachers, providing regular updates on each child's progress. Our goal is to work as partners with families to support the best interests of the children in our care.

5. Positive Impact on the Community:

As a small local non-profit, we are proud to contribute to our community by providing affordable, high-quality child care that is accessible to working families. By participating in the Preschool Open Doors program and other initiatives, we can expand our reach and ensure more children benefit from our services alongside our peers in center-based programs.

I strongly believe that family child care providers play a critical role in the early learning landscape. By supporting home-based care, we not only expand access to high-quality programs but also empower providers to continue elevating their practices and meeting the needs of families.

Thank you for considering my testimony and supporting keeping the inclusion of family child care as a setting that can access POD funding.

Mahalo for your time,
Melita Charan
Head of School & Preschool Director
(808)250-7988
melita@rootsmaui.org



Kamehameha Schools®

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Time: 1:20 p.m.

Date: February 10, 2025

Where: Conference Room 225

TESTIMONY

By Dr. Wai‘ale‘ale Arroyo
Kamehameha Schools

RE: **SB 712, Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program**

E ka Luna Ho‘omalua San Buenaventura, ka Hope Luna Ho‘omalua Aquino, a me nā lālā o kēia Kōmike o ka ‘Aha Kenekoa, aloha kākou. My name is Dr. Wai‘ale‘ale Arroyo, Vice President of Hi‘ialo at Kamehameha Schools.

Kamehameha Schools **supports** SB 712, 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.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 4:40:53 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daniel Plunkett	Testifying for Kauai Christian Academy	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose expanding the Preschool Open Doors program in the manner proposed by the bill. As head of a school with an accredited preschool program, I can verify that the accreditation process is valuable in pushing schools to continuously improve. I think we need to continue to promote access to quality preschool programs and accreditation is a helpful step to ensure quality. I do support expanding the preschool open doors program by means of making the funding more widely available, but that is not what this bill is about.



Hearing Date: **Monday, February 10, 2025, 1:45 PM, Conf. Rm 225**

To: Committee on Human Services
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

Re: **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 712, Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program**

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and the Members of the Committee,

Members of AAUW of Hawaii thank you for this opportunity to testify in **strong support of SB 712, 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 can be unsteady and 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.

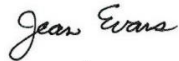
The cost of licensed child care ranges from approximately \$13,000 to \$23,000 per year depending on the age of the child. The median income for a single parent family is \$43,050, which means that child care for an infant would use up over 50% of the salary; leaving little left over to pay for transportation, parking, food, housing and taxes. Child care is the second largest cost to families following housing expense.

One of the major obstacles preventing mothers from securing a well-paid, stable job is finding and retaining available, affordable, quality child care including Family Child Care Centers. For some parents, having quality Family Child Care as an option is extremely important for those who work nontraditional hours or live in rural communities where there are few center-based options. These licensed family centers provide quality care are often located close to homes or places of working. Currently there are 22 Family Child Care Centers progressing through the accreditation process here in Hawaii adding to the existing pool of qualified providers .

This measure increases the availability and access to the quality and affordable early child care including an important array of child care setting options. Having quality Child care is so important for early childhood development and also allows parents the stability to continue in the workforce to provide for their family and contribute to society.

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.



February 10, 2025

Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

Chair Joy A. San Buenaventura
Vice Chair Henry J.C. Aquino
Sen. Troy N. Hashimoto
Sen. Jarrett Keohokalole
Sen. Kurt Fevella

Re: SB712 Relating to Preschool Open Doors Program

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

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

On behalf of HSCADV and our 25 member programs statewide, I respectfully submit testimony in strong support of SB712. **This bill addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for survivors of domestic violence - childcare access.** Survivors cite housing and access to childcare as the top two reasons they stay with an abusive partner, especially if the partner's family is providing childcare. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide more much-needed assistance to hardworking families.

Please support this program expansion to support survivors and increase childcare services in our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Sincerely,
Angelina Mercado, Executive Director

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 9:48:36 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

PATCH Supports SB 712



Date: February 10, 2025

To: Senator Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Aquino, Vice Chair
Committee on Health and Human Services

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

Subject: Measure HS.B. No. 712 – Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program

Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers Position: Strong Support

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of S.B. No. 712, 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 established an accreditation program to support the pursuit of accreditation and other quality improvement measures. Removing the accreditation requirement in this bill broadens family access to early learning opportunities while allowing providers to enhance quality through other complementary programs.

The 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.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 4:30:14 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

Date: February 7, 2025

To: Chair Joy San Buenaventura

Vice Chair Troy Hashimoto

Senate Health and Human Services Committee

From: Jaimie T. Inamine

Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers

Subject: Measure SB712 – Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program (Companion to HB692)

Testimony in Strong Support of SB712

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Hashimoto, and committee members,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB712, 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.

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 7, 2025

To: Chair Joy San Buenaventura
Vice Chair Troy Hashimoto
Senate Health and Human Services Committee

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

Subject: Measure SB712 – Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program (Companion to HB692)

Testimony in Strong Support of SB712

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Hashimoto, and committee members,

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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.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 3:52:18 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

Date: February 7, 2025

To: Chair Joy San Buenaventura

Vice Chair Troy Hashimoto

Senate Health and Human Services Committee

From: Chentira Fink-Ajala

Keiki O Ka ‘Āina Family Learning Centers

Subject: Measure SB712 – Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program (Companion to HB692)

Testimony in Strong Support of SB712

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Hashimoto, and committee members,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB712, 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.

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

Date: February 7, 2025

To: Chair Joy San Buenaventura
Vice Chair Troy Hashimoto
Senate Health and Human Services Committee

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

Subject: Measure SB712 – Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program (Companion to HB692)

Testimony in Strong Support of SB712

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Hashimoto, and committee members,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB712, 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.

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.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 3:35:19 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Ines-Kapua	Testifying for Keiki O Ka 'Aina	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha.

I am testifying in support of this bill, which would incentivize early learning employers in Hawai‘i to participate in Preschool Open Doors Expansion (Preschool Scholarships).

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.

