



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: Representative Jackson D. Sayama, Chair
Representative Mike Lee, Vice Chair
House Committee on Labor

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

SUBJECT: Testimony on H.B. No. 880, H.D. 1 – RELATING TO EARLY CHILD INTERVENTION

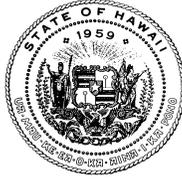
Committee: LAB
Date: Tuesday, February 11, 2025
Time: 9:00 a.m.
Location: Conference Room 309

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

The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) offers the following comments in support of H.B. No. 880, H.D. 1, and defers to the Department of Health and the Department of Human Resources Development regarding implementation and funding.

The Department of Health's Early Intervention Section (EIS) plays a vital role in Hawai'i's early learning system by identifying and addressing developmental delays in young children. The EOEL supports efforts to strengthen the department's ability to recruit and retain highly trained specialists. These specialists provide critical early support for our keiki and help them reach their full potential during their most formative years.

We appreciate the Legislature's continued investment in our youngest keiki and their families and thank you for the opportunity to share these comments in support of H.B. No. 880, H.D.1.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
P. O. Box 3378
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

Testimony in SUPPORT of H.B. 880 H.D. 1
RELATING TO EARLY CHILD INTERVENTION

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON D. SAYAMA, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR

Hearing Date, Time and Room Number: 02/11/2025, 9:00am, CR 309

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The proposed measure appropriates funds to the Department of Health
2 (“Department”) for salary increases for 11.0 FTE positions and to establish 2.0 FTE mental
3 health specialist positions. The Department requests that this measure be considered as a
4 vehicle to provide this needed funding so long as it does not supplant the priorities and
5 requests outlined in the Governor’s executive budget request.

6 **Department Position:** The Department supports this measure and offers comments.

7 **Department Testimony:** The Family Health Services Division (FHSD) provides the following
8 testimony on behalf of the Department.

9 The DOH Early Intervention Section (EIS) provides services as mandated by Part C of the
10 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for children from birth to age 3 years with
11 developmental delays or who have a health condition with a risk for developmental delay.
12 Specially trained providers are necessary to provide the IDEA Part C mandated services,
13 specifically those that offer direct services such as Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and
14 Behavioral Therapy.

15 In Section 3, the bill proposes an appropriation to reclassify three employment classes (Physical
16 therapist III to physical therapist IV; Special education teacher III to special education teacher

1 IV; and Occupational therapist III to occupational therapist IV). There are a total of 11 positions
2 that, if reclassified, would require a \$4,800 per year salary increase. This total (11 x \$4,800)
3 equals \$52,800. Reclassification of these positions will support EIS's recruitment and retention
4 efforts to build a qualified workforce to support infants and toddlers with special needs and
5 their families.

6 Establishing the 2.0 FTE general funded mental health specialist positions will allow maximum
7 reimbursements to the state through Medicaid for services to infants and toddlers with special
8 needs and their families.

9 **Offered Amendment:** None.

10 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M. D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR
KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



BRENNA H. HASHIMOTO
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

BRIAN K. FURUTO
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT
KA 'OIHANA HO'OMŌHALA LIMAHANA
235 S. BERETANIA STREET
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-2437

Statement of
BRENNA H. HASHIMOTO
Director, Department of Human Resources Development

Before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR
Tuesday, February 11, 2025
9:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 309

In consideration of
HB 880, HD1, Relating to Early Child Intervention

Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and the members of the committee.

The Department of Human Resources Development (HRD) offer the following comments for HB 880, HD1.

The purpose of HB 880, HD1 is to require HRD to:

1. Reclassify certain positions within the early childhood services unit of the Department of Health Early Intervention Section; and
2. Appropriate funds for the reclassification of certain positions and the establishment of mental health specialist positions within the Early Child Services Unit of the Department of Health Early Intervention Section.

