

March 27, 2025

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 S. Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

Subject: HB No. 429, S.D. 1 - RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the committee,

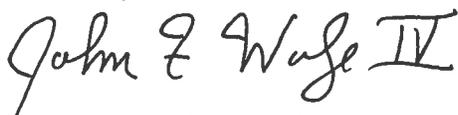
My name is John Walje IV, and I am the proud Principal of Helemano Elementary School. I am writing to express my strong support for HB No. 429, S.D. 1 which funds the expansion of EOEL public pre-kindergarten classrooms on HIDOE campuses.

Hosting an EOEL pre-kindergarten class on Helemano's campus would be very positive for our school. As a Principal, I have seen firsthand the profound impact that quality early learning has on a child's development. Every year, we welcome kindergarteners into our classrooms, and it is evident which students have attended prekindergarten programs. Only 40% of our incoming kindergarteners attend preschool, therefore, this would benefit our school and community. Those with quality early learning experience arrive ready to engage, with stronger language, social, and self-regulation skills.

Expanding access to prekindergarten in Hawai'i is essential to ensuring that *all* keiki, regardless of their background or abilities, have access to high-quality early learning experiences that set the foundation for lifelong success. For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to pass HB429, S.D. 1, and fund the expansion of EOEL public Pre-K.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your leadership on this issue and your commitment to our community.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John E. Walje IV". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "J" and "W".

John E. Walje IV, EdD
Principal
Helemano Elementary School

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



RYAN I. YAMANE
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELawe KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

March 27, 2025

TO: The Honorable Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 429 HD1 SD1 – RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING.**

Hearing: March 28, 2025, 10:02 a.m.
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services supports this measure and defers to the Department of Education and the Executive Office on Early Learning. DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation align with the amount requested in the executive budget and not reduce or replace a priority identified in the executive budget.

PURPOSE: This bill appropriates funds to hire teachers and teacher assistants and for equipment and services for public preschools. Take effect 7/1/2050. (SD1).

The Committee on Education amended this measure (HD1) by:

- (1) Changing the amounts appropriated and amount of positions to be funded to unspecified amounts;
- (2) Changing the effective date to July 1, 3000; and
- (3) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

The Senate Committee on Education amended this measure (SD1) by inserting an effective date of July 1, 2050, to encourage further discussion.

March 27, 2025

Page 2

There continues to be a statewide shortage of qualified caregivers and staff for early learning programs due to low wages and a lack of benefits. Additionally, operating costs for child care programs continue to rise.

This measure aims to increase the number of public pre-K teachers and teacher assistants, assist in covering additional services and equipment costs needed for children and staff, and expand the existing childcare capacity.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.



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

March 26, 2025

To: Senator Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Ways and Means Committee

From: Elaine Yamashita, Chair
Early Learning Board

Re: HB429 HD1 SD1 support

Aloha, Honorable Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the Senate Way and Means 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 Early Learning Board (ELB) supports HB 429 HD1 SD1 that requests the funding of 50 additional public preschool classrooms across the state, to be established and run by the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL).

EOEL continues to refine policies and procedures, using lessons learned from the previous expansion of classrooms. The new classrooms will provide another important option for families during the school day and school year.

Mahalo for your consideration of this bill.

Respectfully,

Elaine Yamashita
Early Learning Board Chair
elb@eoel.hawaii.gov



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: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

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

SUBJECT: Testimony on H.B. No. 429, S.D. 1 – RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING.

Committee: WAM
Date: Friday, March 28, 2025
Time: 10:02 a.m.
Location: Conference Room 211

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

The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) offers the following comments in strong support of H.B. No. 429, S.D. 1.

H.B. No. 429, S.D. 1 appropriates funds and authorizes positions to support the expansion of EOEL Prekindergarten (Pre-K) classrooms over the next biennium. The dollar amounts and position counts in the original version of the bill match the funding requested in the Governor's proposed executive budget and this funding has also been identified as a priority of the Lieutenant Governor's Ready Keiki initiative.

EOEL works in partnership with the Hawai'i State Department of Education (HIDOE) to administer 92 Public Pre-K classrooms in 74 HIDOE campuses across the State. The funding and positions in this bill would allow EOEL to open an additional 50 classrooms over the next two years.

In 2020, the Hawai'i State Legislature passed Act 46 which established a framework and benchmarks for achieving universal access to early learning for 3- and 4-year-olds. The requested expansion of EOEL Pre-K classrooms helps advance our progress toward these goals and supports educational equity through priority enrollment for at-risk children.