Date: February 7, 2025

To: Chair Joy San Buenaventura
Vice Chair Troy Hashimoto
Senate Health and Human Services Committee

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

Subject: Measure SB712 – Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program (Companion to HB692)

Testimony in Strong Support of SB712

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Hashimoto, and committee members,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB712, 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.

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.

LATE

To: Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

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

Subject: Measure S.B. No. 712 – Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program

Hearing: Monday, February 10, 2025, at 1:20 PM, Conference Room 225

POSITION: STRONG SUPPORT

Aloha e Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, 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 S.B. No. 712 in its original text without any content edits**, as it expands the eligibility criteria for the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program, expands setting options, 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 and geographical 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. **Expanding Eligible Child Care Settings to Include Family Child Care Homes** – Currently, families in rural areas face significant barriers to accessing child care due to the limited availability of center-based programs, long waitlists, and transportation challenges. The exclusion of family child care homes from the POD program disproportionately impacts low-income and underserved families, denying many keiki across Hawai'i access to early learning opportunities. Family child care homes provide a nurturing, culturally responsive environment, offering flexible hours, smaller group sizes, and care that aligns with families' values and needs. Expanding POD to include these provider options would

ensure all keiki, regardless of location or economic status, have access to essential early learning opportunities.

This expansion would promote equity in early education, support working families, and strengthen Hawai'i's early learning workforce. Many family child care home providers are small business owners who play a vital role in addressing the state's child care shortage, especially for families with non-traditional work hours. Recognizing and funding these providers through POD would create a more inclusive system that serves all keiki, not just those with access to center-based care.

3. **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 **S.B. No. 712**, 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 as it's currently written 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 **S.B. No. 712**.



LATE

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB712, RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
FEBRUARY 10, 2025**

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i **SUPPORTS** SB712, RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM. Pursuant to the Platform of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i, we are committed to supporting early childhood education programs.

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

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify in support of SB712, RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM. Should you have any questions or require further information, please contact the Democratic Party of Hawai'i at legislation@hawaiidemocrats.org.

DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII

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

LATE

To: Senator San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: Testimony in Support of SB 712

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura and Vice Chair Aquino,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. As the proud owner and operator of Auntie Annie's Keiki Daycare, a family child care program, I am deeply committed to providing high-quality early childhood experiences to the keiki and families we serve. I am in strong support of expanding the Preschool Open Doors program (POD) to 2 year olds, expanding family child care as an allowable setting to receive POD funding, and the provision that caps families copay to no more than \$1.

I am here to highlight the measures we take to ensure the highest standards of care and to emphasize the importance of supporting family child care providers in our community.

1. Commitment to Health and Safety:

At Auntie Annie's Keiki Daycare, we adhere to rigorous state health and safety guidelines to create a safe, nurturing environment for every child. Our space is regularly inspected, and we prioritize hygiene, childproofing, and safety protocols to ensure children are protected while they learn and grow.

[add other ways you are committed to health and safety]I have incorporated in my policy, sick policy. If a child is sick or contagious please keep your child home.

Auntie Annie's Keiki Daycare participates in the USDA Food Program. The Food Program has been beneficial and convenient to the families in my daycare. They don't have to pack breakfast, lunch, & snack it's inclusive in tuition. Participating in the Food Program allows childcare provider to serve nutritious meals that adhere to federal standards. Childcare provider attends annually Food Program training through Patch to receive certification. Certification is mandatory to participate in the Food Program.

2. Continuous Professional Development:

We recognize the critical role that early childhood education plays in a child's development. To ensure we are providing the best possible care, we actively participate in professional development opportunities. We stay current with best practices in early learning, child development, and safety through workshops, certifications, and ongoing training.

As a licensed childcare provider, we are required by the state of Hawaii to complete 16 hours of training for increased knowledge. A lot my training certificates is acquired through Learning To Grow provided by The University of Hawaii. Patch is another resource that I use for increased knowledge. Areas of increased knowledge are the following: Physical care of young children, Care of Sick Children, Foods & nutrition, Child development & growth, Learning activities & play, First Aid & CPR & many more.

3. Individualized Learning Plans:

Our program focuses on the individual needs of each child, ensuring they are supported in their development at every stage. We tailor our curriculum/daily activities to foster growth in cognitive,

emotional, and social areas, helping each child develop at their own pace while preparing them for school readiness.

In My daycare I have incorporated Reading, Writing, & Math Curriculum tailored to each child's learning development. The advantage of teaching them in my daycare is the child gets one on one with childcare provider. This has helped each child progress & excel tremendously.

4. Strong Family Partnerships:

We believe that quality care is built on strong relationships with families. We maintain open lines of communication with parents and caregivers, providing regular updates on each child's progress. Our goal is to work as partners with families to support the best interests of the children in our care.

Every day I communicate to my parents about their child, informing them how their child's day went. I have developed over the years to always be open & communicate to my parents daily. Another way I engage with parents is to inform them to ask or talk to me about any concerns about their child.

5. Positive Impact on the Community:

As a local business, we are proud to contribute to our community by providing affordable, high-quality child care that is accessible to working families. By participating in the Preschool Open Doors program and other initiatives, we can expand our reach and ensure more children benefit from our services alongside our peers in center-based programs.

I strongly believe that family child care providers like mine play a critical role in the early learning landscape. By supporting home-based care, we not only expand access to high-quality programs but also empower providers to continue elevating their practices and meeting the needs of families.

Thank you for considering my testimony and supporting keeping the inclusion of family child care as a setting that can access POD funding.

Mahalo,

Diahnn Villafania

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 10:33:38 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

To: Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

From: Chloe “Pua‘ena” Vierra-Villanueva

Subject: Measure S.B. No. 712 – Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee members,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of S.B. No. 712, 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-age care.

From my understanding, only 15 of the 50 Million POD funds were used. Therefore, the program should be expanded for Hawai'i families, especially ALICE families like mine, who desperately need this support. 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

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 7:23:30 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

In STRONG SUPPORT of SB 712

Aloha Chair and members of the Committee,

Please vote YES on this measure.

