



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

February 22, 2025

To: Representative Yamashita, Chair  
Representative Takenouchi, Vice-chair  
House Finance Committee

From: Elaine Yamashita, Chair  
Early Learning Board

Re: HB549 HD2 support

Aloha, Honorable Chair Yamashita, Vice-chair Takenouchi, and members of the House Finance 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 supports HB 549 HD2, which will expand the current early childhood registered apprenticeship program. This directly affects and supports much needed expansion of the early childhood workforce. Recruitment and retention of our important early educators is key to providing high quality care and education for our youngest keiki.

It is a specialized body of knowledge and experience based on child development and effective relationships, and apprenticeships provide both. The bill would also allow community-based providers resources to provide incentives for apprentices to continue and for the program as a whole.

Mahalo for your consideration and support of this bill.

Sincerely,

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



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

#### Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Finance  
Tuesday, February 25, 2025 2:00 p.m.

By

Nathan Murata, Dean  
College of Education

And

Michael Bruno, PhD  
Provost

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

### HB 549 HD2 – RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 549 HD2, which establishes an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant program to be administered by the University of Hawai'i to provide financial support for early learning program service providers in the State to participate in state- or federally-approved early learning apprenticeship programs.

Families across our state are struggling to find affordable, high-quality early learning programs that support their young children's development while families maintain their own economic stability. At the same time, there is a desperate need to support the recruitment, retention, and stabilization of our specially trained early learning workforce.

This bill offers a tangible solution to these pressing issues by:

- 1. Supporting the Early Learning Professionals:** The grant program will provide funding to support over 500 existing early learning professionals, helping them access critical training and professional development opportunities. This investment will not only enhance the quality of care but also improve recruitment and retention in the early care and education field that has historically faced high turnover due to low wages and limited growth opportunities.
- 2. Increasing the Supply of Early Learning Slots:** By incentivizing individuals to enter and advance in the field, this program has the potential to add up to 75 additional slots for infants and toddlers under the age of three, and up to 200 slots for three and four-year

olds. These additional slots will directly benefit families who are on waiting lists or forced to make difficult compromises in their work and other responsibilities.

3. **Creating Career Pathways:** By funding apprenticeships, the program will offer a structured pathway for career entry and advancement, that will enhance the recruitment of new individuals into the early learning profession. This is especially important in creating good jobs for individuals who reflect the diverse communities they will serve.
4. **Strengthening Economic Stability:** For families in Hawai'i who struggle with the high cost of living, access to reliable child care is often the key to maintaining stable employment and achieving economic security. The proposed program will play a critical role in ensuring parents can participate fully in their jobs and careers, knowing their children are in safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate settings.

This legislation aligns with our shared vision of prioritizing early learning as a cornerstone of our state's future. By investing in the apprenticeship grant program, we are not only addressing immediate needs but also laying the groundwork for long-term systemic improvements in early care and education for our young children's success in school and in life.



**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 Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Finance

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

**SUBJECT:** Testimony on H.B. No. 549, H.D. 2 – RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM.

**Committee:** FIN  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 25, 2025  
**Time:** 2:00 p.m.  
**Location:** Conference room 308

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

The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) offers the following comments in support of H.B. No. 549, H.D. 2, and defers to the University of Hawai'i regarding implementation and funding.

Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Programs (ELRAPs) create structured pathways for aspiring early childhood professionals to gain hands-on experience, earn credentials, and achieve career advancement through apprenticeships that integrate employer-paid classroom learning with on-the-job training and comprehensive wraparound support.

This bill creates a grant program to mitigate financial barriers to participation in state-approved or federally approved ELRAPs for licensed or registered early learning program service providers, with priority given to infant and toddler programs.

EOEL is committed to improving the recruitment, retention, and career pathways for our early learning workforce, and recognizes that our capacity to expand access to early learning opportunities for Hawai'i's keiki is dependent on our ability to grow and support our workforce. ELRAPs can enhance the sustainability and capacity of the workforce by:

- Addressing workforce shortages in the early childhood field by supporting recruitment and retention;
- Providing competitive compensation and benefits to ensure employees are valued; and

- Improving opportunities for professional advancement.

EOEL would be happy to collaborate with the University of Hawai'i to develop the award criteria for this grant program, as directed in this bill.

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 this bill.

