



**STATE OF HAWAII**

**Executive Office on Early Learning**

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

**TO:** Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair  
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Education

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

**SUBJECT:** Testimony on H.B. No. 249 – RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING  
Committee: EDN  
Date: Tuesday, February 4, 2025  
Time: 2:00 p.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. 249 which appropriates funds for contracts with third-party providers of Family Child Interaction Learning programs (FCILs).

FCILs are an important component of a strong, mixed-delivery early learning system, offering families flexibility in choosing the type of early childhood development and learning experiences that best meet their needs.

FCILs promote children's well-being by supporting families in their growth as their children's first and most important teachers. The programs provide activities and opportunities for child development for families who may not be interested in or able to participate in more traditional child care or preschool programs. They are characterized by the following:

- Multi-generational, culturally responsive approach
- Dual focus on parent education and early learning
- Setting looks a lot like a child care classroom, but with the key difference that families are responsible for their own children while attending the program
- Activities can include group circle time, outdoor play, and a variety of learning stations
- Family members also receive instruction on child development, workforce readiness, financial literacy, and more

EOEL currently allocates \$800,000 per year for FCIL program contracts. We support this request to expand state funding for FCIL programs and appreciate the addition of infant and early childhood mental health, provided that the appropriation covers the expanded scope.

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 H.B. No. 249.



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

Feb. 3, 2025

Honorable Chair Woodson, Vice-chair La Chica, and members of the House Education 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 board supports HB 249, which would provide funding for EOEL to contract with third party providers of family-child interaction learning (FCIL) programs that include infant and early childhood mental health consultations. The board approved an EOEL budget request for FCIL contracts.

FCIL programs are an important option for families. Children attend with an adult caregiver, and the children and adults learn activities through play, song, and often a nutritious snack. The sessions are usually twice a week, for 2-3 hours. The children of various ages up to kindergarten entry experience activities that promote learning through play, and adults receive information on child development and strategies to engage with and enhance the learning of their keiki. The activities are relevant to the community and culture.

For example, at a program on Moloka'i, there was an activity based on hunting - which is something that is very prevalent on Moloka'i. At the time, I was teaching at UH Maui College, and my Maui students were surprised, as hunting isn't as widespread on Maui. It was a great opportunity to point out how the community influences education and how educators can support the local community.

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 funding for FCIL programs is one of the ways the board can support all children in Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your consideration of this bill and your support for our youngest keiki and their 'ohana.

Sincerely,

/s/Elaine Yamashita  
Chair, Early Learning Board  
[elb@eoel.hawaii.gov](mailto:elb@eoel.hawaii.gov)

**HB-249**

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 2:15:21 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of **HB 249**, which seeks to expand family-child interaction learning programs in Hawaii by appropriating necessary funds to the Executive Office on Early Learning.

**The Importance of Family-Child Interaction Learning Programs**

Research consistently demonstrates that early childhood learning experiences are critical for long-term academic success and social-emotional well-being. Family-child interaction learning programs create literacy-rich environments that nurture early cognitive development, strengthen social skills, and foster school readiness. These programs also recognize and honor families' choices by supporting those who opt for in-home care by parents, grandparents, or other relatives.

**Key Benefits of HB 249**

1. **Early Detection and Intervention:** These programs play a crucial role in identifying developmental delays and behavioral concerns at an early stage, allowing for timely intervention and improved long-term outcomes.
2. **Parental Education and Engagement:** By equipping parents and caregivers with the necessary skills and knowledge, these programs enhance family dynamics and support children's educational growth at home.
3. **Culturally Responsive, Multi-Generational Support:** Recognizing Hawaii's diverse cultural landscape, family-child interaction learning programs embrace a multi-generational approach, ensuring that families receive support that is aligned with their values and caregiving traditions.
4. **Expanded Access to Mental Health Services:** With a focus on early childhood mental health, these programs provide essential services that promote emotional resilience and well-being in young children.

**Why Funding is Essential**

By allocating funds to contract with third-party providers, **HB 249** ensures that more families across Hawaii—especially those in underserved communities—gain access to these invaluable early learning opportunities. This investment is not just in early education but in the long-term success of our keiki and the well-being of our communities.