Nancy Moser in Waikoloa on Hawai'i Island

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 7:09:14 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair and committee members,

I write in 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 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 established an accreditation program to support the pursuit of accreditation and other quality improvement measures. Removing the accreditation requirement in this bill broadens family access to early learning opportunities while allowing providers to enhance quality through other complementary programs. 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.

Thank you,

Noelle Lindenmann, Kailua-Kona

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 8:26:05 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

I strongly support this measure

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 10:26:26 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michele Chavez-Pardini	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable child care for Hawaii's Families!

Mahalo

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 10:53:57 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

Chair and members- please support this important measure. Thank you.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 11:00:07 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

support this measure to increase access to affordable child care for Hawai'i's families

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 11:05:58 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mimi Beams	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

"I support this measure to increase access to affordable child care for Hawai'i's families." Early education is critical to child development!!!

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 11:08:24 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marty-Jean Bender	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable child care for Hawai'i's families.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 12:26:02 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable child care for Hawai'i's families. The cost of living here is bad enough. We need to act with aloha to help our struggling families.

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Monday, February 10, 2025 at 1:20 PM
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

SB712 - RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM.

SUPPORT

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of S.B. No. 712, 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 to SUPPORT this measure.

Christine L. Andrews, JD
Wailuku, Maui

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 3:00:56 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable child care for Hawai'i's families.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 3:51:59 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable child care for Hawai'i's families.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 4:00:15 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable child care for Hawai'i's families.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 4:53:12 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha, I support this bill because ensuring access to early education, if desired by the family, should be an option that is open to them. Public access assures that it can be an option for all. Mahalo.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 3:47:20 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Betsy Scolnik	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Taking care of Keiki is a priority

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 12:34:29 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

To: Senator San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: Testimony in Support of SB 712

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura and Vice Chair Aquino,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. As the proud owner and operator of Tanya's Family Child Care program, I am deeply committed to providing high-quality early childhood experiences to the keiki and families we serve. I am in strong support of expanding the Preschool Open Doors program (POD) to 2-year-olds, expanding family childcare as an allowable setting to receive POD funding, and the provision that caps family's copay to no more than \$1.

I am here to highlight the measures I have taken to ensure the highest standards of care and to emphasize the importance of supporting family childcare providers in our community.

1. Commitment to Health and Safety:

At Tanya's Family Child Care, I adhere to rigorous state health and safety guidelines to create a safe, nurturing environment for every child. My space is regularly inspected, and we prioritize hygiene, childproofing, and safety protocols to ensure children are protected while they learn and grow.

I am also committed to using safe, non-toxic cleaners that are safe for the children and their environment.

I also participate in the USDA Food Program, that allows me to serve nutritious meals, snacks, and drinks that adhere to federal standards.

2. Continuous Professional Development:

I recognize the critical role that early childhood education plays in a child's development. To ensure I am providing the best possible care, I actively participate in professional development opportunities. I stay current with best practices in early learning, child development, and safety through workshops, certifications, and ongoing training.

Some of the programs are from PATCH; Early Learning Ventures, LENA, Learning to Grow, Farm to Table, and Early Head Start workshops.

3. Individualized Learning Plans:

My program focuses on the individual needs of each child, ensuring they are supported in their development at every stage. I tailor the curriculum/daily activities to foster growth in cognitive, emotional, and social areas, helping each child develop at their own pace while preparing them for school readiness.

Early Head Start's My Teaching Strategies are the curriculum I use to foster growth in specific areas of child development. I submit weekly curriculum plans to EHS by selecting one inside and one outside activity as well as a book to interact with the children every day.

4. Strong Family Partnerships:

I believe that quality care is built on strong relationships with families. I maintain open lines of communication with parents and caregivers, providing regular updates on each child's progress. My goal is to work as partners with families to support the best interests of the children in my care.

There is a monthly reading log provided to record books that are read to the child in the home setting; SMART goals are prepared along with monthly progress reports the parents complete and I initiate Parent-Teacher Conferences to share about the areas of progress and room for growth.

5. Positive Impact on the Community:

As a local business, I am proud to contribute to my community by providing affordable, high-quality childcare that is accessible to working families. By participating in the Preschool Open Doors program and other initiatives, I can expand my reach and ensure more children benefit from my services alongside my peers in center-based programs.

I strongly believe that family childcare providers like mine play a critical role in the early learning landscape. By supporting home-based care, we not only expand access to high-quality programs but also empower providers to continue elevating their practices and meeting the needs of families.

Thank you for considering my testimony and supporting keeping the inclusion of family childcare as a setting that can access POD funding.

Mahalo,

Tanya Rust

670 Waka Place

Wailuku, HI 96793

808-264-6942

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 7:59:57 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Wendy Dame	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I believe that preschools should expand their eligibility criteria to allow more preschool children to access education. This early socialization and educational opportunity can influence a child's future behavior, intellectual curiosity, and social adjustment.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 10:03:31 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

To: Senator San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: Testimony in Support of SB 712

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura and Vice Chair Aquino,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. As Maile Davis, the proud owner and operator of Piikea Kids, a family child care program serving our community in Hamakualoa, Haiku for the past 20 years, I am deeply committed to providing high-quality early childhood experiences to the keiki and families we serve. I strongly support the expansion of the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program to include 2-year-olds, the inclusion of family child care as eligible for POD funding, and the provision capping family copays at no more than \$1.

At Piikea Kids, we believe that the heart of our community's well-being starts with early childhood education. Research consistently shows the profound impact of early learning on long-term family success. Recently, I received state funding for my FCC. Instead of using it solely for program and supplies, I chose to supplement funding for some families directly. This approach not only supported their children's educational journey but also empowered these families to achieve new levels of success.

Family child care, like mine, plays a critical role in preparing children for future educational settings. It offers a nurturing environment where children learn socialization and educational fundamentals comparable to preschool settings. I take pride in the professional standards upheld at Piikea Kids, recently receiving National Association of Family Child Care Accreditation, aligning our offerings with those of traditional preschools but in a unique, home-based setting.

