

A Bill for an Act Relating to Early Education.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that one of the most pressing needs of families within our State is finding adequate care and education for young children. The problem affects parents and children from all economic strata and geographic areas, and additionally, impacts on employers whose workers are parents of young children. Households with two working parents and the growing number of single parent households must struggle to find organizations and institutions that will provide young children with a strong foundation for their future academic development. Parents are especially concerned that their children's first formal learning be affordable and take place in a safe and stimulating environment. When these parents' hopes are not realized, they become preoccupied with the well-being of their children. For the employer of these parents this often results in workers with lower morale, lower productivity, and higher rates of absenteeism.

The legislature is particularly concerned about early childhood education options available to children before entering kindergarten. These children are at that critical age when an early childhood education program could provide a solid foundation for a lifetime of learning. Research in Hawaii and other states documents the difference that preschool makes in an individual's lifelong achievement and satisfaction. This research indicates that students in preschool receive a head start in language development and in gaining motivation and self-esteem.

The legislature finds that only half of Hawaii's four year olds attend preschool. Poor children and children from non-English-speaking homes are less likely to go to preschool.

The purpose of this Act is to require the department of education to plan for voluntary statewide early education to be delivered by private providers whenever possible. The department of education shall adopt standards for curriculum, facilities, teacher training, and methods for encouraging the involvement of parents and guardians. Provisions will also be made for parents and guardians who opt for home care to utilize early childhood education resources.

SECTION 2. Chapter 296, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new part to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

"PART . EARLY EDUCATION

§296- Policy. The department of education shall develop a plan for quality voluntary early education which shall be fully implemented and available statewide to all eligible children on a voluntary basis no later than January 1, 2000.

§296- Early education defined. For the purposes of this part, "early education" means a developmentally appropriate early childhood development and education program for children from birth to age eight.

§296- Quality early education plan. (a) The department of education plan shall focus on children from ages four up to six years.

(b) The board of education shall adopt standards and criteria for quality early education based on current national standards and the needs of Hawaii's children. The standards and criteria shall provide the basis upon which the early education plan shall be developed.

(c) The department of education shall work cooperatively with the department of human services, the department of health, college level education programs,

the office of children and youth, early education organizations, parents of young children, and other appropriate organizations in developing a quality early education plan. The plan shall include but not be limited to the following:

- (1) Standards for curriculum, activities, facilities, and teacher training for early childhood education;
- (2) Methods and materials designed to involve and educate parents and guardians in the education and development of their young children;
- (3) A timetable and implementation schedule, approved by the board of education, to be submitted to the governor and the legislature;
- (4) Costs for delivery of early childhood services, including how costs can be shared between the public and private sectors; and
- (5) Assessment of training and certification capacity of teachers including assurances by teacher training institutions to recruit and graduate qualified staff for early childhood education.

(d) Early education shall be delivered through private providers to the maximum extent possible, and provision shall be made to enable parents and guardians to opt for home care if they so choose by providing early childhood education resources in each school for in-home use.”

SECTION 3. The department of education shall submit its initial plans to the 1990 legislature and submit a final plan, which shall include implementation recommendations and costs, to the legislature twenty days before the convening of the Regular Session of 1991.

SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

(Approved June 19, 1989.)