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

February 24, 2025

TO: The Honorable Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair  
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 549 HD2 – RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM.**

Hearing: February 25, 2025, 2:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this measure and defers to the University of Hawaii. DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation not reduce or replace a priority identified in the executive budget.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this measure is to establish an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program to be administered by the University of Hawaii to provide financial support for early learning program service providers in the State to participate in state-or federally-approved early learning apprenticeship programs. Requires an annual report to the Legislature. Appropriates funds. Effective July 1, 3000. (HD2)

The Committee on Human Services and Homelessness (HD2) amended this measure by making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

The House Committee on Higher Education (HD1) amended the measure by:

- (1) Amending the preamble to declare that the establishment of an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program is a matter of statewide concern;

- (2) Changing the effective date to July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion; and
- (3) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

DHS supports the apprenticeship program, which aims to increase the number of qualified early learning professionals and expand the existing child care capacity. An apprenticeship program provides opportunities to support the recruitment, retention, and professional development of early learning professionals in a career field that has been experiencing a continuous shortage of qualified caregivers and staff for early learning programs.

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

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES  
KA 'OIHANA LAWELAWE KAIĀULU  
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

925 DILLINGHAM BOULEVARD, SUITE 200 • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96817  
PHONE: (808) 768-7762 • FAX: (808) 768-7792 • WEBSITE: [honolulu.gov/dcs](http://honolulu.gov/dcs)

RICK BLANGIARDI  
MAYOR  
MEIA



ANTON C. KRUCKY  
DIRECTOR  
PO'O  
AEDWARD LOS BANOS  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
HOPE PO'O

February 24, 2025

The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair  
The Honorable Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
And Members of the House Committee on Finance  
State Capitol, Conference Room 308  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Yamashita  
And Members of the House Committee on Finance:

SUBJECT: Measure H.B. No. 594 H.D. 2 – Relating to an Early Learning  
Apprenticeship Grant Program

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H.B. No. 594 H.D. 2.

Our State faces a critical shortage of affordable, high-quality child care options. Families are struggling to secure the care they need to support their children's development while maintain economic stability. This bill offers a tangible solution to this urgent issue by:

- 1. Supporting the Early Learning Workforce:** The grant program will fund training and professional development opportunities for over 500 existing early learning professionals. This investment will enhance the quality of care, improve retention in a historically low-paying field, and address turnover rates by offering pathways for career advancement.
- 2. Increasing the Supply of Child Care Slots:** By incentivizing individuals to enter and advance in the field, this program has the potential to create 100- 150 additional slots for infants and toddlers under the age of three, or up to 200 slots for three- and four-year-olds. These added slots will help families currently on waiting lists and those forced to make difficult compromises between work and caregiving.
- 3. Creating Sustainable Career Pathways:** Funding apprenticeship programs will recruit new talent into the early learning profession, while offering structured pathways for career growth. This approach builds a sustainable pipeline of high-quality child care professionals, many of whom reflect the diverse communities they serve.

The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair  
The Honorable Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
And Members of the House Committee on Finance  
February 24, 2025  
Page 2

4. **Strengthening Economic Stability:** The child care industry generates over \$300 million in revenue for the State. In addition, access to reliable child care is critical for families in Hawai'i where the high cost of living makes workforce participation a necessity. This program helps to strengthen Hawai'i's economy by generating revenue and creating new jobs, while also supporting families in securing employment opportunities.

This legislation aligns with our shared vision of prioritizing early learning as a cornerstone of Hawai'i's future. By investing in this apprenticeship grant program, we address immediate workforce while laying the foundation for long-term, systemic improvement in field. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

Sincerely,

Anton C. Krucky  
Director Designate

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 10:07:29 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Michael Golojuch, Jr. (he/him)	Pride at Work – Hawai‘i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Representatives,

Pride at Work – Hawai‘i is an official chapter of [Pride at Work](#) which is a national nonprofit organization that represents LGBTQIA+ union members and their allies. We are an officially recognized constituency group of the AFL-CIO that organizes mutual support between the organized Labor Movement and the LGBTQIA+ Community to further social and economic justice.

Pride at Work – Hawai‘i fully supports HB 549 HD 2.

We ask that you support this needed piece of legislation.

Mahalo,

Michael Golojuch, Jr. (he/him)

President

[Pride at Work – Hawai‘i](#)



Hearing Date: **Tuesday, February 25, 2025, 2:00 PM, Conf. Rm 308**

To: Committee on Finance  
Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair  
Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

**Re: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 549, HD2 RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM**

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

Members of AAUW of Hawaii thank you for this opportunity to testify in **strong support of HB 549, HD2** which establishes an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program to be administered by the University of Hawaii to provide financial support for early learning program service providers in the State to participate in state- or federally-approved early learning apprenticeship programs.

Hawaii has a shortage of qualified child care employees to fill these many vacant, but critical positions. Early childhood care and educational professionals are undervalued in Hawaii, averaging just \$13 to \$17 per hour wage. It is no surprise that the number of professionals in this sector has been decreasing, although they are in high demand.

Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Programs (ELRAP) 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. AAUW of Hawaii supports this measure that will aid Hawaii in retaining and recruiting qualified child care workers, including women who want to work in the field, but cannot, or will not, due to the current low wage. An important feature in this bill will provide funding to eligible providers participate in state- or federally-approved ELRAPs to adequately compensate these workers in training as well as allow providers to pay their existing staff higher wages, ensuring that wages are comparable to federal wage requirements or prevailing industry standards.

Please pass this important measure which will support working families and child care workers by helping them stay in the work force and be productive, tax-paying members of society. Mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jean Evans".

Jean Evans  
Public Policy Committee, AAUW of Hawaii  
publicpolicy-hi@aauw.net

*The American Association of University Women (AAUW) of Hawaii is an all-volunteer, statewide chapter of a national organization and is made up of six branches: Hilo, Honolulu, Kaula'i, Kona, Maui, and Windward Oahu. AAUW's mission is to advance gender equity through research, education, and advocacy. Our goal is economic security for women and their families.*



Date: February 24, 2025

To: House Committee on Finance  
Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair  
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: Support for **HB549 HD2**, Relating to An Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

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Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS) is a statewide cross-sector collaborative designed to improve the system of care for Hawai'i's youngest children and their families. ECAS partners work to align priorities for children prenatal to age eight, streamline services, maximize resources, and improve programs to support our youngest keiki.

**ECAS strongly supports passage of HB549 HD2**, which would provide financial support for early learning employers to participate in Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Programs (ELRAPs).

High-quality early learning programs are fundamental to thriving children, flourishing families, and a robust economy. An effective, well-trained, early learning workforce is the backbone of these programs. Chronic issues related to poor compensation and limited professional advancement opportunities, however, pose huge barriers to workforce recruitment and retention.

Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Programs offer new early learning professionals appropriately-scaled, higher compensation, and valuable on-the-job learning experiences as they work towards earning college degrees. ELRAPs have proven to be an effective recruitment and retention strategy, facilitating a pipeline of new employees into early learning programs and providing the compensation and career pathways instrumental to retaining professionals in the field.

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, as well as support the training and mentoring activities associated with apprenticeship. By providing key grant funding, this measure would help close budget shortfalls and remove the financial barriers impeding the participation of eligible early learning providers in state- or federally-approved ELRAPs.

By building the supply of highly-skilled and well-compensated early learning professionals, expansion of ELRAP participation, via the support of grants, would ultimately increase the number and seat capacity of early learning programs, as well as enhance the quality of care provided by programs.

In order for Hawai'i to meet the education, employment, and economic needs of the state, the state must support and sustain the child care sector and improve families' access to child care and early learning programs by prioritizing strategies to stabilize and expand the early childhood workforce. Towards this end, we strongly urge you to support **HB549 HD2**.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 9:04:39 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ka'ale'a Kyrstin Hanawahine	Hawai'i Children's Action Network	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

Mahalo for hearing this important bill! I am in **strong support** of HB549, which creates an apprenticeship program for early learning. This is an innovative strategy that will create more jobs and strengthen career pathways, which ultimately supports hard working families with children. Please vote yes on HB549!

Warm regards,

Ka'ale'a Hanawahine

**To:** Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Finance

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

**Subject:** Measure H.B. No. 549 H.D. 2 – Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

**Hearing:** Tuesday, February 25, 2025, at 2:00 PM, Conference Room 308

**POSITION: STRONG SUPPORT**

Aloha e Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the committee:

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **STRONG SUPPORT of H.B. No. 549 H.D. 2**. The proposed Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program is a critical step toward stabilizing our early learning system and ensuring all keiki across Hawai'i access early learning services. Families across Hawai'i are facing a severe shortage of affordable, early learning options, making it increasingly difficult for parents/guardians to balance work and their children's early development. This bill presents a meaningful solution by:

1. **Investing in the Early Learning Workforce** – Early learning starts with well-trained and supported educators. This grant program will provide professional development and training for over 500 early learning professionals, improving the quality of care, reducing turnover, and creating pathways for career advancement in a historically underpaid field. When we invest in our educators, we invest in better outcomes for our keiki.
2. **Increasing Supply of Child Care Spaces** – By supporting workforce growth and retention, this program will help create 100-150 new slots for infants and toddlers under the age of three and up to 200 additional slots for three- and four-year-olds. These additional spaces will help alleviate long waitlists and provide much-needed relief for working families who struggle to find care.
3. **Building Sustainable Career Pathways** – This bill establishes structured apprenticeship opportunities, recruiting new professionals into the field while ensuring they receive hands-on training and mentorship. We can create a lasting, sustainable pipeline of early childhood educators by fostering a strong, well-trained workforce that reflects the diverse communities they serve.

4. **Supporting Hawai'i's Economic Stability** – The child care sector generates over \$300 million in revenue for the state and is an essential component of our economy, enabling parents/guardians to participate in the workforce. With Hawai'i's high cost of living, reliable child care is essential for families striving to maintain financial stability. This program strengthens our economy by supporting businesses, creating jobs, and ensuring that parents/guardians have the ability to work while knowing their children are safe.