HRD recognizes the importance of filling statewide early intervention positions to support the State's ability to meet infant and early childhood mental health needs.

We respectfully request the removal of Section 2., which directs HRD to reclassify the following positions within the early childhood services unit of the department of health early intervention section:

- (1) Physical therapist III to physical therapist IV;
- (2) Special education teacher III to special education teacher IV; and
- (3) Occupational therapist III to occupational therapist IV.

The classification of civil service positions within the State Executive Branch is grounded in the merit principle, which is covered by Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS), §76-1. To ensure that the provisions of the merit principle are met, a position is only reclassified to a different class of work or a higher level within the job series when the duties and responsibilities have significantly changed in terms of the nature of work, complexity, scope of work, level of responsibility, etc. These changes in duties and responsibilities are identified by the program following a change in operational needs and are documented in the position description. Position classification is not the appropriate vehicle to achieve recruitment, retention, or compensation goals.

Alternatively, there are existing pay programs that are available and being used to assist in the recruitment and retention of employees.

- These include flexible hiring rates which allow the appointing authority to hire experienced employees up to the mid-point of the pay range, and
- Shortage, which provides a raised hiring rate via a differential to new hires and current employees.

The physical therapist (PT), special education teacher (SPED teacher), and occupational therapist (OT) classes are all currently on shortage. The pay incumbents receive with shortage is greater than the base pay of the proposed salary ranges.

Shortage has helped in the recruitment and retention of OTs and PTs in the Children with Special Needs Branch. There are currently no vacancies for PTs and 1 vacancy out of 5 positions for OTs. The Department of Health requested shortage for the SPED teacher last year and it became effective in August 2024. It is hoped that this will assist in the recruitment and retention of employees as it has helped with other shortage classes.

In addition, reclassifying the III level classes to the IV level will result in supervisors being paid on the same salary range as their subordinates.

The Department of Health's Departmental Human Resources Office can assist its department's programs with position description updates, reviewing those changes, and reclassifying a position if appropriate. Additionally, they can assist in determining which existing pay programs may be appropriate.

HRD has no comments regarding the appropriation of funds for the establishment of 2.0 FTE for permanent mental health specialist positions; however, we would like to note that salary schedules are negotiated through the collective bargaining process.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and provide comments.

HAWAII EARLY INTERVENTION COORDINATING COUNCIL (HEICC)



Date: February 11th, 2025

To: Committee on Labor
Representative Jackson D. Sayama, Chair
Representative Mike Lee, Vice Chair
AND Committee Members

From: Hawaii Early Intervention Coordination Council (HEICC)

Re: Strong Support of Early Intervention Section (EIS) **HB880 Early Child Intervention**

The Early Intervention Section (EIS) is a federal and state-mandated program that provides services to support the development of infant and toddlers from birth to three years of age. Information and support are also provided to parents to increase their knowledge about how to support their child's development. The Department of Health (DOH) is the lead agency for the implementation of Part C, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for the State of Hawaii. Within the DOH, EIS is responsible to ensure that Hawaii meets all the requirements and regulations of Part C of IDEA.

The Hawaii Early Intervention Coordination Council (HEICC) **strongly supports** pay parity among the State's Early Intervention workforce **through HB880**. A few years ago, Early Intervention Section contracted with the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education to conduct a Comparative Rate and Salary Study with comparable states. **Out of the eight comparable states, Hawaii ranked last or in the bottom three** in direct service reimbursement rates for required positions such as Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Speech Therapy, Care Coordinators, Special Education Teachers and General Education teachers. In 2024, gratefully, the Legislature approved increased reimbursement rates for our contracted programs. This year, we are requesting salary rate increases for our State programs to address pay parity and the 30%-42% vacancy rates to ensure our youngest keiki with significant support needs get the services they deserve.