For these reasons, I urge you to pass **HB 249** and support expanding access to high-quality, culturally responsive early learning programs in Hawaii.

2.3.25

Re: HB249

From: Christina Simmons, Early Childhood Action Strategy

Dear House Education Committee,

**Early Childhood Action Strategy strongly supports passage of HB249**, which would appropriate funds to the Executive Office on Early Learning to establish and oversee seven additional family-child interaction learning (FCIL) classrooms with integrated infant and early childhood mental health supports within a trauma-informed framework.

FCIL programs have a proven track record of providing children up to the age of five and their families with highly engaging learning environments that are literacy-rich, support a child's social and emotional development, strengthen parent/caregiver skills and improve school readiness. These programs are both efficient and impactful and the demands are high. In a recent Promising Minds Provider Survey of pediatricians and primary care providers 96% shared that "Promotion services, such as parenting and child development education, support groups and community connections, for families with infant and young children should be readily available and easily accessible."

It should also be noted that FCIL programs utilize multi-generational, culturally-responsive approaches that typically perform well in working-class communities in which parents often rely on extended family to assist in childcare. This is especially noteworthy in our statewide community as a sizeable portion of parents do not—or cannot—use center-based childcare options. FCILs support universal access to early learning opportunities.

Comprehensive programs such as FCILs ensure our youngest keiki and their `ohana get off on the right start!

**HB-249**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 8:31:41 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Godwin Higa	Consultant Trauma-Informed Restorative Justice Consultant	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the Honorable Members of the Hawaii State Legislature,

Re: SB249

Godwin Higa  
Trauma-Informed and Restorative Justice Consultant  
Member, Trauma-Informed Task Force Committee  
[4666 Aldine Drive, San Diego, CA 92115](mailto:godwin.higa@restorativejustice.com)  
[\(619\) 851-4119](tel:6198514119)

[January 30, 2025](#)

I am writing to express my strong support for Family Child Interaction Learning (FCIL) programs. As a retired principal with 30 years of experience in education, including 20 years as a principal in California, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of FCIL.

My experience integrating special needs students into regular education classrooms in early childhood preK programs yielded remarkable results, especially involving parents and guardians. Students learned valuable life skills and compassion, both in and out of the classrooms.

As Ashley P. aptly stated, "Infant and early childhood mental health is foundational for trauma prevention and creating an upstream system of mental healthcare."

FCIL programs are crucial in initiating the unwavering process in promoting effective communication and special relationships among stakeholders.

I urge you to pass legislation supporting FCIL programs, providing a vital framework for supporting Hawaii's most vulnerable populations.

Mahalo, for considering my perspective.

Sincerely,  
Godwin Higa



**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**

*Honolulu County*

- Justina Acevedo-Cross
- Greg Auberry
- Kanoë Enos
- JoAnn Farnsworth
- Danny Goya
- Alex Harris
- Sakinah Harrison
- Shawn Kana'iaupuni
- Ryan Kusumoto
- Ka'iulani Laehā
- Lynelle Marble
- Megan McCorriston
- Mike Mohr
- Marty Oliphant
- Cherilyn Shiinoki
- Eliza Talbot
- Laurie Tochiki
- Kerrie Urosevich
- Ka'ano'i Walk
- Carol Wear
- S. Kukunaokalā Yoshimoto

*Maui County*

- 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

Date: February 4, 2025

To: Representative Justin Woodson, Chair  
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Education

From: Commit to Keiki

RE: House Bill 249, Relating to Early Learning

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 strongly supports passage of HB249**, which would appropriate funds to the Executive Office on Early Learning to establish and oversee additional family-child interaction learning (FCIL) program classrooms.

FCIL programs have a proven track record of providing children up to the age of five and their families with highly engaging learning environments that are literacy-rich, support a child's social and emotional development, strengthen parent/caregiver skills and improve school readiness. These programs are both efficient and impactful.