This measure aligns with our collective vision of prioritizing early learning as a foundational investment in Hawai'i's future. By supporting this apprenticeship grant program, we take a critical step in addressing our child care crisis while laying the foundation for a stronger, more resilient early learning system.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong support** of **H.B. No. 549 H.D. 2.**



**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**

*City and County of Honolulu*

- Justina Acevedo-Cross
- Greg Auberry
- Chiyomi Chow
- Kanoe Enos
- JoAnn Farnsworth
- Jordana Ferreira
- Nadia Garcia
- Danny Goya
- Alex Harris
- Sakinah Harrison
- Erin Henderson
- Monique Ibarra
- Shawn Kana'iaupuni
- Ryan Kusumoto
- Ka'iulani Laehā
- Lynelle Marble
- Megan McCorriston
- Marty Oliphant
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- Laurie Tochiki
- Sunshine Topping
- Kerrie Urosevich
- Carol Wear
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- Ka'ina Bonacorsi
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*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  
CommitToKeiki.org

Date: February 25, 2025

To: Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

From: Commit to Keiki

RE: House Bill 549 HD2, Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

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 House Bill 549 HD2**, which would establish the Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program at the University of Hawai'i and provide financial support to early learning employers who participate in the program.

The importance of high-quality early learning opportunities cannot be overstated. Providing our community's youngest keiki with access to programs of this nature is critical to their overall development and has positive impacts on both the wellbeing of their families and our local economy.

It is impossible to provide these high-quality opportunities without a workforce of highly prepared educators.

For years, the field of early learning has struggled with numerous issues including low compensation and limited opportunity for professional advancement. This has propped up significant barriers for individuals who are looking to enter the workforce and resulted in a limited number of available slots at a limited number of early learning programs.

The Early Learning Apprenticeship Program would provide those studying to become early learning educators with higher compensation and applicable, on-the-job experience while they are still completing their undergraduate coursework. Similar apprenticeship programs around the country have proven to be successful in both recruitment and retention of individuals who are interested in joining the early learning workforce, and it is our position that the program laid out in this measure would enjoy similar success.

**For these reasons, CTK strongly supports HB549 HD2.**

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony.



# holomua

COLLABORATIVE

## OUR MISSION

To support and advance public policies that make Hawai'i affordable for all working families.

## OUR VISION

Collaborative, sustainable, and evidence-based public policies that create a diverse and sustainable Hawai'i economy, an abundance of quality job opportunities, and a future where all working families living in Hawai'i can thrive.

## BOARD MEMBERS

Jason Fujimoto  
Meli James, *Board Chair*  
Micah Kāne  
Brandon Kurisu  
Brad Nicolai  
Mike Pietsch  
Sunshine Topping

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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HolomuaCollaborative.org

**Committee:** House Committee on Finance  
**Bill Number:** HB 549 HD2, Relating to An Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program  
**Hearing Date and Time:** February 25, 2024, at 2:00pm (Room 308)  
**Re:** Testimony of Holomua Collaborative in support

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Committee Members:

We write in support of HB 549 HD2, Relating to An Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program. The purpose of HB 549 HD2 is to establish an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program to provide financial support for early learning program service providers in the State to participate in state- or federally-approved early learning apprenticeship programs. This Program will help with the recruitment, retention, and upskilling of our early learning workforce so parents can fully participate in the workforce.

Multiple studies have shown that a person's most dramatic brain development occurs in the first three years of their life. Making sure that the frontline early learning workers—who are in charge of molding the minds of babies and other young children during these critical years—are paid well enough to stay in the profession benefits: (1) the workers who can now stay in the profession; (2) the children who will receive professional care during critical years; (3) businesses whose employees depend on child care; (4) parents who can stay at their jobs because of greater access to child care; and (5) society as a whole, because a new generation of children will be better prepared to learn, grow, and thrive.

Hawai'i is having an increasingly difficult time retaining and recruiting infant and toddler child care workers. The RAND Corporation<sup>1</sup> has noted that as of May 2021, the typical child care worker in Hawai'i earned just under \$13.79 on an hourly basis. When adjusting for cost of living, this is lower than the national median hourly wage for child care workers. This is unsustainable.

Indeed, between 2018 and 2020 Hawai'i lost 20% of its child care workforce. When child care workers leave the profession, it becomes harder for child care providers to stay open. This ultimately makes it harder for families to get child care as demand increases while supply shrinks. And this disparity between supply and demand for child care is why families struggle to pay for facilities that charge \$20,000 per year per child, because that is what they must do to stay afloat.