The department of human resources development shall reclassify the following positions within the early childhood services unit of the department of health early intervention section as follows:

- (1) Physical therapist (PT) level III to physical therapist level IV;
- (2) Special education teacher (SPED) level III to special education teacher level IV; and
- (3) Occupational therapist (OT) level III to occupational therapist level IV.

Physical therapists and occupational therapists are now required to obtain doctorate level degrees, justifying the move from a level III to a level IV, sharing levels with speech pathologists (SLPs). Special education teachers with two years' experience should be at the required level IV. All providers (PT, SPED, OT and SLP) are required to provide the same level of responsibilities and function independently in the field with their respective scope of work.



HAWAII EARLY INTERVENTION COORDINATING COUNCIL (HEICC)

Additionally, the department will establish mental health specialist positions to integrate early childhood mental health into its programs and to meet the demand for social and emotional development services. In addition to meeting the needs of the keiki and `ohana they serve, mental health specialists have proven to contribute to staff retention.

Recruiting and retaining qualified staff is critical for delivering quality services and ensuring our youngest keiki with disabilities receive the support needed to help them reach their developmental goals. Having the needed service providers and support staff within the DOH EIS infrastructure is critical to delivering mandated EI services both statewide and within state operated EI programs. If the State cannot provide the mandated services, it risks the following lawsuits. HEICC would like to avoid an IDEA lawsuit like the 2018 DOE's Special Education lawsuit, which cost the State 10.5M in preventative dollars.

Historically, EIS has not received any state complaints. However, the first complaint was received in FFY2023, followed by four complaints in FFY2024. All complaints, except for one, was primarily due to the child not receiving EI services in accordance with the Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP) that resulted in a finding of noncompliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Mahalo, on behalf of the Hawaii`i Early Intervention Coordinating council (HEICC) for your continued support to improve the health, safety and well-being of our youngest keiki with significant support needs and their `ohana. We appreciate you supporting **HB880**.

Aloha nui,

Kerrie Urosevich, PhD

Chair, Hawaii`i Early Intervention Coordinating Council

Date: February 11th, 2025

To: Committee on Labor
Representative Jackson D. Sayama, Chair
Representative Mike Lee, Vice Chair
AND Committee Members

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: Strong Support of Early Intervention Section (EIS) **HB880 HD1 Early Child Intervention**

The Early Intervention Section (EIS) is a federal and state-mandated program that provides services to support the development of infant and toddlers from birth to three years of age. Information and support are also provided to parents to increase their knowledge about and ability to support their child's development. The Department of Health (DOH) is the lead agency for the implementation of Part C, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for the State of Hawaii. Within the DOH, EIS is responsible to ensure that Hawaii meets all the requirements and regulations of Part C of IDEA.

ECAS strongly supports parity among the State's Early Intervention workforce **through HB880 HD1**. A couple of years ago, Early Intervention Section contracted with the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education to conduct a Comparative Rate and Salary Study with comparable states. **Out of the eight comparable states, Hawai'i ranked last or in the bottom three** in EI program administration salaries (e.g., Program Manager, Data Clerk, and Office Assistant) and direct service reimbursement rates for required positions such as Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Speech Therapy, Care Coordinators, Special Education Teachers, General Education teachers.) The Legislature gratefully approved an increase for *contracted programs* in 2024. This year, we are requesting increases for our State programs to address the 30%-42% vacancy rates.

The department of human resources development shall reclassify the following positions within the early childhood services unit of the department of health early intervention section as follows:

- (1) Physical therapist III to physical therapist IV;
- (2) Special education teacher III to special education teacher IV; and
- (3) Occupational therapist III to occupational therapist IV.

Physical therapists and occupational therapists are now required to obtain doctorate level degrees, justifying the move from a level III to a level IV, sharing levels with speech pathologists (SLPs). Special education teachers with two years' experience should be at the required level IV. All providers (PT, SPED, OT and SLP) are required to provide the same level of responsibilities and function independently in the field with their respective scope of work.

