



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

The 33rd Legislature, State of Hawaii
House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness
February 4, 2025

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

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of H.B. 429** 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.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



RYAN I. YAMANE
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KA LUNA HO'OKELE

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STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
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TRISTA SPEER
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KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

February 3, 2025

TO: The Honorable Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
House Committee on Education

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

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

Hearing: February 4, 2025, 2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 309 & 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: The purpose of this bill is to appropriate funds to hire teachers and teacher assistants and for equipment and services for public preschools.

There continues to be a statewide shortage of qualified caregivers and staff for early learning programs due to low wages and 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 child care capacity.

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



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: 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. 429 – 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 strong support of H.B. No. 429.

This House Majority Package bill appropriates funds and authorizes positions to support the expansion of EOEL Prekindergarten (Pre-K) classrooms over the next biennium. It aligns with the funding requested in the Governor's proposed executive budget and has been identified as a priority of the Lieutenant Governor's Ready Keiki initiative. We are grateful to the House Majority Caucus for introducing this bill and appreciate the opportunity to highlight this funding request.

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 add an additional 50 classrooms over the next two years.

In 2020, the Hawaii 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, 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.



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Cheney Kaku
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Ann Mahi
Executive Director

TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Item: **HB 429 - Related to Early Learning**

Position: **SUPPORT**

Hearing: **2/4/2025, Conference Room 229, 2:00pm**

Submitter: **Osa Tui, Jr. – President, Hawai'i State Teachers Association**

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association supports HB 429, 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** this bill.



Kamehameha Schools®

LATE

House Committee on Education

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Date: February 4, 2025

Where: Conference Room 309

TESTIMONY

By Dr. Wai‘ale‘ale Arroyo
Kamehameha Schools

RE: **HB 429, Relating to Early Learning**

E ka Luna Ho‘omalua Woodson, ka Hope Luna Ho‘omalua La Chica, a me nā lālā o ke Kōmike Ho‘ona‘auao o ka Hale o nā Lunamaka‘āinana, aloha nui kākou. My name is Dr. Wai‘ale‘ale Arroyo, Vice President of Hi‘ialo at Kamehameha Schools.

Kamehameha Schools **supports** HB 429, 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.

HB-429

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 10:24:40 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carol Linde	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill. Especially as we do not know the future of so many different sources of federal funding, it is crucial to create as many opportunities for keiki to access high-quality preschool experiences.