Since the passage of Act 46, the number of EOEL prekindergarten classrooms has grown. However, demand remains high, with the number of applications far exceeding the number of available classroom seats for the 2024-25 school year.

As the program continues to grow, EOEL also works closely with HIDOE to ensure children enrolled in our classrooms receive high-quality early childhood development and early learning experiences that promote Kindergarten readiness. We are happy to report that the program is consistently recognized by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) for meeting benchmarks for quality standards, and as of their 2023 report, Hawai'i is one of only five states that met all 10 benchmarks for state preschool programs.

EOEL strongly supports H.B. No. 429, S.D. 1, as it will expand access to high-quality early learning, advance educational equity, and help fulfill the state's commitment to universal access to early learning for 3 and 4-year-olds. We appreciate the Legislature's continued investment in our youngest keiki and their families and respectfully request your support of this funding.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



MAKALAPUA ALENCASTRE, ED. D.
CHAIRPERSON

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION
(‘AHA KULA HO‘ĀMANA)

<http://CharterCommission.Hawaii.Gov>
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1100, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Tel: (808) 586-3775 Fax: (808) 586-3776

LATE

FOR: HB 429 HD1, SD1 Relating to Early Learning
DATE: March 28, 2025
TIME: 10:02 AM
COMMITTEE: Committee on Education
ROOM: Conference Room 211 & Videoconference
FROM: Ed H. Noh, Ed. D., Executive Director
State Public Charter School Commission

Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and members of the Committee:

The State Public Charter School Commission (“Commission”) appreciates the opportunity to offer testimony in **SUPPORT of HB 429 HD1, SD1** which establishes appropriations for the expansion of 50 additional EOEL public pre-K classrooms over the next two years.

Expanding the Executive Office on Early Learning’s public pre-K program is critical to meeting the targets established in the legislatively supported Ready Keiki Initiative’s mixed delivery approach. This expansion will ensure Hawai’i’s three- and four-year-old keiki will have the opportunity to attend a high-quality preschool by 2032.



S E A C
Special Education Advisory Council
1010 Richards Street Honolulu, HI 96813
Phone: (808) 586-8126 Fax: (808) 586-8129
email: spin@doh.hawaii.gov

March 28 2025

**Special Education
Advisory Council**

Ms. Martha Guinan, *Chair*
Ms. Susan Wood, *Vice Chair*

Ms. Kathie Awaya
Ms. Virginia Beringer
Mr. Will Carlson
Ms. Annette Cooper
Mr. Mark Disher
Ms. Nancy Gorman
Ms. Mai Hall
Ms. Melissa Johnson
Ms. Tina King
Ms. Dale Matsuura
Ms. Cheryl Matthews
Dr. Paul Meng
Ms. Siena Molina
Ms. Trish Moniz
Mr. Chris Pelayo
Ms. Kiele Pennington
Ms. Kau'i Rezentes
Ms. Rosie Rowe
Dr. Scott Shimabukuro
Mr. Herbert Taitingfong
Mr. Steven Vannatta
Ms. Lisa Vegas
Ms. Jasmine Williams

Ms. Helen Kaniho, *liaison to
the Superintendent*
Ms. Wendy Nakasone-Kalani,
*liaison to the military
community*

Amanda Kaahanui, Staff
Susan Rocco, Staff

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Committee on Ways and Means
Hawaii State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: HB 429, HD 1, SD 1 - RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

Dear Chair Dela Cruz and members of the Committee,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) is in support of HB 429, HD 1, SD 1 which appropriates funds to hire teachers and teacher assistants and for equipment and services for public preschools.

This legislation advances the State's commitment to provide universal access to high quality early learning for Hawaii's 3- and 4-year-olds. Numerous research studies have shown the long-term benefits of quality early childhood education programs for students with and without disabilities, including increased high school graduation rates, lower grade retention and dropout rates, and greater social and emotional maturity. There is also ample evidence that access to quality preschool programming can lessen referrals for special education services by providing prevention and early intervention strategies to meet students' diverse needs.

HB 429, HD 1, SD1 will allow the Executive Office on Early Learning to add another 50 Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) classrooms over the next two years. It provides funding for Pre-K teachers and teacher assistants, and assists in covering equipment and additional services needed for students and staff. It will also create more opportunities for young children with disabilities to have their school readiness needs met in inclusive settings.

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on this important issue.

