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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the demand for  
2           quality early care and education far exceeds the amount of  
3           available and qualified early childhood educators. Given the  
4           critical need to expand access to and the availability of  
5           high-quality early care and education programs for the benefit  
6           of the State's children and their families. The legislature  
7           recognizes that there must also be enough qualified educators to  
8           staff the programs. This will ultimately benefit the entire  
9           society, particularly now as the State focuses on taking steps  
10          toward economic recovery from the unprecedented strain of  
11          COVID-19.

12          The legislature further recognizes that these educators  
13          must have the research-based knowledge and competencies to work  
14          with young children and their families. Researchers have  
15          repeatedly demonstrated that children, particularly those who  
16          come from disadvantaged backgrounds, will benefit from early



1 childhood education; however, it is emphasized that the  
2 education must be of high quality.

3       The legislature also finds that preschool teachers are  
4 amongst the lowest paid occupations, on average making less than  
5 many non-skills positions such as parking lot attendants.  
6 Moreover, it is difficult to attract individuals to this highly  
7 specialized field with such low pay and to overcome the  
8 misperception that preschool teachers are babysitters. There  
9 are many professionals currently working in the early childhood  
10 field who aspire to work in higher paying positions and could  
11 benefit from obtaining the necessary credentials. A stipend  
12 program will assist with workforce development and support those  
13 individuals seeking to become high-quality early childhood  
14 educators, thereby moving the State toward reaching its goal of  
15 increasing access to high-quality early learning programs.

16       Acknowledging the importance of obtaining credentials or  
17 coursework in early childhood education, a stipend program  
18 aligns with national policy initiatives, which recognize that  
19 workforce development is key to creating the kind of early  
20 childhood systems that make a significant and impactful  
21 difference for families and children by financing and bolstering



1 programs that help offset the cost of tuition and encourage  
2 higher educational attainment. Furthermore, the federal  
3 government recognized the necessity to develop the workforce of  
4 early childhood professionals and allowed for preschool  
5 development grant funds to be utilized for stipend and  
6 scholarship programs. There currently exists private sector  
7 funding for the establishment of a stipend program. Without  
8 qualified teaching staff, providers across the system will be  
9 unable to expand the inventory of early care and education  
10 opportunities. Where providers do develop programs, they run  
11 the risk of implementing programs that may be detrimental to  
12 children, many of whom are living in poverty and who have  
13 experienced trauma, as well as possibly excluding children  
14 through suspension and expulsion practices.

15 The purpose of this Act is to make stipends available  
16 through an early childhood educator stipend program, to be  
17 administered by the executive office on early learning, to  
18 encourage individuals, especially those already working in the  
19 early childhood field, to pursue a certificate, degree, or  
20 license in early childhood education and fill the critical need  
21 for qualified educators across the early learning system in



1 programs delivered in either of Hawaii's two official languages.  
2 Recognizing early care and education as a specialized field,  
3 this program shall be based on the strong foundations laid by  
4 the existing Grow Our Own teacher stipend program currently only  
5 available for kindergarten through grade twelve teachers and is  
6 structured similarly to the stipend program funded through the  
7 federal preschool development grant that ended in 2019.

8 SECTION 2. Chapter 302L, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
9 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated  
10 and to read as follows:

11 **"§302L- Hawaii early childhood educator stipend**  
12 **program.** (a) There is established the Hawaii early childhood  
13 educator stipend program to be administered by the office to  
14 address the shortage of early childhood educators who have  
15 coursework in early childhood education.

16 (b) An individual shall be eligible for stipend  
17 consideration if the individual:

18 (1) Is enrolled at a University of Hawaii campus or in a  
19 University of Hawaii program and qualifies for Hawaii  
20 resident tuition; and



1           (2) Is enrolled in a certificate, degree, or license  
2           program in early childhood education, including those  
3           in the Hawaiian language medium, which includes  
4           courses required for the respective program of study,  
5           within the University of Hawaii system.

6           (c) Immediately following completion of a certificate,  
7           degree, or license program pursuant to subsection (b), stipend  
8           recipients shall provide early care and education services  
9           directly to children from birth through five years of age for at  
10          least two consecutive years in one of the early learning  
11          settings described in section 302L-2, including Hawaiian  
12          language medium and Hawaiian immersion settings and early  
13          learning settings at charter schools.

14          (d) If the recipient fails to complete a certificate,  
15          degree, or license program pursuant to subsection (b), or to  
16          satisfy the work requirements of subsection (c), stipend funds  
17          shall be repaid as follows:

18           (1) For each year less than the designated number of years  
19           that a stipend recipient does not meet the work  
20           requirements of subsection (c), the recipient shall



1           repay a proportionate percentage of the total stipend  
2           funds received; and

3           (2) The repayment shall be subject to the terms and  
4           conditions set by the office for stipend repayment,  
5           including circumstances under which recipients may be  
6           eligible for deferment or forgiveness due to hardship  
7           or inability to secure employment, as well as  
8           potential for fees for the collection of delinquent  
9           repayment.

10 Stipend funds repaid by a stipend recipient pursuant to this  
11 subsection shall be deposited into the early learning special  
12 fund established pursuant to section 302L-5.

13           (e) In accordance with chapter 103D, the office may enter  
14 into written contracts with collection agencies to collect  
15 delinquent repayment of stipends owed to the office pursuant to  
16 subsection (d). A collection agency that enters into a written  
17 contract with the office to collect delinquent stipend  
18 repayments pursuant to this section may collect a fee from the  
19 debtor in accordance with the terms of, and up to the amounts  
20 authorized in, the written contract.

1        (f) The office may adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91 to  
2 implement and administer the stipend program, including the  
3 terms of repayment pursuant to subsection (d)."

4        SECTION 3. Section 302L-5, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
5 amended by amending subsection (a) to read as follows:

6        "(a) There is established within the state treasury the  
7 early learning special fund, to be administered by the executive  
8 office on early learning, into which shall be deposited all  
9 moneys received by the office in the form of:

10        (1) Repayments made from the Hawaii early childhood  
11 educator stipend program pursuant to  
12 section 302L- (d);

13        [~~(1)~~] (2) Fees;

14        [~~(2)~~] (3) Grants;

15        [~~(3)~~] (4) Donations;

16        [~~(4)~~] (5) Appropriations made by the legislature to the  
17 fund; and

18        [~~(5)~~] (6) Revenues regardless of their source,  
19 and earnings on moneys in the fund. Moneys in the fund shall be  
20 used for the early learning system. Expenditures from the fund  
21 may be made by the office without appropriation or allotment."



1 SECTION 4. Section 443B-9, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
2 amended by amending subsection (b) to read as follows:

3 "(b) This section shall not prohibit a collection agency  
4 from collecting, or attempting to collect, from a debtor, a  
5 commission authorized under a contract with the University of  
6 Hawaii, [~~or~~] a contract with the department of taxation pursuant  
7 to sections 231-13 and 231-26[-], or a contract with the  
8 executive office on early learning pursuant to  
9 section 302L-1.5."

10 SECTION 5. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed  
11 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

12 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2051.



**Report Title:**

Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program; Executive Office on Early Learning; Early Learning Special Fund

**Description:**

Establishes an early childhood educator stipend program to be administered by the executive office on early learning to address the shortage of qualified early childhood educators in Hawaii. Requires stipend fund repayments for the early childhood educator stipend program to be deposited into the early learning special fund. Effective 7/1/2051. (HD1)

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