1. **Commitment to Health and Safety:** At Piikea Kids, we adhere to rigorous state health and safety guidelines, ensuring a safe and nurturing environment for every child. Our commitment to hygiene, childproofing, and safety protocols is paramount to fostering a secure learning space.
2. **Continuous Professional Development:** We prioritize ongoing professional development to stay current with best practices in early childhood education. This

commitment ensures that we provide the highest quality care and educational experiences.

3. **Individualized Learning Plans:** Our curriculum is tailored to meet the unique developmental needs of each child, fostering growth in cognitive, emotional, and social skills essential for school readiness.
4. **Strong Family Partnerships:** We maintain open communication with families, ensuring they are active partners in their child's learning journey. This collaboration strengthens the impact of our program within the community.
5. **Positive Impact on the Community:** As a local business, Piikea Kids contributes to our community by providing accessible, high-quality child care. By expanding access to programs like POD, we can enhance our community's early learning landscape and support more families in need.

In conclusion, I urge you to support SB 712 and continue including family child care as a vital setting eligible for POD funding. By doing so, we can ensure equitable access to high-quality early childhood education for all keiki in Hawaii.

Mahalo for considering my testimony and for your dedication to supporting early childhood education initiatives in our state.

Warm regards,

Maile Davis
Owner & Operator, Piikea Kids
Haiku, Maui

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 11:53:57 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

Mahalo Chair Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and committee members for hearing SB712.

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 SB712.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 9:45:14 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Charis Sole	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I stand in support of this bill.

In expanding Preschool Open Doors subsidy funds access, the State is opening early learning opportunities to more families with young children. This is invaluable in the State of Hawaii, as the cost of living is high and seats in early learning settings are hard to come by. Through expanding access to this subsidy, SB 712 is making early learning for young children more affordable for working class families. And hopefully, by expanding access to 2 year olds, this will also encourage more early learning settings to open seats for children younger than 3 years old.

I would like to draw attention to and applaud the fact that Family Child Care settings are included in this bill, as they make up an invaluable part of our early learning ecosystem in the State of Hawaii- and are often overlooked by governing bodies, especially in being able to receive subsidies.

In addition, I would like to point out this bill does not have an appropriation request as none is needed at the present time.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

To: Senator San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: Testimony in Support of SB 712

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura and Vice Chair Aquino,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. As the proud owner and operator of VIDDO Keiki Kare a family childcare program, I am deeply committed to providing high-quality early childhood experiences to the keiki and families we serve. I am in strong support of expanding the Preschool Open Doors program (POD) to 2 year olds, expanding family child care as an allowable setting to receive POD funding, and the provision that caps families copay to no more than \$1.

I am here to highlight the measures we take to ensure the highest standards of care and to emphasize the importance of supporting family childcare providers in our community.

1. Commitment to Health and Safety:

At VIDDO Keiki Kare, we adhere to rigorous state health and safety guidelines to create a safe, nurturing environment for every child. Our space is regularly inspected, and we prioritize hygiene, childproofing, and safety protocols to ensure children are protected while they learn and grow. Monthly fire drills are practiced and I am planning to show the keiki how a fire extinguisher is used.

Being a participant in the USDA Food Program, I proudly prepare and serve nutritious meals to the keiki. There are days that I allow the keiki to help me prepare their meal and since I have two and three year olds, they will soon learn how to set and serve themselves, allowing them to become self-sufficient.

2. Continuous Professional Development:

We recognize the critical role that early childhood education plays in a child's development. To ensure we are providing the best possible care, we actively participate in professional development opportunities. We stay current with best practices in early learning, child development, and safety through workshops, certifications, and ongoing training.

3. Individualized Learning Plans:

Our program focuses on the individual needs of each child, ensuring they are supported in their development at every stage. We tailor our curriculum/daily activities to foster growth in cognitive, emotional, and social areas, helping each child develop at their own pace while preparing them for school readiness. I was blessed by INPEACE with a rigorous curriculum created by INPEACE literacy Director. The focus is early literacy and we also integrate writing as well. I learned how to assess a child's development by using the ASQ and ASQ-SE. These are great tools to have to assess where a child is advanced in an area or lags in certain.

4. Strong Family Partnerships:

We believe that quality care is built on strong relationships with families. We maintain open lines of communication with parents and caregivers, providing regular updates on each child's progress. Our goal is to work as partners with families to support the best interests of the children in our care. I have a yearly gathering with the families for the children who graduate from my program who will be entering pre-school or kindergarten. This is a great time for families to get to know each other on a very casual setting. Drop off and pick up times are usually hectic as parents are rushing to get to work on time. The families love this time to sit and mingle.

5. Positive Impact on the Community:

As a local business, we are proud to contribute to our community by providing affordable, high-quality child care that is accessible to working families. By participating in the Preschool Open Doors program and other initiatives, we can expand our reach and ensure more children benefit from our services alongside our peers in center-based programs.

I strongly believe that family child care providers like mine play a critical role in the early learning landscape. By supporting home-based care, we not only expand access to high-quality programs but also empower providers to continue elevating their practices and meeting the needs of families.

Thank you for considering my testimony and supporting keeping the inclusion of family child care as a setting that can access POD funding.

Sincerely,

Desiree Milar-Okinaka
VIDDO Keiki Kare

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 6:25:44 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support SB 712

To: Senator San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: Testimony in Support of SB 712

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura and Vice Chair Aquino,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. As the proud owner and operator of Concrete Surfer dba licensed child care also known as Joseph and Melissa Lindsey, a family child care program, I am deeply committed to providing high-quality early childhood experiences to the keiki and families we serve. I am in strong support of expanding the Preschool Open Doors program (POD) to 2 year olds, expanding family child care as an allowable setting to receive POD funding, and the provision that caps families copay to no more than \$1.

I am here to highlight the measures we take to ensure the highest standards of care and to emphasize the importance of supporting family child care providers in our community.