We know that early learning program service providers operate on miniscule financial margins with fixed costs that can't be negotiated or reduced, like rent or electricity. This means that when they need to lower expenses they must turn to wages. And in turn, early learning professionals leave the state.

<sup>1</sup> See "Early Childhood Educators in Hawai'i: Addressing Compensation, Working Conditions, and Professional Advancement," at [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA1908-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1908-1.html).



The Grant Program established by HB 549 HD2 will allow early learning program service providers to cover costs associated with participation in state- or federally-approved early learning programs, including personnel expenses and wages, training expenses, mentorship stipends, administrative costs, wage supplements, wage or salary increases, and other compensation enhancements to attract and retain qualified employees.

The establishment of the Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program will help break this cycle of poor retention and recruitment, and put us on a path to greater affordability both for early learning workers and for those who need access to early learning. We are proud to support it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Josh Wisch', is written in a cursive style.

Josh Wisch  
President & Executive Director



**Parents And  
Children Together**  
BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIPS  
THAT MATTER MOST

ParentsAndChildrenTogether.org

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 549 HD2 Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

**TO:** Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, & Members,  
House Committee on Finance  
**FROM:** Ryan Kusumoto, President & CEO  
**DATE:** February 25, 2025 at 2:00 PM

**Parents and Children Together (PACT) supports HB 549 HD2, Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program, which will incentivize early learning employers in Hawaii to participate in a specialized apprenticeship program.**

Child care workers face disproportionately low wages, which contributes to high turnover rates and loss of workforce. Lack of affordable and available child care has far reaching consequences, from the individual development of children to family economic stability, to employer operations. When child care is not available, parents cannot work, triggering a cascade of problems for the family and for employers.

Early learning registered apprenticeship programs (ELRAPs) 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.

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 and allow providers to pay their existing staff higher wages, ensuring that wages are comparable to federal wage requirements or prevailing industry standards.

Founded in 1968, PACT is a statewide community-based organization providing a wide array of innovative and educational social services to families in need. Assisting more than 15,000 people across the state annually, we help identify, address, and successfully resolve challenges through our 20 programs. Among our services are early education programs, domestic violence prevention and intervention programs, child abuse prevention and intervention programs, childhood sexual abuse supportive group services, child and adolescent behavioral health programs, sex trafficking intervention, poverty prevention and community building programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact me at (808) 847-3285 or [rkusumoto@pacthawaii.org](mailto:rkusumoto@pacthawaii.org) if you have any questions.

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 9:34:06 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jessie L Gonsalves	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

Mahalo for hearing this important bill! I am in **strong support** of HB549, which creates an apprenticeship program for early learning. This is an innovative strategy that will create more jobs and strengthen career pathways, which ultimately supports hard working families with children. Please vote yes on HB549!

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 9:46:30 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Shay Chan Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

Mahalo for hearing this important bill! I am in **strong support** of HB549, which creates an apprenticeship program for early learning. This is an innovative strategy that will create more jobs and strengthen career pathways, which ultimately supports hard working families with children. Please vote yes on HB549!

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 11:23:42 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Molly Mamaril	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Committee Members,

Mahalo for hearing this important bill! I am in **strong support** of HB549 HD2, which creates an apprenticeship program for early learning. This is an innovative strategy that will create more jobs and strengthen career pathways, which ultimately supports hard working families with children. Please vote yes on HB549!

Mahalo for your consideration,

Molly Mamaril

Kaimukī resident

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 11:25:28 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Caroline Kunitake	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

Mahalo for hearing this important bill! I am in **strong support** of HB549, which creates an apprenticeship program for early learning. This is an innovative strategy that will create more jobs and strengthen career pathways, which ultimately supports hard working families with children. Please vote yes on HB549!

Mahalo,

Caroline Kunitake

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 11:35:19 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Toni Fujimoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

Mahalo for hearing this important bill! I am in **strong support** of HB549, which creates an apprenticeship program for early learning. This is an innovative strategy that will create more jobs and strengthen career pathways, which ultimately supports hard working families with children. Please vote yes on HB549!

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 12:02:47 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Zane K Lacaden	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

Mahalo for hearing this important bill! I am in **strong support** of HB549, which creates an apprenticeship program for early learning. This is an innovative strategy that will create more jobs and strengthen career pathways, which ultimately supports hard working families with children. Please vote yes on HB549!

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 3:26:23 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Iwalani Hall	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

Mahalo for hearing this important bill! I am in **strong support** of HB549, which creates an apprenticeship program for early learning. This is an innovative strategy that will create more jobs and strengthen career pathways, which ultimately supports hard working families with children. Please vote yes on HB549!

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 5:41:51 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Younghee Overly	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for hearing HB549 which would increase and develop the number of childcare professionals through apprenticeship programs. This would help the shortage problem we have with childcare professionals.