Respectfully,

Martha Guinan
Chair

HB-429-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 5:44:24 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/28/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christopher Sanita	Testifying for Hana High and Elementary School	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 S. Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813**

Subject: HB No. 429, S.D. 1 - RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the committee,

My name is Chris Sanita, and I am the Principal of Hāna High and Elementary School. We have hosted an Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) public prekindergarten classroom at our school since 2023 and before that for ten years funded by Kamehameha Schools and EOEL. I am writing to express my strong support for HB No. 429, S.D. 1, which funds the expansion of EOEL public prekindergarten classrooms on HIDOE campuses.

Hosting an EOEL prekindergarten class on campus has been incredibly positive for our school and community. It allows us to provide essential early learning opportunities for all students, including those with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) who benefit greatly from an inclusive classroom setting. Through this program, our young learners receive early interventions, structured support, and the opportunity to develop foundational academic and social-emotional skills alongside their peers.

Beyond the direct impact on students, the program strengthens our school community and helps working families. Many parents in Hāna and across Hawai'i struggle to find affordable, high-quality early childhood education while balancing work responsibilities. Expanding EOEL prekindergarten programs gives keiki a strong start and provides families with reliable, no-cost early learning options. This allows parents to remain in the workforce, contribute to our local economy, and stabilize household finances. Supporting working families through access to prekindergarten programs strengthens Hawai'i's economy by enabling greater workforce participation and productivity.

Additionally, the long-term academic benefits of early learning are undeniable. As a Principal, I witness firsthand how students who have attended prekindergarten enter kindergarten with more potent literacy, math, and problem-solving skills. They demonstrate greater confidence, social adaptability, and the ability to engage in structured learning environments. Research consistently shows that children with access to quality early education are likelier to perform well academically, graduate from high school, and pursue higher education or career opportunities. Expanding prekindergarten access ensures that more students gain a solid academic foothold, reducing achievement gaps and setting the stage for lifelong success.

The EOEL program is also well-supported with ongoing professional development for Preschool teachers, Educational Assistants, and Administrators. We benefit from high-quality coaching, mentoring, and curriculum development that ensures our educators are equipped to meet the unique needs of our students.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to pass HB429, S.D. 1, and fund the expansion of EOEL public prekindergarten classrooms. Investing in early learning is an investment in Hawai'i's children, families, and economy.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your leadership on this issue and your commitment to our keiki.

Mahalo,

**Chris Sanita
Principal, Hāna High and Elementary School**



**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Friday, March 28, 2025
10:02 A.M.
Conference Room 211**

HB 429 HD1 SD1: RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means:

My name is Gary Kai, and I serve as Executive Director of the Hawai‘i Business Roundtable. On behalf of our members, I am writing in strong support of House Bill 429 HD1 SD1, which appropriates essential funding to hire teachers and teacher assistants, and to provide equipment and services for public preschools.

This bill is a critical step in expanding Hawai‘i’s public Prekindergarten (Pre-K) system. It ensures we have the resources needed to recruit qualified educators, build classroom infrastructure, and offer comprehensive support services to our youngest learners. We respectfully urge the Committee to consider the funding and staffing levels proposed in the original version of HB429, which are aligned with the Executive Office on Early Learning’s (EOEL) budget request.

The Hawai‘i Business Roundtable is a statewide organization composed of Chief Executive Officers of many of Hawai‘i’s largest employers. While our members are business leaders, our community focused mission includes building strong public-private partnerships that support education, workforce development, and long-term economic resilience. We view investments in early learning as a strategic foundation for Hawai‘i’s future.

HBR has long championed early childhood education. As we noted in a 2013 Op-Ed:

“On top of the economic benefits, our state stands to gain significantly in social capital. Aside from cognitive skills, participation in early learning programs teaches children valuable skills such as patience, self-discipline and collaboration — skills that help students succeed in school, in college and as professionals. Early education would help ensure Hawai‘i has a strong workforce that could compete effectively in the global market.”

Today, the need for a strong, adaptable workforce is even more evident. The long-term benefits of early learning are well-established, and we believe that sustained public investment will yield generational returns in educational outcomes, economic stability, and community well-being.

The Hawai‘i Business Roundtable stands ready to work alongside the Legislature, EOEL, and the Department of Education to ensure every keiki in Hawai‘i has access to high-quality Pre-K opportunities.