1. Commitment to Health and Safety:

At Concrete Surfer dba licensed child care also known as Joseph and Melissa Lindsey, we adhere to rigorous state health and safety guidelines to create a safe, nurturing environment for every child. Our space is regularly inspected, and we prioritize hygiene, childproofing, and safety protocols to ensure children are protected while they learn and grow.

Continuous yearly education in safeguarding and health protection is highly important in my licensed child care facility. I have also stressed to guardians and parents and those who arrive and departure of their little ones to sanitize before utilizing writing material or grabbing of the clipboard.

2. Continuous Professional Development:

We recognize the critical role that early childhood education plays in a child's development. To ensure we are providing the best possible care, we actively participate in professional development opportunities. We stay current with best practices in early learning, child development, and safety through workshops, certifications, and ongoing training.

I have included and continue to add educational certificates through Chaminade in the Montessori setting of education, which I plan to expand into my licensed child care.

3. Individualized Learning Plans:

Our program focuses on the individual needs of each child, ensuring they are supported in their development at every stage. We tailor our curriculum/daily activities to foster growth in cognitive, emotional, and social areas, helping each child develop at their own pace while preparing them for school readiness. My priority is to teach our 'olelo hawai'i within my care as an importance in education and providing a 2nd language and readiness as each little one learns. Hands-on in gardening and planting for the toddlers while building language and words in the infant to toddlers. Exercise is key to provide balance in health as a learning base to the future.

4. Strong Family Partnerships:

We believe that quality care is built on strong relationships with families. We maintain open lines of communication with parents and caregivers, providing regular updates on each child's progress. Our goal is to work as partners with families to support the best interests of the children in our care. My clients are welcome into the environment which provides unity in our Aloha spirit of learning together is key to success in their children and also brings me in learning each 'ohana. I continue by emails and frequent text messages. However, person to person is the ultimate key of communication.

5. Positive Impact on the Community:

As a local business, we are proud to contribute to our community by providing affordable, high-quality child care that is accessible to working families. By participating in the Preschool Open Doors program and other initiatives, we can expand our reach and ensure more children benefit from our services alongside our peers in center-based programs.

I strongly believe that family child care providers like mine play a critical role in the early learning landscape. By supporting home-based care, we not only expand access to high-quality programs but also empower providers to continue elevating their practices and meeting the needs of families.

Thank you for considering my testimony and supporting keeping the inclusion of family child care as a setting that can access POD funding.

Mahalo,

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 3:18:36 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to support SB712 by Senator San Buenaventura. Preschool programs are critical for children to learn and thrive. We simply must do everything we can to provide child care . It's necessary for our current and future workforce.

Please pass SB712.

Mahalo,

Renee Rabb

Keaau, HI 96749

Big Island

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 1:40:06 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this measure because an accessible child care system is good for Hawai'i. There is a shortage of child care spaces in our state. Working parents need affordable child care options. Child care centers are very expensive and take an unreasonable portion of parents's wages, on average 18% of the median income for married couples right now. That is not sustainable for most families. If you have more than one child needing child care, that percentage doubles.

Providing child care for working families will benefit our entire state and economy. Parents can return to their jobs, which also helps employers, many of which are having trouble filling job positions. Or, parents can choose to get the education they need to further their careers which drives our state's economic growth.

Lack of open door Family Child Care Centers in our state for children ages 2-5 is a serious problem.

Mahalo for considering my views.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 12:28:36 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Isis Usborne	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e,

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

Mahalo,

Isis Usborne (96815)

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 8:57:22 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable child care for Hawai'i's families

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 5:30:12 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jane Aquino	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Preschool is the bedrock of success as an adult. The more children who can be served, the better.
Hawai‘i no ka oi. I SUPPORT this bill.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 5:29:58 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sheryl Summers	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable child care for Hawai'i's families.

Date: February 7, 2025

To: Chair Joy San Buenaventura
Vice Chair Troy Hashimoto
Senate Health and Human Services Committee

From: Jessica Chang
Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers

Subject: Measure SB712 – Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program (Companion to HB692)

Testimony in Strong Support of SB712

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Hashimoto, and committee members,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB712, 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. Many families struggle to afford preschool. Early childhood education is vital for cognitive, emotional and social development. This program helps ensure that more children can access this critical foundation for learning.

The bill will also create equal opportunity as it helps level the playing field for children of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. It reduces disparities by making preschool more accessible to all families, regardless of income.

Early education has been shown to provide long-term benefits, including improved academic performance, higher graduation rates and better career prospects. The POD program helps increase these positive outcomes for children who might otherwise not have access to early childhood learning opportunities.

Overall, the Preschool Open Doors program is needed to support both children's development and families' well being by making preschool more affordable and accessible to those who need it the most.

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

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 3:55:54 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

Date: February 7, 2025

To: Chair Joy San Buenaventura

Vice Chair Troy Hashimoto

Senate Health and Human Services Committee

From: Ann Sullivan

Keiki O Ka ‘Āina Family Learning Centers

Subject: Measure SB712 – Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program (Companion to HB692)

Testimony in Strong Support of SB712

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Hashimoto, and committee members,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB712, 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.

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

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 3:51:53 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

Date: February 7, 2025

To:Chair Joy San Buenaventura

Vice Chair Troy Hashimoto

Senate Health and Human Services Committee

From: SheriAnn Hinano Maxwell

Keiki O Ka ‘Āina Family Learning Centers

Subject:Measure SB712 – Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program (Companion to HB692)

Testimony in Strong Support of SB712

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Hashimoto, and committee members,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB712, 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.

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.

To: Senator San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: Testimony in Support of SB 712

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura and Vice Chair Aquino,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. As the proud owner and operator of Kamuela Keiki Korral daycare, a family child care program, I am deeply committed to providing high-quality early childhood experiences to the keiki and families we serve. I am in strong support of expanding the Preschool Open Doors program (POD) to 2 year olds, expanding family child care as an allowable setting to receive POD funding, and the provision that caps families copay to no more than \$1.

I am here to highlight the measures we take to ensure the highest standards of care and to emphasize the importance of supporting family child care providers in our community.