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 9:09:46 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Cassia Simms-Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

Mahalo for hearing this important bill! I am in **strong support** of HB549, which creates an apprenticeship program for early learning. This is an innovative strategy that will create more jobs and strengthen career pathways, which ultimately supports hard working families with children. Please vote yes on HB549!

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 5:25:07 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alfred Castle	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB 549. This smart program will create more jobs and bolster our early learning teaching force. The Castle Foundation will work with the UH to implement this project quickly and efficiently. We did so in 2022 with the UH Stipend Grant Program, which is such a success. This is a great opportunity to further a public-private approach to creating Hawaii's early education workforce, on which the prospects of our keiki and families rest.

Thank you, and ready to go to work with you.

Alfred L. Castle

Executive Director

Samuel N. and Mary Castle Foundation

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 8:52:42 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lukas Petersons	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

Mahalo for hearing this important bill! I am in strong support of HB549, which creates an apprenticeship program for early learning. This is an innovative strategy that will create more jobs and strengthen career pathways, which ultimately supports hard working families with children. Please vote yes on HB549!

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 11:06:45 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Laurie Arial Tochiki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 11:27:37 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Rachel Ebert	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

Mahalo for hearing this important bill! I am in **strong support** of HB549, which creates an apprenticeship program for early learning. This is an innovative strategy that will create more jobs and strengthen career pathways, which ultimately supports hard working families with children. Please vote yes on HB549!

February 23, 2025

To: The Honorable Kyle Yamashita, Chair  
The Honorable Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
and members of the House Committee on Finance

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

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 549 HD2– Relating to the Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

**Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H. B. No. 549 HD2.**

Aloha,

My name is Dr. Terry Lock. Currently, I am the Director of the Hawai'i Early Childhood Educator Excellence and Equity (ECE<sup>3</sup>) Project at the University of Hawai'i Mānoa College of Education. I have been in the field of early childhood education for the past 49 years.

In Hawai'i, many parents, like my own adult children, with young children, continue to struggle to find high-quality reliable early learning programs that support their young children's development and simultaneously help them to work and achieve economic security. Unfortunately, many early learning programs are having difficulty recruiting and retaining quality early learning professionals.

This proposed Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program offers a tangible solution to these pressing issues by:

1. **Supporting the Early Learning Professionals:** The grant program will provide funding to support over 500 existing early learning professionals, helping them access critical training and professional development opportunities. This investment will not only enhance the quality of care but also improve recruitment and retention in the early care and education field that has historically faced high turnover due to low wages and limited growth opportunities.
2. **Increasing the Supply of Early Learning Slots:** By incentivizing individuals to enter and advance in the field, this program has the potential to add up to 75 additional slots for infants and toddlers under the age of three, and up to 200 slots for three and four year olds. These additional slots will directly benefit families who are on waiting lists or forced to make difficult compromises in their work and other responsibilities.
3. **Creating Career Pathways:** By funding apprenticeships, the program will offer a structured pathway for career entry and advancement, that will enhance the recruitment of new individuals into the early learning profession. This is especially important in creating good jobs for individuals who reflect the diverse communities they will serve.

4. **Strengthening Economic Stability:** For families in Hawai'i who struggle with the high cost of living, access to reliable child care is often the key to maintaining stable employment and achieving economic security. The proposed program will play a critical role in ensuring parents can participate fully in their jobs and careers, knowing their children are in safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate settings.

As the Director of the ECE<sup>3</sup> Project at the UHM College of Education, I supported Honolulu Community College (HonCC) and Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers' (KOKA) in launching our state's first early childhood education (ECE) registered apprenticeship program through KOKA in the summer of 2023. Recently, I spoke to one of KOKA's apprentices. She is employed as an aide at KOKA's Ka Pua Preschool, located in Mā'ili, 'Oahu. With strong support from her husband and their four boys, ages 14, 11, 10, and 5, she enrolled in her first ECE course at HonCC in the 2023-2024 academic year. She shared, "To be in a job, while going to school, has made a huge difference. This [apprenticeship program] fits the type of learner that I am. I love that I get to apply what I learn from my mentor and my college instructors, while interacting with preschool children." She also credits her "very encouraging" instructors at HonCC. She is on target to complete her first of three milestones, a Child Development Associate (CDA), a nationally recognized credential in May 2025. Her goal is to be a preschool lead teacher or open her own day care program.

HB 549 HD2 will help to grow our early learning workforce and aligns with the shared vision of prioritizing early learning as a cornerstone of our state's future. By investing in the apprenticeship grant program, we are not only addressing immediate needs but also laying the groundwork for long-term systemic improvements in early learning for our young children's success in school and in life.