We urge the Committee to pass HB 429 HD1 SD1 and continue to make early childhood education a top priority. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Gary K. Kai
Executive Director
Hawai‘i Business Roundtable



1200 Ala Kapuna Street • Honolulu, Hawai'i 96819
Tel: (808) 833-2711 • Fax: (808) 839-7106 • Web: www.hsta.org

Osa Tui, Jr.
President

Logan Okita
Vice President

Cheney Kaku
Secretary-Treasurer

Ann Mahi
Executive Director

TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Item: **HB 429 HD 1 SD 1 - Related to Early Learning**
Position: **SUPPORT**
Hearing: **Friday, March 28, 2025, 10:02am, Conference Room 211**
Submitter: **Osa Tui, Jr. – President, Hawai'i State Teachers Association**

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association supports HB 429 HD 1 SD 1, which appropriates funds to hire teachers and teacher assistants and for equipment and services for public preschools.

Preschool plays a crucial role in a child's development, laying the foundation for their future academic, social, and emotional success. Here's why it's so important:

Cognitive Development

- **Brain Development**: The preschool years are a critical period for brain development. Preschool programs provide stimulating environments and activities that enhance cognitive abilities, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and memory.
- **Early Literacy and Math Skills**: Preschool introduces children to foundational literacy skills like letter recognition, phonics, and vocabulary, as well as basic math concepts like counting, shapes, and patterns. These skills are essential for future academic success.
- **Curiosity and Exploration**: Preschool encourages children to explore their surroundings, fostering curiosity and a love of learning. Through play-based activities, children develop a sense of wonder and a desire to learn more about the world around them.

Social and Emotional Development

- Social Skills: Preschool provides opportunities for children to interact with their peers, learn to share, cooperate, and resolve conflicts. These social skills are crucial for building relationships and navigating social situations throughout life.
- Emotional Regulation: Preschool helps children develop emotional regulation skills, such as recognizing and managing their emotions, and understanding the emotions of others. This emotional intelligence is essential for building resilience and mental well-being
- Self-Confidence: Preschool provides a supportive environment where children can develop a sense of self-confidence and independence. They learn to make choices, take on challenges, and celebrate their accomplishments, which builds their self-esteem and belief in their abilities.

School Readiness

- Structure and Routine: Preschool introduces children to the structure and routine of a classroom environment, helping them prepare for the expectations of kindergarten and beyond. They learn to follow directions, listen to teachers, and participate in group activities.
- Academic Skills: Preschool provides a foundation for academic learning by introducing children to basic concepts in literacy, math, science, and other subjects. This gives them a head start when they enter formal schooling.
- Social and Emotional Readiness: Preschool helps children develop the social and emotional skills they need to succeed in school, such as the ability to focus, follow directions, and interact positively with peers and adults.

Long-Term Benefits

- Academic Achievement: Research has shown that children who attend preschool are more likely to graduate from high school, attend college, and achieve higher levels of education.
- Economic Success: Studies have also linked preschool attendance to higher earning potential and greater economic stability in adulthood.
- Social and Civic Engagement: Preschool graduates are more likely to be involved in their communities, vote, and participate in civic activities.

In conclusion, preschool provides a strong foundation for children's future success in all areas of life. It's an investment in their cognitive, social, emotional, and academic development that pays dividends for years to come. The Hawai'i State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** HB 429 HD 1 SD 1.



Kamehameha Schools®

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Time: 10:02 a.m.

Date: March 28, 2025

Where: Conference Room 211

TESTIMONY

By Dr. Wai‘ale‘ale Arroyo
Kamehameha Schools

RE: HB 429, HD1, SD1, Relating to Early Learning

E ka Luna Ho‘omaluku Dela Cruz, ka Hope Luna Ho‘omaluku Moriwaki, a me nā lālā o ke Kōmike o nā Loa‘a a me nā Ho‘olilo o ka ‘Aha Kenekoa, aloha nui kākou! My name is Dr. Wai‘ale‘ale Arroyo, Vice President of Hi‘ialo at Kamehameha Schools.

Kamehameha Schools **supports** HB 429, HD1, SD1, which supports the continued implementation of EOEL public preschool for Hawai‘i’s keiki.

According to recent figures, only 41.4% of Native Hawaiian children attend preschool and 1 in 2 are living below the ALICE threshold. The continued expansion ensures that all keiki including Native Hawaiians have access to early learning in their community. Such access is important to ensure the readiness of keiki to enter kindergarten while lessening the financial burden on families.