It should also be noted that FCIL programs utilize multi-generational, culturally responsive approaches that typically perform well in working-class communities in which parents often rely on extended family to assist in childcare. This is especially noteworthy in our statewide community as a sizeable portion of parents do not—or cannot—use center-based childcare options.

As noted above, HB249 proposes an allocation to EOEL, the majority of which the agency would use to establish seven new FCIL classrooms, with the remainder of the monies being used for infant and early childhood mental health services.

**For these reasons, Commit to Keiki strongly supports HB249.**

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

February 3, 2025  
State of Hawaii Legislature  
State Capitol

Aloha Chair Woodson and Members of the Education Committee:

Every year, for over fifteen years, ***Family-Child Interaction Learning Programs*** have been providing you with a first-hand look at what they do to support early learning success in our state. Due to Covid, we held our last Rally in the Rotunda at the Capitol in 2019. That year some of you came down from your offices and read a book to the keiki in the library area, played a homemade ipu to live Hawaiian music, had a sample of fresh pa'i 'ai, or sat in the canoe and played in the hale with keiki, taking advantage of the great photo opportunities afforded you! Some of you even roamed the area and spoke with families and early childhood educators, talking story about the over 50,000 keiki ***Family-Child Interaction Learning Programs*** served from 2009-2019, or the approximately 10,000 keiki the programs were currently serving that year! (More than half of the preschool-age keiki population in the state that year!)

***Family-Child Interaction Learning (FCIL) Programs*** support families in taking an active role in the social, emotional, and cognitive development of their young children. In addition, ***FCIL*** programs are an important option for families who care for their children at home. Finally, because children and caregivers attend together, ***FCIL*** programs can focus on both child development AND family strengthening, a vital component needed in our communities today.

During this 2025 legislative session, when the conversation rests on early learning, and what you can do to support families with young keiki, please support ***Family-Child Interaction Learning Programs HB249*** as an integral part of a comprehensive, early learning system!

Mahalo for your time and for the hard work and decisions you make on behalf of the families of Hawai'i!

Melodie Vega, MAEd  
Chief Early Education Office  
Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers

Date: February 3, 2025

To: Representative Chair Justin Woodson  
Representative Vice Chair Trish La Chica  
House Committee on Education

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

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 249 – Relating to Early Learning

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica and Members of the Education Committee:

Every year, for over fifteen years, ***Family-Child Interaction Learning Programs*** have been providing you with a first-hand look at what they do to support early learning success in our state. Due to Covid, we held our last Rally in the Rotunda at the Capitol in 2019. That year some of you came down from your offices and read a book to the keiki in the library area, played a homemade ipu to live Hawaiian music, had a sample of fresh pa'i 'ai, or sat in the canoe and played in the hale with keiki, taking advantage of the great photo opportunities afforded you! Some of you even roamed the area and spoke with families and early childhood educators, talking story about the over 50,000 keiki ***Family-Child Interaction Learning Programs*** served from 2009-2019, or the approximately 10,000 keiki the programs were currently serving that year! (More than half of the preschool-age keiki population in the state that year!)

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During this 2025 legislative session, when the conversation rests on early learning, and what you can do to support families with young keiki, please support ***Family-Child Interaction Learning Programs HB249*** as an integral part of a comprehensive, early learning system!

Mahalo for your time and for the hard work and decisions you make on behalf of the families of Hawai'i!



**PARTNERS IN DEVELOPMENT**  
FOUNDATION

February 3, 2025

To: House of Representatives Committee on Education  
The Honorable Justin H. Woodson, Chair  
The Honorable Trish La Chica, Vice Chair

**Re: Hearing on Tuesday, Feb. 4, 2025 at 2:00pm, via videoconference, State Capitol Room 309**

**Regarding Support for HB249, “Relating to Early Learning”**

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica and Members of the House Committee on Education,

Partners in Development Foundation ask that you strongly support the passage of HB249, which would appropriate funds to the Executive Office on Early Learning to establish and oversee seven additional family-child interaction learning (FCIL) classrooms with integrated infant and early childhood mental health supports.