1. **Commitment to Health and Safety:** At Kamuela Keiki Korral daycare we adhere to rigorous state health and safety guidelines to create a safe, nurturing environment for every child. Our space is regularly inspected, and we prioritize hygiene, childproofing, and safety protocols to ensure children are protected while they learn and grow. We participate and practice monthly fire and earth quake drills.

We participate in the USDA Federal Food Program, where I provide all meals and snacks. Providing early healthy eating habits. All menus are inspected and approved by a qualified nutrition consultant. By providing meals and snacks for all children in my daycare families are saving money and time daily. We also do training on storing and preparing food safely.

2. Continuous Professional Development:

We recognize the critical role that early childhood education plays in a child's development. To ensure we are providing the best possible care, we actively participate in professional development opportunities. We stay current with best practices in early learning, child development, and safety through workshops, certifications, and ongoing training.

3. Individualized Learning Plans:

Our program focuses on the individual needs of each child, ensuring they are supported in their development at every stage. We tailor our curriculum/daily activities to foster

growth in cognitive, emotional, and social areas, helping each child develop at their own pace while preparing them for school readiness.

We use kid zone, Quality care program from the University of Hawaii Learning to grow program, Bright wheel, for curriculum and session planning.

4. Strong Family Partnerships:

We believe that quality care is built on strong relationships with families. We maintain open lines of communication with parents and caregivers, providing regular updates on each child's progress. Our goal is to work as partners with families to support the best interests of the children in our care.

Family engagement is very important, daily at pick up I inform authorized family member of their Childs day, activities, achievements. Photos are sent via text as well. I work with parents on any special care plans and therapist.

5. Positive Impact on the Community:

As a local business, we are proud to contribute to our community by providing affordable, high-quality child care that is accessible to working families. By participating in the Preschool Open Doors program and other initiatives, we can expand our reach and ensure more children benefit from our services alongside our peers in center-based programs.

I strongly believe that family child care providers like mine play a critical role in the early learning landscape. By supporting home-based care, we not only expand access to high-quality programs but also empower providers to continue elevating their practices and meeting the needs of families.

Thank you for considering my testimony and supporting keeping the inclusion of family child care as a setting that can access POD funding.

Mahalo,

Raydyn K Ines
Kamuela Keiki Korral daycare

February 7, 2025

To: The Honorable Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Henry Aquino, Vice Chair
and members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services

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

Subject: Measure S.B. No. 712 – Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program

Aloha,

My name is Dr. Terry Lock. Currently, I have been an early childhood educator for almost 50 years and I am the Director of the Hawai'i Early Childhood Educator Excellence and Equity (ECE³) Project at the University of Hawai'i Mānoa College of Education.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. No. 712.

SB 712 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 SB 712, 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 SB 712, the types of early learning programs for eligible families are listed on pg. 3, line 18-21 and p. 4, line 1-4. I am in agreement with licensed group child care centers, licensed group child care homes, licensed infant and toddler child care centers, and exempt center-based providers.

In addition, I am in support of regulated or accredited family child care homes only if the Department of Human Services (DHS) is ready to include this type of setting in the POD program.

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, and I commend how the DHS has established an accreditation support program. Because this complementary program exists, I agree with the statement on pg. 4, lines 6-8. that "Participation in the program shall not require preschools or early learning programs to be accredited by an approved accredited body". This will mean eligible families will have more early learning programs to choose from in the POD program, and DHS will continue to support accreditation.

I appreciate the balanced approach of this bill, which reflects a commitment to expanding access to early learning programs, while removing barriers. This bill will open doors for more families to access affordable and reliable care and learning for their keiki, and allow working families to remain in the workforce and achieve greater economic stability,

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 712.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 7:52:07 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Matthew Anderson	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

I support this bill.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 6:10:39 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Momi Akana	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Date: February 7, 2025

To: Chair Joy San Buenaventura

Vice Chair Troy Hashimoto

Senate Health and Human Services Committee

From: Momi Akana

Keiki O Ka ‘Āina Family Learning Centers

Subject: Measure SB712 – Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program (Companion to HB692)

Testimony in Strong Support of SB712

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Hashimoto, and committee members,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB712, 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.

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,

Momi Akana

Keiki O Ka Aina Family Learning Centers

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 6:45:11 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

Mahalo Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members for hearing SB712.

I strongly support SB712 in its original text without any content edits. Expanding the settings of the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program to include family child care homes will help to alleviate the disparities of the current exclusionary practices. All aspects of this bill are necessary for Hawai'i to truly be able to expand access to childcare, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

SB712 will help our working families, build up our economy, and allow more children to be prepared for learning. The POD program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, will provide much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please vote IN FAVOR of SB712 and support Hawaii's working families, economy and young children.

Mahalo!

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 6:55:36 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha, Affordable childcare is required in Hawaii if we want to thrive and grow. As a mom of now 10 and 13 yrs old boys, I remember too well the difficulty when they were younger. My boys stayed home with me until they were 3 yrs old, because there were no options even available in Kailua. We put both the boys on a waitlist to a preschool to ensure they would get in, and luckily they did. However, it cost about \$2,000/mo per kid. I don't have parents here and had to just make it work.

Most families can barely survive to stay here when they have young children. They do so only with a huge growing burden and debt. I think if I had to do it again, I would probably leave when the first was born so that I could afford childcare, housing, and food, without going into debt.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 9:55:43 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

Mahalo Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members for hearing SB712.

I strongly support SB712 in its original text without any content edits. Expanding the settings of the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program to include family child care homes will help to alleviate the disparities of the current exclusionary practices. All aspects of this bill are necessary for Hawai'i to truly be able to expand access to childcare, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

SB712 will help our working families, build up our economy, and allow more children to be prepared for learning. The POD program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, will provide much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please vote IN FAVOR of SB712 and support Hawaii's working families, economy and young children.