Founded in 1887 by the legacy of Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop, Kamehameha Schools (KS) is a private, educational, charitable trust committed to improving the capability and well-being of Native Hawaiian people through education. KS envisions a thriving lāhui where learners, grounded in Christian and Hawaiian values, grow into ‘ōiwi leaders who inspire and contribute to their communities, both locally and globally.

‘A‘ohe ‘ulu e loa‘a i ka pōkole o ka lou. There is no success without preparation.



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: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: Chevelle Davis, MPH - Director of Early Childhood & Health Policy
Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 429, H.D. 1, S.D. 1 – Relating to Early Learning

Hearing: Friday, March 28, 2025, at 10:02 AM, Conference Room 211

POSITION: STRONG SUPPORT

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **STRONG SUPPORT of H.B. No. 429 H.D. 1, S.D. 1**, which appropriates funds to hire teachers and teacher assistants, as well as for equipment and services for public preschools.

HCAN Speaks! is dedicated to ensuring that all keiki in Hawai'i have access to high-quality early learning opportunities. Research overwhelmingly demonstrates that early learning is critical to a child's academic success, social development, and long-term well-being. Expanding and strengthening our public preschool system is essential to creating equitable opportunities for all children, especially those from underserved communities.

The need for qualified teachers and teacher assistants in our public preschools cannot be overstated. Early learning professionals play a vital role in shaping young minds, and investing in their hiring and retention ensures that Hawai'i's keiki receive the best possible start to their education. Additionally, funding for essential equipment and services will provide our preschools with the resources necessary to create safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate learning environments.

H.B. No. 429, H.D. 1, S.D. 1 represents a meaningful step toward addressing the existing gaps in Hawai'i's early learning infrastructure. By supporting this measure, we prioritize our keiki's future, strengthen our workforce, and invest in a more prosperous Hawai'i.

We respectfully urge the committee to pass H.B. No. 429, H.D. 1, S.D. 1 and continue the commitment to expanding access to high-quality early learning programs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **STRONG SUPPORT** of this critical legislation.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

HB-429-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/25/2025 11:33:37 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/28/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Uilani K Kaitoku	Testifying for Hauula Elementary	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the committee,

My name is U'ilani Kaitoku, and I am the Principal of Hau'ula Elementary. We are eager to host an Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) public prekindergarten classroom at our school. I am writing to express my strong support for HB No. 429, S.D. 1, which funds the expansion of EOEL public prekindergarten classrooms on HIDOE campuses.

Hosting an EOEL pre kindergarten class is essential for our community. Many of our students lack access to early learning opportunities, and having a program on our campus would ensure more keiki begin their educational journey with a strong foundation. Additionally, an EOEL pre kindergarten class would provide inclusive learning opportunities for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), allowing them to thrive in an inclusive setting alongside their peers.

As a Principal, I see firsthand the profound impact of quality early learning on a child's development. Each year, as we welcome new kindergarteners, it is clear which students have had prekindergarten experience—those who have arrived ready to engage, with stronger language, social, and self-regulation skills. Expanding access to EOEL prekindergarten would give more students these critical advantages from the start.

An early learning program aligned with the DOE schedule would also provide much-needed consistency for families with multiple children, creating a seamless school experience. More importantly, establishing an EOEL pre kindergarten at Hau'ula Elementary would allow us to nurture and prepare students within our own community. From an early age, teachers could instill our school's culture and expectations, fostering a sense of belonging and readiness that supports long-term success.

Expanding access to prekindergarten in Hawai'i is essential to ensuring that all keiki, regardless of their background or abilities, have access to high-quality early learning experiences that set the foundation for lifelong success. For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to pass HB429, S.D. 1, and fund the expansion of EOEL public prekindergarten.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your leadership on this issue and your commitment to our community.

Me ka ha'aha'a,
U'ilani Kaitoku
Principal, Hau'ula Elementary

HB-429-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 9:29:59 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/28/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Douglas Boyer	Testifying for Lanai High and Elementary School	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

March 27, 2025

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Hawai'i State Capitol
415 S. Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

Subject: HB No. 429, S.D. 1 - RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the committee,

My name is Doug Boyer, and I am the Principal of Lāna'i High and Elementary School. We have hosted two Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) public prekindergarten classrooms at our school since my tenure started in the school year 2021-2022. I am writing to express my strong support for HB No. 429, S.D. 1, which funds the expansion of EOEL public prekindergarten classrooms on HIDOE campuses.