**Benefits of FCIL Programs**

FCIL programs have demonstrated remarkable success in providing children up to age five and their families with engaging, literacy-rich learning environments. These programs effectively support a child's social and emotional development, strengthen parent/caregiver skills, and improve school readiness. The efficiency and impact of FCIL programs are evident, and the demand for such services is high.

A recent Promising Minds Provider Survey of pediatricians and primary care providers revealed that 96% believe promotion services, such as parenting and child development education, support groups, and community connections for families with infants and young children, should be readily available and easily accessible.

**Cultural Responsiveness and Accessibility**

FCIL programs utilize multi-generational, culturally-responsive approaches that are particularly effective in working-class communities where parents often rely on extended family for childcare. This aspect is especially significant in Hawaii's diverse community, where many parents may not have access to or choose not to use center-based childcare options. By supporting FCILs, we are promoting universal access to early learning opportunities for all keiki and their 'ohana.

**Integrated Mental Health Support**

The integration of infant and early childhood mental health supports in these FCIL classrooms is a crucial component of HB249. This holistic approach ensures that our youngest keiki and their 'ohana receive comprehensive care and education, setting a strong foundation for their future development and success.

*Serving Hawai'i's Families, Living Hawaiian Values*

2040 Bachelot Street | Honolulu, Hawai'i 96817 | P 808.595.2752 | F 808.595.4932 | [www.pidfoundation.org](http://www.pidfoundation.org)

## Conclusion

Comprehensive programs such as FCILs are essential in ensuring our youngest keiki and their 'ohana have access to resources to support positive and productive futures. By supporting HB249, we invest in the future of Hawaii's children and families, promoting early learning, mental health, and cultural responsiveness in our communities.

We urge you to pass HB249 and make this vital investment in our keiki and 'ohana.

Mahalo for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shawn', written in a cursive style.

Shawn Kana'iaupuni  
President & CEO

LATE \*Testimony submitted late may not be considered by the Committee for decision making purposes.



*Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.*

To: House Committee on Education  
Re: HB 249 Relating to Early Learning

**LATE**

Hawai'i State Capitol, Conference Room 309 & Via Videoconference  
Tuesday, February 4, 2025, 2:00PM

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Committee Members,

**On behalf of HCANSpeaks!, I am writing in support of HB 249, relating to early learning.**

This bill appropriates funds for the Executive Office on Early Learning to contract with third-party providers of family-child interaction learning programs (FCILs).

Investing in FCILs is crucial for fostering healthy social and emotional development in infants and young children. Early experiences significantly influence a child's mental health, laying the foundation for their future and their family's overall well-being. By supporting HB 249, we can ensure that families in Hawai'i have access to resources that promote nurturing relationships, which are essential for infants' emotional and social growth and development.

This investment not only benefits individual families but also contributes to the overall health and wellbeing of our communities. Prioritizing early childhood mental health leads to long-term positive outcomes, including improved educational achievement and better physical health.

**Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 249.**

Kind regards,  
Noreen Kohl, Ph.D.  
Policy Researcher and Advocate

**HB-249**

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 2:02:23 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gina I	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Andrew Takuya Garret, Vice Chair Terez Amato, and committee members,

**I am testifying in support of this bill, which would incentivize early learning employers in Hawai'i to participate in HB549 Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program.**

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.

Mahalo,

Gina I

**HB-249**

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 10:16:36 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Carol Linde	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of this bill. Early childhood is a crucial time for children and families. It is important that we provides many different supports so that families have the option to chose the apporaches that work best for their 'ohana and their keiki.

Elaine Yamashita  
105 Kamehameiki Rd.  
Kula, HI 96790-8451  
808-281-1216  
[elaine208@gmail.com](mailto:elaine208@gmail.com)

Feb. 2, 2025

Aloha, Honorable Chair Woodson, Vice-chair La Chica, and members of the House Education 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.

I support HB 249, which would allow the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) to contract with third party providers of family-child interaction learning (FCIL) programs. These programs are an important option for families that may not need full time care and education, but want to learn and have their keiki interact with other keiki.

In the 1980s and into the early 1990s, I remember that the concept was piloted in the DOE – at Wailuku Elementary and then at Makawao Elementary School. It was called Families for REAL. I believe the acronym stood for “Resources for Early Access to Learning.”