Additionally, the department will establish mental health specialist positions to integrate early childhood mental health into its programs. In addition to meeting the needs of the keiki and `ohana they serve, mental health specialists have proven to contribute to staff retention.

Recruiting and retaining qualified staff is critical for delivering quality services and ensuring our youngest keiki with disabilities receive the support needed to help them reach their developmental goals. Additionally, having the needed service providers and support staff within the DOH EIS infrastructure is critical to delivering mandated EI services both statewide and within state operated EI programs. If the State cannot provide the mandated services, it risks the following lawsuits. ECAS would like to avoid an IDEA lawsuit similar to DOE's Special Education law suit few years back, costing the State 10.5M in preventative dollars.

Historically, EIS has not received any state complaints. However, the first complaint was received in FFY2023, followed by four complaints in FFY2024. All complaints, except for one, was primarily due to the child not receiving EI services in accordance with the Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP) that resulted in a finding of noncompliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Mahalo for your continued support to improve the health, safety and well-being of our youngest keiki with significant support needs and their `ohana. We appreciate you supporting **HB880 HD1**.

Mahalo Nui Loa,



Jonathan R. Alexander, MSW

Hawaii Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Coordinator (CSPD), ECAS



Our Mission

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



Steering Committee

City and County of Honolulu

- Justina Acevedo-Cross
- Greg Auberry
- Chiyomi Chow
- Kanoe Enos
- JoAnn Farnsworth
- Jordana Ferreira
- Nadia Garcia
- Danny Goya
- Alex Harris
- Sakinah Harrison
- Erin Henderson
- Monique Ibarra
- Shawn Kana'iaupuni
- Ryan Kusumoto
- Ka'iulani Laehā
- Lynelle Marble
- Megan McCorriston
- Marty Oliphant
- Cherilyn Shiinoki
- Laurie Tochiki
- Sunshine Topping
- Kerrie Urosevich
- Carol Wear
- S. Kukunaokalā Yoshimoto

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

Kaua'i County

- Sarah Blane
- Alice Luck

Hawai'i County

- Sulma Gandhi
- Kahi Moreman
- Angela Thomas



Contact Info

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

info@committokeiki.org
CommitToKeiki.org

Date: February 11, 2025

To: Representative Jackson Sayama, Chair
Representative Mike Lee, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Labor

From: Commit to Keiki

RE: House Bill 880 HD1, Relating to Early Child Intervention

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

Commit to Keiki supports passage of House Bill 880 HD1, requires the Department of Human Resources Development to reclassify certain early intervention specialist positions within the Early Childhood Services Unit in the Department of Health.

Commit to Keiki believes strongly that we—as a community—must support all of our keiki and strive to meet each of their developmental and educational needs. The motivations for doing so are myriad but—more than anything—meeting their needs early in their lives pays dividends for the individual children as well as our community.

As noted in the measure's preamble, there is currently a vacancy rate between thirty and forty-two percent across all early intervention programs across the state. Not only does this limit our ability to address the needs of our state's keiki, but it also puts us at significant risk of legal action.

Should this measure be passed, it would inject a significant amount of funding into programs that provide keiki with access to professionals in fields including special education, occupational and physical therapy. It would also provide funding to support mental health specialists who would integrate early childhood mental health into their programs. This has been shown to positively impact the children they work and have a marked effect on overall staff retention.

For these reasons, CTK strongly supports House Bill 880 HD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony.



Date: February 11, 2025
To: Committee on Labor
Representative Jackson D. Sayama, Chair
Representative Mike Lee, Vice Chair
Committee Members

From: Hawai'i Association for Infant Mental Health, dba AIMH HI
Re: Strong Support of Early Intervention Section (EIS) **HB880 Early Child Intervention**

The Early Intervention Section (EIS) is a federal and state-mandated program that provides services to support the development of infant and toddlers from birth to three years of age. Information and support are also provided to parents to increase their knowledge about and ability to support their child's development. The Department of Health (DOH) is the lead agency for the implementation of Part C, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for the State of Hawai'i. Within the DOH, EIS is responsible to ensure that Hawai'i meets all the requirements and regulations of Part C of IDEA.