Hosting two EOEL prekindergarten classes on campus has been very positive for our school. It allows us to provide additional learning opportunities for prekindergarten students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) who might benefit from an inclusion setting. In addition, it has allowed the school to create an expansion preschool program that leads into our Kaiapuni (Hawaiian Immersion) program.

The island of Lāna'i has the opportunity to host two EOEL classrooms, which has provided educational opportunities for students to prepare for Kindergarten. As we would host a third program due to the lack of early education programs in Lāna'i, other communities throughout Hawai'i would benefit from establishing or having multiple EOEL classrooms.

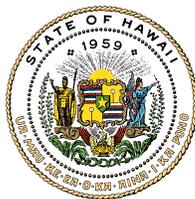
The program is very well supported, with Preschool teachers, Educational Assistants, and Administrators engaged in professional development throughout the year. We also receive coaching, mentoring, and curriculum development support tailored to the unique needs of our classroom.

As a Principal, I see firsthand the profound impact of quality early learning on a child's development. Every year, we welcome kindergarteners into our classrooms, and it is evident which students have attended prekindergarten programs. Those with quality early learning experience arrive ready to engage and have stronger language, social, and self-regulation skills.

Expanding access to prekindergarten in Hawai'i is essential to ensuring that all keiki, regardless of their background or abilities, have access to high-quality early learning experiences that set the foundation for lifelong success. For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to pass HB429, S.D. 1, and fund the expansion of EOEL public Pre-K.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your leadership on this issue and your commitment to our community.

Mahalo,
Douglas Boyer, EdD
Lāna'i High and Elementary School



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
LANA'I HIGH & ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
P.O. Box 630630; 555 Fraser Avenue
Lana'i City, HI 96763

March 27, 2025

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 S. Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

Subject: HB No. 429, S.D. 1 - RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the committee,

My name is Jennifer Pimentel, and I am the Vice Principal of Lana'i High & Elementary School. We have hosted an Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) public prekindergarten classroom at our site over the past 10 years. This past year, we were thrilled to open a second classroom to meet the needs of our Hawaiian immersion students. I am writing to express my strong support for HB No. 429, S.D.1, which funds the expansion of EOEL public prekindergarten classrooms on HIDOE campuses. Hosting an EOEL prekindergarten class on campus has been very positive for our school. It allows us to provide additional learning opportunities for prekindergarten students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) who might benefit from an inclusion setting. For example, we've seen significant improvements in our students' communication and social interaction skills with IEPs when integrated into a general education setting. The diverse learning environment fosters empathy and understanding among all students, creating a more inclusive and supportive school culture.

Beyond inclusion, the program has strengthened our school community. Families feel more connected to the school from an earlier age, which builds strong relationships and facilitates smoother transitions into kindergarten. Parents have expressed gratitude for the convenient location and the high-quality education their children receive. The early exposure to our school's culture and expectations also helps to align home and school learning environments. Crucially, the program has supported the ongoing need for support for our littlest haumana and their ohana, as we navigate our community's 'Ōlelo and English needs. The program is very well supported, with Preschool teachers, Educational Assistants, and Administrators engaged in professional development throughout the year. We also receive coaching, mentoring, and curriculum development support tailored to the unique needs of our classroom.

As a Vice Principal, I see firsthand the profound impact that quality early learning has on a child's development. Every year, we welcome kindergarteners into our classrooms, and it is evident which students have attended prekindergarten programs. Those with quality early learning experience arrive ready to engage with stronger language, social, and self-regulation skills. Expanding access to

prekindergarten in Hawai'i is essential to ensuring that all keiki, regardless of their background or abilities, have access to high-quality early learning experiences that set the foundation for lifelong

success. For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to pass HB429, S.D.1, and fund the expansion of EOEL public Pre-K.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your leadership on this issue and your commitment to our community.

Mahalo,

Jennifer Pimentel
Assistant Principal
Lana'i High & Elementary School

HB-429-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 9:30:19 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/28/2025 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Llasmin Chaine	Testifying for Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I stand in support of HB429, HD1, SD1, as it will expand access to child care and early learning opportunities via prekindergarten classrooms on HODOE campuses, enabling community members to pursue educational and professional opportunities while parenting.



SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
Ke Ke'ena O Ka Hope Kia'āina

The 33rd Legislature, State of Hawaii
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
March 28, 2025

Testimony on
H.B. 429 – RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of H.B. 429, H.D. 1, S.D. 1** which appropriates funds to hire teachers and teacher assistants and for equipment and services for public preschools.