Kamehameha Schools adopted the concept into their “Traveling Preschools” which were held at community centers. The large room would be set up with a variety of hands-on activities for a wide range of ages of keiki and information for the adult on what aspects of development were being supported by the activity and suggestions for the adult to maximize participation.

Now there are a variety of FCIL programs across the state. I've had the privilege of visiting Tutu and Me programs on Maui and Moloka'i and made sure to let my college students know about this important type of program.

I was active in the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). In the late 1990s, as I attended national conferences, I heard Native American tribes take an interest in the FCIL concept, as people from Hawai'i started presenting workshops.

I'm thrilled to see the growth of these programs over the years and know that the funding would be a good investment.

Mahalo for considering this bill and for your support of our youngest keiki and their 'ohana.

Sincerely,

/s/Elaine Yamashita

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and committee members,

**I am testifying in support of this bill, which would allocate supports of third party providers in Hawai'i to participate in HB249 Early Learning Programs.**

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.

Mahalo,  
Renata Laupola-Ah Kuoi  
Keiki O Ka Aina Preschool Inc.

**HB-249**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:28:16 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Sanoë Marfil	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**I strongly support passage of HB249**, which would appropriate funds to the Executive Office on Early Learning to establish and oversee seven additional family-child interaction learning (FCIL) classrooms with integrated infant and early childhood mental health supports.

FCIL programs utilize multi-generational, culturally-responsive approaches that typically perform well in working-class communities in which parents often rely on extended family to assist in childcare. This is especially noteworthy in our statewide community as a sizeable portion of parents do not—or cannot—use center-based childcare options. FCILs support universal access to early learning opportunities.

FCIL programs have a proven track record of providing children up to the age of five and their families with highly engaging learning environments that are literacy-rich, support a child’s social and emotional development, strengthen parent/caregiver skills and improve school readiness. These programs are both efficient and impactful and the demands are high. In a recent Promising Minds Provider Survey of pediatricians and primary care providers 96% shared that “Promotion services, such as parenting and child development education, support groups and community connections, for families with infant and young children should be readily available and easily accessible.”

Comprehensive programs such as FCILs ensure our youngest keiki and their `ohana get off on the right start!

**HB-249**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:22:23 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sonya Zabala	Keiki O Ka Aina	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Date:** February 3, 2025

**To:**

Representative Chair Justin Woodson  
Representative Vice Chair Trish La Chica  
House Committee on Education

**From:**

Sonya Zabala  
Keiki O Ka ‘Āina Family Learning Centers

**Subject:** Measure H.B. No. 249 – Relating to Early Learning

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**Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Education Committee,**

For over fifteen years, Family-Child Interaction Learning (FCIL) Programs have had the privilege of offering a firsthand look at the valuable work they do to support early learning success across our state. Due to the impacts of COVID-19, our last Rally in the Rotunda at the Capitol was in 2019. That year, some of you visited us in the library area, where you read books to keiki, enjoyed the rhythm of a homemade ipu played to live Hawaiian music, tasted fresh pa‘i ‘ai, or spent time in the canoe and hale, engaging with the children. Many of you also spoke directly with families and early childhood educators about the over 50,000 keiki we served from 2009 to 2019, and the approximately 10,000 keiki we were currently serving that year—more than half of the preschool-age keiki population in the state at the time.

FCIL Programs support families in taking an active role in the social, emotional, and cognitive development of their young children. These programs provide a vital service to families who care for their children at home, creating a space where both child development and family strengthening can be prioritized simultaneously. This dual focus is an essential component for building stronger communities across Hawai‘i.

As you continue the conversation on early learning during this 2025 legislative session, we urge you to support Family-Child Interaction Learning Programs through HB249, as a vital part of a comprehensive, statewide early learning system.

Mahalo for your time, your hard work, and the important decisions you make on behalf of Hawai'i's families.