Mahalo nui loa

Leilani

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 10:19:37 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

Please support SB712. Thank you.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 4:52:32 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable childcare for Hawaii families.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 7:31:49 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

I strongly support SB712. As a retired elementary teacher, every year the top students in my classes were the ones who had attended preschool. Every child in Hawaii deserves the opportunity to attend preschool to provide them the path to success. Please pass this bill.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 8:16:22 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

Thank you for hearing SB712 which would expand the preschool open door program to two year olds. This would make childcare in Hawaii more affordable and accessible.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 9:34:10 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable child care for Hawai'i's families.

Thank you for your consideration,

Leah Morse

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 9:35:41 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

Mahalo Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members for hearing SB712.

I strongly support SB712 in its original text without any content edits. Expanding the settings of the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program to include family child care homes will help to alleviate the disparities of the current exclusionary practices. All aspects of this bill are necessary for Hawai'i to truly be able to expand access to childcare, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

SB712 will help our working families, build up our economy, and allow more children to be prepared for learning. The POD program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, will provide much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please vote IN FAVOR of SB712 and support Hawaii's working families, economy and young children.

Mahalo!

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 10:08:43 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Suellen Barton	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill - we need quality preschools for our Keiki

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 10:13:54 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable child care for Hawai'i's families.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 1:03:11 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
KELEN R CASEY	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable child care for Hawai'i's families.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 3:15:38 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable child care for Hawai'i's families. Educating our young children is paramount to their successful future, and our future as a nation.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 3:26:38 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable child care for Hawai'i's families.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 3:33:38 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
glenn oshiro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha. As a former volunteer, parent and spouse of a preschool administrator, I ask that you support this. Mahalo.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 4:39:19 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this bill.

Kanani Kai

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 4:43:59 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Lum	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.

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,

Jennifer Lum, ‘Ewa Beach

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 5:43:35 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marlene Thom	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable child care for Hawai'i's families. It is well-established science that there is nothing more important to the development of our children than providing them with stimulating education as early as possible. Instead of restricting access by requiring some arbitrary accreditation mandate, we should expand eligibility to include children aged two years old, thus offering parents the much-needed affordable child care.

Thank you for your support and consideration.

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

February 8, 2025

To: Senator San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice-chair
Members of the Health and Human Services Committee

From: Elaine Yamashita

Re: SB 712 support

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice-chair Aquino, and members of the 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.

This bill to expand access to Preschool Open Doors (POD) would greatly benefit Hawai'i's working families who need early care and education for their keiki beyond the school day and for the full year.

Our early learning system is broad and complex, and this additional state funding will supplement the current federal and state funding that families can access.

High quality programs facilitate children's growth and development, with well qualified, hopefully equitably compensated staff. As director of a small faith-based preschool in the 1980s, we were (Ala Lani United Methodist Preschool) the first on Maui to be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in 1987. It entailed a lot of work and it was very rewarding (but not financially at that time!) to be acknowledged as a high quality program. The accreditation process is extra work and programs need extra support and funding to achieve and maintain quality.

It's important to note that the requirement for the Dept. of Human Services (DHS) to support accreditation stays in place and DHS and other entities have launched programs for accreditation support. As these programs progress, there'll be better information and data on what and how much funding is needed to bring more programs up to accreditation standards.

Mahalo for your attention to this important bill.

Sincerely,

Elaine Yamashita

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 10:04:41 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable child care for Hawai'i's families.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 11:22:13 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable child care for Hawai'i's families.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 6:49:37 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and committee members,

I am writing in strong support of SB 712. This bill increases the income eligibility thresholds, which will allow many more of our family to access quality early care and education programs, especially our ALICE families. This bill also lowers the age of eligibility, and expands the eligible settings to include Family Child Care and Infant-Toddler Settings. We know that birth through 5 years old is a critical period of development and the research shows that quality early education is correlated with positive life outcomes. This bill will increase access to early learning programs and help more families to afford child care, which will support a future where we all thrive together.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Caitlin Kryss, Mountain View, Hawaii Island

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 9:39:12 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lianne Jernigan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Date: February 10, 2025

To: Senator San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Aquino, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

From: Lianne Jernigan

Subject: Measure S.B. No. 712 – Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program

Position: Strong Support

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and respected committee members,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of S.B. No. 712, a bill that seeks to expand the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program and reduce significant barriers to accessing child care for families across our state. This legislation will also lay a strong foundation for the future success of our youngest keiki.

If passed, this bill will dramatically increase access to affordable early learning opportunities for Hawaii's keiki. To maximize its impact, all components of the bill should

be retained. Lowering the age limit and including registered family child care homes are essential to increasing access, particularly in rural and underserved communities. Family child care homes represent a significant portion of child care options in Hawai'i, and there is no reason to maintain the current exclusionary practices, especially at a time when Hawai'i's families are facing urgent child care shortages.

The First Five Years Fund, 2024 has estimated that Hawai'i's economy loses approximately \$476 million annually due to a lack of child care. To ensure a stable and resilient economy, we must increase access to quality child care. Families are being forced to choose between employment and caring for their children, and businesses are struggling to maintain a reliable workforce when child care options are scarce. Expanding access to child care is critical to supporting our families, businesses, and economy.

S.B. No. 712 requires no new appropriation, yet its provisions could have a profound positive impact on our children, families, and businesses. We urge you to support and pass this bill for the benefit of all who call Hawai'i home.

Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,

Name

Lianne Jernigan

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 10:27:20 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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 Hawai‘i, our keiki and their families.

Based on my experience as a working mother I find this information the most relevant to my own career which was delayed until my children were in high school:

- Having children actually experience as penalizes women in the workforce. A recent report states that 50.5% of households with children in Hawai‘i have mothers who are the main source of family income. However, women working full time make only \$.74 for every dollar working fathers make in Hawaii. One major obstacle preventing mothers from securing a well-paid, stable job is finding and retaining available, affordable, quality childcare.

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 11:22:58 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

Mahalo Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members for hearing SB712.

I strongly support SB712 in its original text without any content edits. Expanding the settings of the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program to include family child care homes will help to alleviate the disparities of the current exclusionary practices. All aspects of this bill are necessary for Hawai'i to truly be able to expand access to childcare, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

SB712 will help our working families, build up our economy, and allow more children to be prepared for learning. The POD program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, will provide much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please vote IN FAVOR of SB712 and support Hawaii's working families, economy and young children.