H.B. 429 aligns with our *Ready Keiki* initiative, the Administration's multi-faceted plan to ensure universal access to high-quality childcare and preschool. The Executive Office on Early Learning and School Facilities Authority built and refurbished over 50 classrooms to date and anticipate adding an additional 50 classrooms in the next two years. In 2024, the National Institute for Early Education Research's annual *State of Preschool* report found that Hawai'i is only one of five states in the country to meet 10 of 10 research-based quality benchmarks for its public pre-kindergarten programs. We must ensure that we have qualified teachers and teacher assistants to ensure keiki success.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.B. 429, H.D. 1, S.D. 1.

March 27, 2025

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 S. Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

Hawai'i State Capitol
415 S. Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

Subject: HB No. 429, S.D. 1 - RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the committee,

My name is Leighton Nakamoto, and I am the Principal of Ka'ala Elementary School. We have hosted an Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) public prekindergarten classroom at our school since 2024. I am writing to express my strong support for HB No. 429, S.D. 1 which funds the expansion of EOEL public prekindergarten classrooms on HIDOE campuses.

Hosting an EOEL prekindergarten class on our campus has proven to be a highly positive experience. It provides valuable inclusion opportunities for prekindergarten students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), allowing them to thrive in a diverse learning environment. The prekindergarten inclusion programs offer a wealth of multifaceted benefits for all children, regardless of their individual learning styles or developmental needs. These programs create a dynamic and enriching environment that promotes social and emotional development. Even in the relatively short time our EOEL classroom has been established, I've had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the profound impact of this inclusive approach. I've observed how it organically fosters a truly welcoming and supportive atmosphere, one where every child feels valued and respected. This environment serves as a fertile ground for cultivating a strong sense of community, where children learn to appreciate diversity, practice empathy, and collaborate effectively. The shared experiences within our inclusive classroom are not merely about social milestones; they are about building the foundational skills necessary for lifelong success, including resilience, adaptability, and a genuine understanding of the importance of belonging.

The program is very well supported, with Preschool teachers, Educational Assistants, and Administrators engaged in professional development throughout the year. We also receive coaching, mentoring, and curriculum development support tailored to the unique needs of our classroom.

As a Principal, I see firsthand the profound impact that quality early learning has on a child's development. Every year, we welcome kindergarteners into our classrooms, and it is evident which students have attended prekindergarten programs. Those with quality early learning experience arrive ready to engage, with stronger language, social, and self-regulation skills.

Expanding access to prekindergarten in Hawai'i is essential to ensuring that *all* keiki, regardless of their background or abilities, have access to high-quality early learning experiences that set the foundation for lifelong success. For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to pass HB429, S.D. 1, and fund the expansion of EOEL public Pre-K.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your leadership on this issue and your commitment to our community.

Mahalo,

Leighton Nakamoto

Ka'ala Elementary School

March 27, 2027

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Hawai'i State Capitol
415 S. Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

Subject: HB No. 429, S.D. 1 - RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the committee,

My name is Eliza Elkington, and I am the Principal of Sunset Beach Elementary School. One of my proudest accomplishments as a Principal has been being involved in the opening of an Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) public pre-kindergarten (pre-k) classroom at our school. We opened the room in 2023, and it has been pure joy having these little ones on our campus as they learn and grow! I am writing to express my strong support for HB No. 429, S.D. 1 which funds the expansion of EOEL public pre-k classrooms on HIDOE campuses.

We run a fully inclusive model of EOEL on our campus, with a General Education teacher and a Special Education teacher, and two Educational Assistants working together to support all students. We believe inclusion sets the foundation for lifelong learning, positive social interactions, and a more accepting society. Inclusion settings in pre-k specifically offer numerous benefits for young students, including those with **and** without disabilities. Some key advantages for our Special Education students are: increased social development, extensive language growth, and improved confidence. Our General Education students experience a deeper sense of empathy and compassion as they learn alongside a diverse group of peers. They also develop stronger social skills as they learn to respect and celebrate differences among their classmates. Our community has benefited greatly from the EOEL classroom as well. Our PreK teachers invite families into the classroom for things like quarterly awards, literacy events, and interactive math games.

The program is very well supported, with Preschool teachers, Educational Assistants, and Administrators engaged in professional development throughout the year. We also receive coaching, mentoring, and curriculum development support tailored to the unique needs of our classroom.

