

**ACT 259**

S.B. NO. 3101

A Bill for an Act Relating to Early Childhood Education.

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

SECTION 1. As stated in Act 51, Session Laws of 2004, the legislature finds that “although many responsibilities are laid upon education, ultimately education must do no less than advance the endowment of human culture itself, so that each succeeding generation finds itself further along the road towards peace, social justice, and environmental sustainability in a society guided by creativity, compassion, and curiosity.” While Act 51 serves as a road map for public education in a critical phase of the ongoing journey during which our children prepare to take on their civil role in society, the legislature finds that children are born ready-to-learn, with minds that are shaped significantly by experiences and environments in the first five years of life. This period sets the foundation in which a person forms his or her behavioral, emotional, social, and decision-making skills, values, self-esteem, and lifelong learning ability. In short, this period paves the way for a child’s healthy, successful development.

Neglect and inadequate care in the early years can hold a child back from achieving full potential, and can instead place the child in jeopardy of poor outcomes

later in life, at considerable cost to society. Research and studies have shown that providing children with culturally responsive, proper early childhood care and education has a far-reaching, long-term impact on their development. Thus, the legislature recognizes the importance of providing children with early learning opportunities of the highest quality. Early learning programs, both public and private, should meet professionally-accepted standards, be staffed by well-trained, appropriately-compensated educators, reflect the cultural needs and diversity unique to Hawaii, and be available to all children from birth to entry into kindergarten.

During a child's first five years, a family may need a variety of child care settings or programs—family child care, home visiting, play and learn groups, or center-based care—sometimes simultaneously, to meet their child care needs or to enhance their child's learning and experiences. All of these settings should be of the highest quality to ensure optimal outcomes.

Accordingly, the legislature created the temporary early childhood education task force in 2005 to:

- (1) Develop plans and proposals to increase access to early learning programs for all children;
- (2) Increase participation in these programs by promoting their value; and
- (3) Improve the quality of programs, including the professional development and compensation of practitioners.

The legislature also finds that forty per cent of four-year-old children are already being served by public schools through the kindergarten program. Having recognized this fact, the legislature, through Act 219, Session Laws of Hawaii 2004 (Act 219), established junior kindergarten in public elementary schools for children who are at least five years old after August 1 and before January 1 of the school year, beginning with the 2006-2007 school year. The intent of Act 219 was to implement a flexible, developmentally appropriate program, with curricula aligned with the Hawaii Preschool Content Standards, to ensure a child's school-readiness.

The benefits of early learning programs have already been proven in states such as Oklahoma, which has provided state funding for voluntary pre-kindergarten or junior kindergarten programs since 1998 through its Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program, which has since bridged the achievement gap among its students. Of the students enrolled in the program, the test scores of low-income students improved by twenty-six per cent, and those of Hispanic students by fifty-four per cent.

Furthermore, research shows that the top indicator of a child's success in school is the mental health of the primary caregiver, most often the child's mother. This suggests that it is critical to educate children within the family context, and with sensitivity to the family's socio-emotional well-being.

The legislature acknowledges the significant milestones achieved thus far in promoting young children's development and school readiness through public and private efforts. The currently available array of services forms the basis for further development and integration into a system that better serves all of Hawaii's young children and their families. The process of system development will engage representatives of various constituencies across the community to firmly and collectively enhance services so that young children will succeed in reaching their highest potential.

The purpose of this Act is to build a comprehensive early learning system by further developing and refining the recommendations of the temporary early childhood education task force, while acknowledging the important role of parent education and family strengthening in the overall education of young children. Specifically, this bill:

- (1) Establishes and appropriates funds for an early learning educational task force; and

- (2) Builds upon the existing framework and services for early childhood learning.

SECTION 2. (a) There is established the early learning educational task force, to be attached to the department of education for administrative purposes only. The task force shall develop a five-year plan with annual increments for a coherent, comprehensive, and sustainable early learning system that shall ensure a continuum of quality early learning opportunities for young children in the State from birth up to age five, and which maximizes public and private resources.

The plan for the early learning system shall include:

- (1) An implementation and financing schedule that begins with services to four-year-old children and proceeds to younger age groups;
- (2) Mechanisms to ensure cross-sector and interdepartmental collaboration;
- (3) Measures to ensure the continuing professional development of teachers and administrators; and
- (4) Provisions for the promotion of the importance of early learning to families, policymakers, and the general public.

The task force shall be composed of working groups as needed, including an interdepartmental resources working group, to address the program and workforce development portions of the plan.

(b) The interdepartmental resources working group shall develop plans to maximize public and private resources to provide early learning opportunities for all young children in the State, beginning with those who will be four years old by January 1 of that school year. Plans shall strive to optimize existing government resources, including the following:

- (1) Within the department of education: title I – education for the disadvantaged; early reading first; individuals with disabilities education act part b; even start; migrant education; 21st century learning centers; and adult education and family literacy;
- (2) Within the department of human services: temporary assistance to needy families; social services block grant; child care development fund; welfare to work; and open doors;
- (3) Within the department of health: individuals with disabilities education act part c; title V maternal and child health services block grant; women infants and children; child abuse prevention and treatment act funds; healthy start; and parenting support; and
- (4) Within the department of labor and industrial relations: community services block grant and workforce investment act funds.