**Mahalo for supporting H. B. No. 549 HD2.**

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 3:15:37 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Christy MacPherson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi and members of the House Committee on Finance,

I am in strong support of HB549 HD2. In order to help our keiki grow and thrive in their formative educational years, we need more well-equipped early care and education providers. This apprenticeship program makes a **WHOLE** lot of sense- a win-win-win for employers, our keiki, and people who are wanting to enter the ECE workforce.

Mahalo for your consideration.

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 5:40:34 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Joanna Galingana	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and committee members,

Thank you for hearing this important bill! I am in strong support for HB 549!

The apprenticeship program for early learning potential to innovate strategies for creating more job opportunities and strengthening career pathways. It also supports the development of efficient and safe classroom environments.

Please vote for HB549!

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 6:04:35 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kristy Arias	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

Bill HB549 pertaining to Early Learning apprenticeship Grant program, I fully support and I urge you to support as well. We are living in a time where Early childhood is much needed. Children need more support to early learning, and providers are needed to support them. This will help strenghten our communities career path and support hard working families!

Mahalo nui!

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 6:43:00 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jordan Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

Mahalo for hearing this important bill! I am in **strong support** of HB549, which creates an apprenticeship program for early learning. This is an innovative strategy that will create more jobs and strengthen career pathways, which ultimately supports hard working families with children.

Our early childhood workforce is in DIRE conditions in need of immediate support to continue to serve our families and keiki, helping keep working families in Hawaii. Please vote yes on HB549!

Sincerely,

Jordan Smith

Honolulu, 96813

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 8:46:53 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Beth Anderson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am testifying in support of HB549, which would incentivize early childhood care and early learning employers to participate in Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Programs (ELRAPs)

We need more childcare workers and we need them to be fairly compensated in order to enable them to earn a living and provide working parents with quality childcare. ELRAPs would ensure families have access to high quality early childhood care and education from birth to kindergarten and ensure the early care and education workforce is provided opportunities for professional advancement.

Early learning registered apprenticeship programs are a proven recruitment and retention strategy because they offer apprentices higher compensation and valuable on-the-job learning experiences as they work towards earning a higher education degree. ELRAPs increase the quality of early learning programs because they develop a well-prepared, well-supported, and well compensated Early Childhood Education workforce. These things are beneficial to the future of our keiki, working parents, and the quality of education, and the economy of our State.

This bill is critically necessary because 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 support businesses by helping employees with young children--particularly mothers--stay in the workforce because the difficult challenge of inaccessible and unaffordable child care would be addressed and alleviated. It would also increase the quality and availability of high quality early learning programs in our State. which is critically lacking now, so sorely needed, and so important for working parents and keiki.

Thank you for supporting HB549 to help ensure a successful future of our youngest keiki, their parents, and our valuable early child educators and caretakers.

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 10:39:16 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
pamela anderson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

Mahalo for hearing this important bill! I am in **strong support** of HB549, which creates an apprenticeship program for early learning. This is an innovative strategy that will create more jobs and strengthen career pathways, which ultimately supports hard working families with children. Please vote yes on HB549!

aloha,

P.Anderson

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 10:43:23 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I am in **strong support** of HB549, which creates an apprenticeship program for early learning. This is an innovative strategy that will create more jobs and strengthen career pathways, which ultimately supports hard working families with children.

me ke aloha ‘āina,  
Nanea Lo  
Mō‘ili‘ili, HI 96826  
Sierra Club of Hawai‘i Executive Commission Member  
Board Member, Hawai‘i Workers Center  
Kanaka Maoli/Lineal Descendant of the Hawaiian Kingdom

Date: February 25, 2025

To: Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takeouchi, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Finance

From: Sherrie Galdeira, Ohana Leadership Council Member  
Hawaii Children's Action Network

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 549 – Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

**Position: Strong Support**

Aloha Chair Yamashita , Vice Chair Takeouchi, and committee members,

**I am testifying in strong support of HB 549, which would incentivize early learning employers in Hawai'i to participate in Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Programs (ELRAPs).**

Hawai'i's economy relies heavily on access to childcare. When families are unable to access childcare it keeps them from participating in the workforce. This causes significant negative economic impacts not only for the family's economic stability but for Hawai'i's economy.

While efforts have been made to increase access to early learning opportunities there is still a severe shortage of staff to meet the exorbitant demand for childcare and early learning. ELRAPs is a proven recruitment and retention strategy, offering apprentices the opportunity to earn a living wage, a higher education degree and valuable on-the-job learning experiences.

Unfortunately, many early learning providers are unable to participate in ELRAPs because they do not have the resources to provide for the requirements of paying a living wage for apprentices, coaching and mentoring and additional administrative costs associated with the ELRAP. The ELRAP grant would remove this financial barrier by providing funding for eligible providers to participate in state- or federally approved ELRAPs.