As a Principal, I see firsthand the profound impact that quality early learning has on a child's development. Every year, we welcome kindergarteners into our classrooms, and it is

evident which students have attended prekindergarten programs. Those with quality early learning experience arrive ready to engage, with stronger language, social, and self-regulation skills.

Expanding access to prekindergarten in Hawai‘i is essential to ensuring that *all* keiki, regardless of their background or abilities, have access to high-quality early learning experiences that set the foundation for lifelong success. For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to pass HB429, S.D. 1, and fund the expansion of EOEL public Pre-K.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your leadership on this issue and your commitment to our community.

Mahalo,

Eliza Elkington
Principal, SBES

March 26, 2025

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 S. Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

Subject: HB No. 429, S.D. 1 - RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Allyson Doherty, and I am the Principal of Kailua Elementary School. Since 2018, our school has hosted an Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) public prekindergarten classroom. I am writing to express my strong support for HB No. 429, S.D. 1, which funds the expansion of EOEL public prekindergarten classrooms.

Hosting an EOEL prekindergarten classroom has been a transformative experience for our school community, particularly in increasing inclusion and setting students up for success as they transition into kindergarten. The program has allowed us to provide high-quality early learning experiences to a diverse range of students, including those with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), by fostering an inclusive environment where children of varying abilities learn and grow together.

This inclusion has enhanced the campus culture, as students build peer relationships early, develop self-regulation skills, and enter kindergarten with the foundational language and social-emotional abilities they need to thrive. Our teachers consistently note the difference in readiness between students who have attended EOEL prekindergarten programs and those who have not. The structured yet nurturing learning environment of EOEL classrooms ensures that students are exposed to literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving skills in a developmentally appropriate way.

Beyond student success, the EOEL program provides essential professional development and support for teachers and educational assistants. With ongoing coaching, mentoring, and curriculum guidance tailored to the unique needs of early learners, our educators are equipped with the best tools to foster strong learning outcomes.

Expanding access to EOEL public pre-kindergarten is critical for ensuring equitable early learning opportunities for all keiki, regardless of their background or learning needs. By investing in these programs, we are investing in Hawai'i's future—ensuring that all children enter kindergarten ready to engage, succeed, and contribute to their communities.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to pass HB 429, S.D. 1, and fund the expansion of EOEL public prekindergarten classrooms. Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to early childhood education in our state.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Allyson", written in a cursive style.

Allyson Doherty
Kailua Elementary School

March 27, 2025

Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Education
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 S. Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

Subject: HB No. 429, H.D. 1 - RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

Dear Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and members of the committee,

My name is Kimberly Ka'ai, and I am the Principal of Maunaloa Elementary School. In our current 2024-2025 school year, we have been blessed to host an Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) public prekindergarten classroom. Having a PreK classroom in Maunaloa has been long awaited, thus I am writing to express my strong support for HB No. 429, H.D. 1 which funds the expansion of EOEL public prekindergarten classrooms on HIDOE campuses.

Hosting an EOEL prekindergarten class on campus has been very positive for our school. It allows us to provide additional learning opportunities for prekindergarten students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) who might benefit from an inclusion setting, especially as they learn to transition into the school setting. Having this opportunity is a great way for students with IEPs to enhance their social skills, as well as improve their communication skills at a young age.

Specifically at Maunaloa School, our EOEL program is truly preparing our students for Kindergarten Readiness, as they begin developing foundational skills in literacy and numeracy, as well as fostering cognitive development, including problem-solving and critical thinking. Socially and emotionally, I have seen our students learn important skills such as sharing, positively communicating with both teachers and peers, learning about empathy and understanding, as well as developing their self-control and emotional regulation.

The program is very well supported, with Preschool teachers, Educational Assistants, and Administrators engaged in professional development throughout the year. We also receive coaching, mentoring, and curriculum development support tailored to the unique needs of our classroom.

As a Principal, I see firsthand the profound impact that quality early learning has on a child's development. Every year, we welcome kindergarteners into our classrooms, and it is evident which students have attended prekindergarten programs. Those with

quality early learning experience arrive ready to engage, with stronger language, social, and self-regulation skills.

Expanding access to prekindergarten in Hawai‘i is essential to ensuring that *all* keiki, regardless of their background or abilities, have access to high-quality early learning experiences that set the foundation for lifelong success. For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to pass HB429, H.D. 1, and fund the expansion of EOEL public Pre-K.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your leadership on this issue and your commitment to our community.

Mahalo,

Kimberly Ka‘ai

Maunaloa Elementary, Principal