The first 1,000 days after birth are critical in establishing brain connections, relationship patterns, and laying the foundation for future development. **AIMH HI** stands on the vision that "infant mental health is everyone's kuleana" - and the Early Intervention Section is key in addressing the mental and early relational health of our youngest. Our association's role in the early childhood space is to "hold the hands of those who hold the hands of babies" - knowing that when the providers around young children are steady, the children can then have steady growth and development. **We urge you to move this critical bill forward to support the workforce that is doing the specialized work that is not only their professions but also understanding the unique developmental needs of babies and toddlers with disabilities.**

AIMH HI strongly supports parity among the State's Early Intervention workforce through **HB880**. A couple of years ago, Early Intervention Section contracted with the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education to conduct a Comparative Rate and Salary Study with comparable states. **Out of the eight comparable states, Hawai'i ranked last or in the bottom three** in EI program administration salaries (e.g., Program Manager, Data Clerk, and Office Assistant) and direct service reimbursement rates for required positions such as Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Speech Therapy, Care Coordinators, Special Education Teachers, General Education teachers.) The Legislature gratefully approved an increase for contracted programs in 2024. This bill will enable our State programs to address the 30%-42% vacancy rates.



This bill also allows the department to establish mental health specialist positions to integrate early childhood mental health into its programs. Infant Mental Health Specialists provide targeted supports, understanding the delicate need to support the relationships around the child. The addition of mental health specialists is an innovative approach to tackling mental health as early as possible and triaging resources in a more efficient way, alleviating the need to elevate children to more intensive services. In addition to meeting the needs of the keiki and 'ohana they serve, mental health specialists have proven to contribute to staff retention.

Mahalo for your commitment and support to improve the mental health, safety, and well-being of our youngest keiki with significant support needs and their 'ohana.

Na'u nō me ka ha'aha'a,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erin Henderson Lacerdo', is positioned above the printed name.

Erin Henderson Lacerdo, LCSW, IECMH-E©

Executive Director, Association for Infant Mental Health in Hawai'i

HB-880-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 10:06:14 AM

Testimony for LAB on 2/11/2025 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

Recruiting and retaining qualified staff is essential for providing quality services and ensuring that our youngest keiki with disabilities receive the support needed to achieve their developmental goals. Thank you for your ongoing support in improving the health, safety, and well-being of our youngest keiki with significant support needs and their `ohana. I appreciate your support for HB880 HD1.

Testimony in Strong Support of HB880 HD1 - Early Childhood Intervention

To: Committee on Labor
Representative Jackson D. Sayama, Chair
Representative Mike Lee, Vice Chair
AND Committee Members

From: Kathleen O'Dell, PhD
Re: Strong Support of Early Childhood Intervention Section (EIS) HB880 HD1

I am writing in strong support of HB880 HD1, which seeks to address critical workforce and service delivery issues within Hawai'i's Early Intervention Section (EIS). The EIS is a vital program that provides essential services to infants and toddlers, from birth to three years old, to support their development. As a federal and state-mandated program under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), it is imperative that Hawai'i meets its obligations to provide quality services for young children with disabilities and developmental delays.

The Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS) strongly supports HB880 HD1, as it aims to establish greater parity within Hawai'i's Early Intervention workforce. A study conducted by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education highlighted that Hawai'i ranks at the bottom for salaries and reimbursement rates for early intervention service providers, including physical therapists, special education teachers, occupational therapists, and care coordinators. This salary gap has led to concerning vacancy rates of 30%-42% in some positions, which threatens the quality and availability of services to families in need.