Mahalo!

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 12:08:25 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and respected committee members,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of S.B. No. 712, a bill that seeks to expand the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program and reduce significant barriers to accessing child care for families across our state. This legislation will also lay a strong foundation for the future success of our youngest keiki.

If passed, this bill will dramatically increase access to affordable early learning opportunities for Hawaii's keiki. To maximize its impact, all components of the bill should be retained. Lowering the age limit and including registered family child care homes are essential to increasing access, particularly in rural and underserved communities. Family child care homes represent a significant portion of child care options in Hawai'i, and there is no reason to maintain the current exclusionary practices, especially at a time when Hawai'i's families are facing urgent child care shortages.

The First Five Years Fund, 2024 has estimated that Hawai'i's economy loses approximately \$476 million annually due to a lack of child care. To ensure a stable and resilient economy, we must increase access to quality child care. Families are being forced to choose between employment and caring for their children, and businesses are struggling to maintain a reliable workforce when child care options are scarce. Expanding access to child care is critical to supporting our families, businesses, and economy.

S.B. No. 712 requires no new appropriation, yet its provisions could have a profound positive impact on our children, families, and businesses. We urge you to support and pass this bill for the benefit of all who call Hawai'i home.

Thank you for your service.

Shay Chan Hodges

Haiku, Maui

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 12:13:59 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

My family and I in Waimea on Hawaii Island strongly support SB712. We need more good quality and available childcare!

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 12:45:32 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable child care for Hawai'i's families.

LATE

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 1:15:12 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable child care for Hawai'i's families.

LATE

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 1:17:31 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable child care for Hawai'i's families.

LATE

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 1:58:05 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
teri skillman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to increase access to affordable child care for Hawai'i's families.

**Mahalo,
Teri Skillman**

LATE

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 2:32:39 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

I am in full support of this bill. Our working families in Hawai'i still need a lot of help when it comes to accessing affordable preschool options for their keiki. The expansion of EOEL preschools has been helpful, but some families want or need different options which can be supported through this expansion of POD. It is important to remember that access to preschool is not just about accounting for the numbers of seats available in a given area but also if they are the right fit for the families and their keiki. The POD program offers an opportunity to ensure that families truly have choice in meeting their needs so that every child can have access to quality preschool experiences. Mahalo!

LATE

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 4:12:28 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
christopher castillo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill

LATE

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 9:06:13 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

I am writing in support of SB712 because I am a community college instructor who sees every day how unaffordable and inaccessible childcare makes it impossible for dedicated parents to attend class, juggle their school and job commitments, and make progress toward their academic and workforce goals. We must do better for these parent-students and others in the community!

LATE

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 9:33:43 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this measure which expands child care eligibility to include children ages 2 - 5 years old.

When all families have better access to child care, they have the ability to make choices that benefit our entire community.

Working parents can choose to return to their jobs which also helps employers and the economy.

Please support this bill to expand the availability of child care for working families.

LATE

Testimony in support of SB297

February 2, 2025

Re: SB297, relating to reproductive freedom

Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Dear Chair Buenaventura, V-Chair Aquino, Members of the Committee.

I am Gail Breakey with Indivisible, testifying in very strong support of SB297. This bill amends the Hawai'i State Constitution to prohibit the State from denying or interfering with an individual's reproductive freedom, including the right to choose to obtain an abortion and to obtain or use contraceptives.

This amendment is critically needed to ensure that the rights of Hawaii citizens are upheld. Given the serious challenges posed by the current federal administrations intention to deny citizens their right to bodily autonomy and appropriate health care, this legislation is critical to the

Thank you very much for your consideration to pass this critical legislation and for the opportunity to testify,

Sincerely,



Gail Breakey

LATE

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 8:10:32 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Senator Henry J.C. Aquino,

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

LATE

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 10:04:53 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha,

I strongly support SB712 Preschool Open Doors Expansion to include **two-year-olds through five-year-olds (see sb712, page 2, lines 10-12). I also support allowing parents or guardians to choose from all types of registered and/or licensed early learning child care/preschool programs, without the requirement for accreditation.**

SB712 will help working families, build up the economy, and get more children school ready. If expanded, the POD program will provide the needed assistance to hardworking ohana.

Please vote IN FAVOR of SB712 and support Hawai‘i keiki, working ‘ohana, and economy.

Mahalo.

LATE

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 12:24:00 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

Mahalo Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members for hearing SB712.

I strongly support SB712 in its original text without any content edits. Expanding the settings of the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program to include family child care homes will help to alleviate the disparities of the current exclusionary practices. All aspects of this bill are necessary for Hawai'i to truly be able to expand access to childcare, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

SB712 will help our working families, build up our economy, and allow more children to be prepared for learning. The POD program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, will provide much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please vote IN FAVOR of SB712 and support Hawaii's working families, economy and young children.

Mahalo!

LATE

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 1:09:37 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shisa Kahaunaele	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB712 in its original text without any content edits. As a single mom of three, programs like this completely change households by offering quality childcare at an affordable rate.

Expanding the settings of the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program to include family child care homes will help to alleviate the disparities of the current exclusionary practices. All aspects of this bill are necessary for Hawai'i to truly be able to expand access to childcare, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

SB712 will help our working families, build up our economy, and allow more children to be prepared for learning. The POD program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, will provide much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please vote IN FAVOR of SB712 and support Hawaii's working families, economy and young children.

Mahalo!

LATE

SB-712

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 2:00:29 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

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

Comments:

Mahalo Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members for hearing SB712.

I strongly support SB712 in its original text without any content edits. Expanding the settings of the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program to include family child care homes will help to alleviate the disparities of the current exclusionary practices. All aspects of this bill are necessary for Hawai'i to truly be able to expand access to childcare, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

SB712 will help our working families, build up our economy, and allow more children to be prepared for learning. The POD program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, will provide much-needed assistance to hardworking families. Please vote IN FAVOR of SB712 and support Hawaii's working families, economy and young children.

Mahalo!