(c) The program portion of the plan shall:

- (1) Delineate a continuum of early learning services for children from birth to age five, beginning with those who will be four years old by January 1 of that school year;
- (2) Consider best practice models offered through both early childhood education and parenting education programs;
- (3) Address the quality components of standards, curriculum, assessments, instructional approaches, and transitions;
- (4) Explore and define the roles and responsibilities of the departments of education, human services, health, and labor and industrial relations, in providing early learning opportunities for all young children from birth to age five;
- (5) Identify and ensure maximum use of public facilities, whether the program is publicly or privately run;

- (6) Recognize a variety of early learning approaches and service deliveries; and
- (7) Ensure sustainability by various types of funding, including federal, state, and private funds.
- (d) The workforce development portion of the plan shall address:
  - (1) Early childhood educator preparation, including credentials, certifications, and licensing;
  - (2) Fair compensation for early childhood educators in various settings;
  - (3) Recruitment and retention of the early childhood workforce for all learning settings;
  - (4) Access to higher education and community-based training; and
  - (5) Quality and alignment of community-based training and higher education.
- (e) The members of the early learning educational task force shall serve as representatives of a particular organization or community and are therefore responsible for engaging, informing, and receiving input from their constituency in the planning process. The task force shall be composed of twenty-two members as follows:

- (1) For the interdepartmental resources working group:
  - (A) The chairperson of the board of education or the chairperson's designee;
  - (B) The superintendent of education or the superintendent's designee;
  - (C) The director of human services or the director's designee;
  - (D) The director of health or the director's designee;
  - (E) The director of labor and industrial relations or the director's designee;
  - (F) The director of the city and county of Honolulu department of community services, or the director's designee;
  - (G) The director of the county of Kauai office of community assistance, or the director's designee;
  - (H) The director of the county of Maui department of housing and human concerns, or the director's designee;
  - (I) The director of the county of Hawaii department of parks and recreation, or the director's designee;
  - (J) The director of the head start state collaboration office or the director's designee;
  - (K) A representative of the Hawaii Business Roundtable;
  - (L) A representative of the Child Care Business Coalition;
  - (M) The chief executive officer of the Kamehameha Schools or the chief executive officer's designee;
  - (N) The executive director of the Good Beginnings Alliance or the executive director's designee; and
  - (O) A representative of the organization of native Hawaiian community-based programs for early childhood education; and
- (2) Additional members to focus on the program and workforce development portions of the plan:
  - (A) The executive director of the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools or the executive director's designee;
  - (B) The executive director of the Hawaii Association for the Education of Young Children or the executive director's designee;
  - (C) The executive director of PATCH Hawaii or the director's designee;

- (D) The president of the Head Start Association or the president's designee;
  - (E) A representative designated by the chancellors of the University of Hawaii community colleges;
  - (F) The president of Chaminade University or the president's designee; and
  - (G) The dean of the college of education of the University of Hawaii at Manoa, or the dean's designee.
- (f) A chairperson of the task force shall be selected from among a majority of members appointed to the task force.
- (g) The early learning educational task force may form subcommittees to:
- (1) Obtain resource information from early education professionals and any other individuals as may be determined necessary by the task force; and
  - (2) Perform any other function as may be deemed necessary by the task force for the fulfillment of its functions.
- (h) The subcommittees shall be exempt from chapter 92, Hawaii Revised Statutes.
- (i) The task force shall have support for facilitation, coordination of working groups, engaging technical assistance, and to provide resource information to its members as needed. The department of education may enter into a contract with any agency or organization to implement any part of this Act.
- (j) The members of the early learning educational task force shall serve without compensation but shall be reimbursed for expenses necessary for the performance of their duties, including travel expenses.

SECTION 3. The early learning educational task force shall submit reports to the governor and legislature as follows:

- (1) An interim report of its progress in planning early learning programs for four-year-old children with optimal use of public resources, including any proposed legislation to be submitted no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the 2007 regular session; and
- (2) A final report of its progress, findings, and recommendations, including any additional proposed legislation, no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the 2008 regular session.

SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$250,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2006-2007 for the operations of the early learning educational task force.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of education for the purposes of this section.

SECTION 5. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$350,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2006-2007 to enhance junior kindergarten services to ensure children are provided with learning experiences that promote the skills they need to be successful in kindergarten or first grade.

Specifically, these funds shall be used as follows:

- (1) For the creation of a full-time equivalent (1.00 FTE) permanent educational specialist who shall focus on early childhood education and is responsible for policies, curriculum, and assessment relating to kindergarten, junior kindergarten, and other pre-kindergarten programs. The early childhood education specialist shall report directly to the superintendent of education;

- (2) For ongoing, professional development of teachers and administrators;  
and
- (3) For classroom resources.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of education for the purposes of this section.

SECTION 6. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$400,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2006-2007 to expand to four new sites the department of education's Families for R.E.A.L. early childhood program, which fosters interaction between parents and their children; provided that each site shall receive \$100,000; provided further that priority for new sites shall be in areas not currently served by head start programs.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of education for the purposes of this section.

SECTION 7. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$500,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2006-2007 to increase the number of low-income children and families served through the Early Head Start and Head Start Programs. Children and families served through this expansion shall be based upon findings of underserved areas within a head start program's annual community assessment.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of labor and industrial relations for the purposes of this section.

SECTION 8. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2006, and shall be repealed on July 1, 2008.

(Approved June 30, 2006.)