HB880 HD1 addresses this issue by proposing critical reclassifications and pay increases for essential positions, including:

- **Reclassification of Physical Therapists, Occupational Therapists, and Special Education Teachers:** The bill supports moving qualified staff from a Level III to Level IV, reflecting the advanced educational requirements (such as doctorate degrees for physical and occupational therapists) and the high level of responsibilities these professionals hold in the early intervention field.
- **Establishment of Mental Health Specialist Positions:** This provision will integrate early childhood mental health support into the program, ensuring that families receive the holistic care they need while also contributing to staff retention by addressing the mental health needs of both children and providers.

The recruitment and retention of qualified staff are critical for delivering high-quality services to Hawai'i's youngest keiki. Without the necessary workforce, there is a risk that the State may fail to meet its legal obligations under IDEA, which could lead to lawsuits, similar to the one faced by the Department of Education regarding special education services. Such a lawsuit cost the state \$10.5 million in preventative measures. By passing HB880 HD1, we can ensure Hawai'i

does not face these costly repercussions and continues to deliver the mandated services to all children who need them.

Additionally, with increasing complaints regarding the noncompliance of individualized family support plans (IFSPs), it is clear that action is needed to ensure that children and families receive timely and appropriate services. This bill will help to address the root causes of these complaints by stabilizing and supporting the workforce responsible for delivering critical early intervention services.

I urge the committee to support HB880 HD1 and take this important step toward strengthening Hawai'i's early intervention services for our youngest children and their families.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kathleen O'Dell, PhD

HB-880-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 7:14:20 AM

Testimony for LAB on 2/11/2025 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha!

My name is Leilani Kailiawa. from Hawaii Island. I am a parent of 3 sons ages 22, 20, and 8. My youngest child who went through the Early Intervention Services almost 9 years ago. My son was hospitalized for 7 months at Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children. He has a complex medical history. As I reflect back on my past experience, I wish that there was an Occupational Therapist and/or Speech Language Pathologist who was specialized in Feeding Therapy. I was not familiar with IFSP (Part C of IDEA) because I was focusing on taking care of my child and my mental state in striving to do the day to day activities as a mother of a child with medical and developmental challenges.

Till this day, he is over 90% dependent on his feeding tube for most of his nutrition. I feel that if I had that extra support in that area, He may have come farther along.

Recruiting and retaining qualified staff is critical for delivering quality services and ensuring our youngest keiki with disabilities receive the support needed to help them reach their developmental goals. Additionally, having the needed service providers and support staff within the DOH EIS infrastructure is critical to delivering mandated EI services both statewide and within state operated EI programs.

I am in strong support of HB880 HD1

With gratitude

Leilani

HB-880-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 4:36:12 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/11/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christina Simmons	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

2.10.25

Strong Support for HB880

Early Intervention is important for our vulnerable keiki. The work staff perform, helping with assessments and interventions in a trauma-informed way can change lives. Their parity with Department of Education only makes sense to help keep staff, decrease gaps in service and create a strong workforce.

Hawaii has had real challenges with comparative rate reimbursement for contractors. Gratefully the Legislature approved increases so contractors are less likely to drop contracts with the Department of Health while paying their own bills. This year's request increases salaries for specific occupations within the program with the vision of decreasing the 30%-42% vacancy rates. The reclassification of specific positions will make them more competitive. Additionally, the department will establish mental health specialist positions to integrate early childhood mental health into its programs. This addition has been shown to decrease staff turnover and increase job satisfaction.

For these reasons I ask you to pass HB880 HD1.

Sincerely,

Christina Simmons, MPH, IBCLC emeritus

Kaneohe resident

HB-880-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 7:57:00 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/11/2025 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha, I support HB880 HD1 for early intervention services. My son benefitted from Early Intervention when he was two years old. The services provided to him and myself were essential for his growth and development, and encouraged me to become a better parent. It taught me to understand his needs better and to try useful activities in my home to aid in his therapies. Please support our most vulnerable keiki by passing this bill. Mahalo