Mahalo Ke Akua,

Sonya Zabala  
Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers

Date: February 3, 2025

To: Representative Chair Justin Woodson  
Representative Vice Chair Trish La Chica  
House Committee on Education

From: Ty Tamagawa  
Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 249 – Relating to Early Learning

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica and Members of the Education Committee:

Every year, for over fifteen years, ***Family-Child Interaction Learning Programs*** have been providing you with a first-hand look at what they do to support early learning success in our state. Due to Covid, we held our last Rally in the Rotunda at the Capitol in 2019. That year some of you came down from your offices and read a book to the keiki in the library area, played a homemade ipu to live Hawaiian music, had a sample of fresh pa'i 'ai, or sat in the canoe and played in the hale with keiki, taking advantage of the great photo opportunities afforded you! Some of you even roamed the area and spoke with families and early childhood educators, talking story about the over 50,000 keiki ***Family-Child Interaction Learning Programs*** served from 2009-2019, or the approximately 10,000 keiki the programs were currently serving that year! (More than half of the preschool-age keiki population in the state that year!)

***Family-Child Interaction Learning (FCIL) Programs*** support families in taking an active role in the social, emotional, and cognitive development of their young children. In addition, ***FCIL*** programs are an important option for families who care for their children at home. Finally, because children and caregivers attend together, ***FCIL*** programs can focus on both child development AND family strengthening, a vital component needed in our communities today.

During this 2025 legislative session, when the conversation rests on early learning, and what you can do to support families with young keiki, please support ***Family-Child Interaction Learning Programs HB249*** as an integral part of a comprehensive, early learning system!

Mahalo for your time and for the hard work and decisions you make on behalf of the families of Hawai'i!

Date: February 3, 2025

To: Representative Chair Justin Woodson  
Representative Vice Chair Trish La Chica  
House Committee on Education

From: Mālie Shiraishi-Nagao  
Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 249 – Relating to Early Learning

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica and Members of the Education Committee:

Every year, for over fifteen years, ***Family-Child Interaction Learning Programs*** have been providing you with a first-hand look at what they do to support early learning success in our state. Due to Covid, we held our last Rally in the Rotunda at the Capitol in 2019. That year some of you came down from your offices and read a book to the keiki in the library area, played a homemade ipu to live Hawaiian music, had a sample of fresh pa'i 'ai, or sat in the canoe and played in the hale with keiki, taking advantage of the great photo opportunities afforded you! Some of you even roamed the area and spoke with families and early childhood educators, talking story about the over 50,000 keiki ***Family-Child Interaction Learning Programs*** served from 2009-2019, or the approximately 10,000 keiki the programs were currently serving that year! (More than half of the preschool-age keiki population in the state that year!)

***Family-Child Interaction Learning (FCIL) Programs*** support families in taking an active role in the social, emotional, and cognitive development of their young children. In addition, ***FCIL*** programs are an important option for families who care for their children at home. Finally, because children and caregivers attend together, ***FCIL*** programs can focus on both child development AND family strengthening, a vital component needed in our communities today.

During this 2025 legislative session, when the conversation rests on early learning, and what you can do to support families with young keiki, please support ***Family-Child Interaction Learning Programs HB249*** as an integral part of a comprehensive, early learning system!

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**HB-249**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:37:37 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Candice Napuelua	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Candice Napuelua, strongly supports passage of HB249, which would appropriate funds to the Executive Office on Early Learning to establish and oversee seven additional family-child interaction learning (FCIL) classrooms with integrated infant and early childhood mental health supports.

FCIL programs have a proven track record of providing children up to the age of five and their families with highly engaging learning environments that are literacy-rich, support a child’s social and emotional development, strengthen parent/caregiver skills and improve school readiness. These programs are both efficient and impactful and the demands are high. In a recent Promising Minds Provider Survey of pediatricians and primary care providers 96% shared that “Promotion services, such as parenting and child development education, support groups and community connections, for families with infant and young children should be readily available and easily accessible.”

It should also be noted that FCIL programs utilize multi-generational, culturally-responsive approaches that typically perform well in working-class communities in which parents often rely on extended family to assist in childcare. This is especially noteworthy in our statewide community as a sizeable portion of parents do not—or cannot—use center-based childcare options. FCILs support universal access to early learning opportunities.

Comprehensive programs such as FCILs ensure our youngest keiki and their `ohana get off on the right start!

**HB-249**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:39:54 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Puhala Kamalamalama	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Puhala Kamalamalama \_ strongly supports passage of HB249, which would appropriate funds to the Executive Office on Early Learning to establish and oversee seven additional family-child interaction learning (FCIL) classrooms with integrated infant and early childhood mental health supports.

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**HB-249**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:40:01 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Theresa-Ann Kahili	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Theresa-Ann Kekawa-Kahili, strongly supports passage of HB249, which would appropriate funds to the Executive Office on Early Learning to establish and oversee seven additional family-child interaction learning (FCIL) classrooms with integrated infant and early childhood mental health supports.

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**HB-249**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:42:12 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tiare Kaleiwahea	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

\_\_\_\_\_ strongly supports passage of HB249, which would appropriate funds to the Executive Office on Early Learning to establish and oversee seven additional family-child interaction learning (FCIL) classrooms with integrated infant and early childhood mental health supports. FCIL programs have a proven track record of providing children up to the age of five and their families with highly engaging learning environments that are literacy-rich, support a child’s social and emotional development, strengthen parent/caregiver skills and improve school readiness. These programs are both efficient and impactful and the demands are high. In a recent Promising Minds Provider Survey of pediatricians and primary care providers 96% shared that “Promotion services, such as parenting and child development education, support groups and community connections, for families with infant and young children should be readily available and easily accessible.”

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**HB-249**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:44:12 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kaailee Pacatang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support passage of HB249, which would appropriate funds to the Executive Office on Early Learning to establish and oversee seven additional family-child interaction learning (FCIL) classrooms with integrated infant and early childhood mental health supports. These programs are both efficient and impactful and the demands are high. In a recent Promising Minds Provider Survey of pediatricians and primary care providers 96% shared that “Promotion services, such as parenting and child development education, support groups and community connections, for families with infant and young children should be readily available and easily accessible.” It should also be noted that FCIL programs utilize multi-generational, culturally-responsive approaches that typically perform well in working-class communities in which parents often rely on extended family to assist in childcare. This is especially noteworthy in our statewide community as a sizeable portion of parents do not—or cannot—use center-based childcare options. FCILs support universal access to early learning opportunities.

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**HB-249**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:52:29 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Noelani Napuelua Patronis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support the passage of HB249, which would appropriate funds to the Executive Office on Early Learning to establish and oversee seven additional family-child interaction learning (FCIL) classrooms with integrated infant and early childhood mental health supports.

FCIL programs have a proven track record of providing children up to the age of five and their families with highly engaging learning environments that are literacy-rich, support a child’s social and emotional development, strengthen parent/caregiver skills and improve school readiness. These programs are both efficient and impactful and the demands are high. In a recent Promising Minds Provider Survey of pediatricians and primary care providers 96% shared that “Promotion services, such as parenting and child development education, support groups and community connections, for families with infant and young children should be readily available and easily accessible.”

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**HB-249**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:57:47 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Momi Akana	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

February 3, 2025

State of Hawaii Legislature

State Capitol

Aloha Chair Woodson and Members of the Education Committee:

Keiki O Ka Aina Family Learning Centers has provided Family-Child Interaction Learning Programs for over 28 years. These programs have been the early education choice for tens of thousands of families over the years and have resulted in positive outcomes and successful learner results in preparing keiki for school. These free programs have been a lifeline for families that could not afford the exorbitant tuition rates that both infant toddler and preschool centers are currently charging. The socialization and parent education that families receive make all the difference in helping children be kindergarten ready.

Family-Child Interaction Learning (FCIL) Programs support families in taking an active role in the social, emotional, and cognitive development of their young children. In addition, FCIL programs are an important option for families who care for their children at home. Finally, because children and caregivers attend together, FCIL programs can focus on both child development AND family strengthening, a vital component needed in our communities today.

During this 2025 legislative session, when the conversation rests on early learning, and what you can do to support families with young keiki, please support Family-Child Interaction Learning Programs HB249 as an integral part of a comprehensive, early learning system!

Mahalo for your time and for the hard work and decisions you make on behalf of the families of Hawai'i!

Aloha,

Momi Akana

Keiki O Ka Aina Family Learning Centers

**HB-249**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:58:25 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Solomon Alfapada	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support passage of HB249, which would appropriate funds to the Executive Office on Early Learning to establish and oversee seven additional family-child interaction learning (FCIL) classrooms with integrated infant and early childhood mental health supports.

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In a recent Promising Minds Provider Survey of pediatricians and primary care providers 96% shared that “Promotion services, such as parenting and child development education, support groups and community connections, for families with infant and young children should be readily available and easily accessible.

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**LATE**

**HB-249**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 2:17:52 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica and Members of the Education Committee:

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Mahalo for your time and for the hard work and decisions you make on behalf of the families of Hawai'i!

Mahalo, Ann Sullivan

**LATE**

**HB-249**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 3:31:50 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Date: February 3, 2025

To: Representative Chair Justin Woodson

Representative Vice Chair Trish La Chica

House Committee on Education

From: SheriAnn Hinano Maxwell

Keiki O Ka ‘Āina Family Learning Centers

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 249 – Relating to Early Learning

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica and Members of the Education Committee:

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Mahalo, Sheri Ann Hinano Maxwell

**LATE**

**HB-249**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 4:01:59 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
CHENTIRA F FINK-AJALA	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Date: February 3, 2025

To: Representative Chair Justin Woodson  
 Representative Vice Chair Trish La Chica  
 House Committee on Education

From: Chentira Fink-Ajala  
 Keiki O Ka ‘Āina Family Learning Centers

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 249 – Relating to Early Learning

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**LATE**

Date: February 3, 2025

To: Representative Chair Justin Woodson  
Representative Vice Chair Trish La Chica  
House Committee on Education

From: Shani Simeona  
Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 249 – Relating to Early Learning

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica and Members of the Education Committee:

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**LATE**

Date: February 3, 2025

To: Representative Chair Justin Woodson  
Representative Vice Chair Trish La Chica  
House Committee on Education

From: Margot Mesinas  
Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 249 – Relating to Early Learning

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica and Members of the Education Committee:

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**LATE**

**HB-249**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 4:27:39 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kealani Makaiwi	Keiki O Ka ‘Aina	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Kealani Makaiwi

91-1023 Kamaaha Ave #803

Kapolei, HI 96707

Subject: Strong Support for HB 429 Expanding Access to Family-Child Interaction Learning Programs

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica and Members of the Education Committee,

I am writing as a committed preschool teacher and resident of Hawai'i to express my strong support for HB 429, which appropriates funds for the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) to contract with third-party providers of family-child interaction learning programs. This bill is a crucial investment in Hawai'i keiki and families, ensuring that more young children have access to early learning opportunities that support their development and future success.

Family-child interaction learning programs play a vital role in early childhood education by actively engaging both children and their caregivers in a collaborative learning process. These programs strengthen the bond between parents and their keiki while promoting school readiness, social-emotional development, and foundational literacy and numeracy skills. By funding these programs, HB 429 directly supports families in providing nurturing, high-quality early learning experiences, particularly for those who may not otherwise have access to preschool education.

As an early childhood educator of Nānākuli Elementary EOEL for the last two school years, I have seen firsthand how these programs empower families to be their child's first and most important teachers. When parents and caregivers are actively involved in their child's learning journey, the benefits extend far beyond the classroom, creating stronger family relationships, increasing parental confidence, and fostering a lifelong love for learning. Expanding these programs through third-party providers will ensure that more families, including those in rural and underserved communities, can participate in these invaluable learning experiences.

Investing in early education is investing in Hawai'i's future. I urge you and your colleagues to pass HB 429 and continue to prioritize the well-being and success of our youngest learners. Mahalo for your time and dedication to Hawai'i's keiki.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

Kealani Makaiwi

Kumu and Site Coordinator

Keiki o Ka 'Āina FCL