This bill would give priority to licensed and/or regulated childcare 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 childcare providers will help families access quality care from the time children 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—to stay in the workforce, addressing the common challenge of inaccessible and unaffordable childcare.

Please support this measure.

Mahalo,  
Sherrie Galdeira, OLC HCAN

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 9:25:25 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alexandria Sisson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Date: February 25, 2025**

**To: Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair**

**Representative Jenna Takeouchi, Vice Chair**

**House Committee on Finance**

**From: Alexandria Sisson**

**Subject: Measure H.B. No. 549 – Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program**

**Position: Strong Support**

Aloha Chair Yamashita , Vice Chair Takeouchi, and committee members,

I am testifying in strong support of HB 549, which would incentivize early learning employers in Hawai'i to participate in Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Programs (ELRAPs).

Hawai'i's economy relies heavily on access to childcare. When families are unable to access childcare it keeps them from participating in the workforce. This causes significant negative economic impacts not only for the family's economic stability but for Hawai'i's economy as a whole.

While efforts have been made to increase access to early learning opportunities there is still a severe shortage of staff to meet the exorbitant demand for childcare and early learning. ELRAPs are a proven recruitment and retention strategy, offering apprentices the opportunity to earn a living wage, a higher education degree and valuable on-the-job learning experiences.

Unfortunately, many early learning providers are unable to participate in ELRAPs because they do not have the resources to provide for the requirements of paying a living wage for apprentices, coaching and mentoring and additional administrative costs associated with the ELRAP. The ELRAP grant would remove this financial barrier by providing funding for eligible providers to participate in state- or federally-approved ELRAPs.

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 children 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.

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 9:28:36 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Chloe Pua'ena Vierra-Villanueva	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**To: Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair**

**Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair**

**House Committee on Finance**

**From: Chloe “Pua’ena” Vierra-Villanueva**

**Subject: Measure H.B. No. 549 HD1 – Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program**

**Position: Strong Support**

**Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members,**

**I am testifying in strong support of HB549, which would incentivize early learning employers in Hawai‘i to participate in Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Programs (ELRAPs).**

**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 children need it most.

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,

C. Pua‘ena Vierra-Villanueva

‘Ohana Leadership Council

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 9:36:30 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kee Lo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

Mahalo for hearing this important bill! I am in strong support of HB549, which creates an apprenticeship program for early learning. This is an innovative strategy that will create more jobs and strengthen career pathways, which ultimately supports hard working families with children.

Please vote yes on HB549!

Mahalo,

Kee

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 10:01:39 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Joell Edwards	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**To: Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair**

**Representative Jenna Takeouchi, Vice Chair**

**House Committee on Finance**

**Subject: Measure H.B. No. 549 – Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program**

**Position: Strong Support**

**Aloha Chair Yamashita , Vice Chair Takeouchi, and committee members,**

**I am testifying in strong support of HB 549, which would incentivize early learning employers in Hawai‘i to participate in Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Programs (ELRAPs).**

**Hawai‘i’s economy relies heavily on access to childcare. When families are unable to access childcare it keeps them from participating in the workforce. This causes significant negative economic impacts not only for the family’s economic stability but for Hawaii’s economy as a whole.**

**While efforts have been made to increase access to early learning opportunities there is still a severe shortage of staff to meet the exorbitant demand for childcare and early learning. ELRAPs are a proven recruitment and retention strategy, offering apprentices the opportunity to earn a living wage, a higher education degree and valuable on-the-job learning experiences.**

**Unfortunately, many early learning providers are unable to participate in ELRAPs because they do not have the resources to provide for the requirements of paying a living wage for apprentices, coaching and mentoring and additional administrative costs associated with the ELRAP. The ELRAP grant would remove this financial barrier by providing funding for eligible providers to participate in state- or federally-approved ELRAPs.**

**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 children 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.**

**Joell M Edwards - Wainiha, Kaua‘i**

Rodney Saito  
3138 Waialae Ave #232  
Honolulu, HI 96816

February 24, 2025

Mr. Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair and members of the  
Committee on Higher Education  
415 S. Beretania Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Garrett and members of the Committee on Human Services & Homelessness:

Mahalo for hearing this important bill. I want to express my strong support for HB549, which creates an apprenticeship program for early learning. This is an innovative strategy that will create more jobs and strengthen career pathways, which ultimately supports hard working families with children

I strongly encourage to please vote YES on HB549!

Sincerely,



Rodney Saito

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 11:28:02 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Raya Esteban	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takeouchi, and committee members,

I am testifying in support of HB 549, which would incentivize early learning employers in Hawai‘i to participate in Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Programs (ELRAPs).

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 toward 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.

I was a preschool teacher for three years, and though I loved my job, I often struggled to make ends meet. I had to take on multiple jobs to supplement my income and earn a livable wage; oftentimes, the toll of working numerous jobs left me exhausted and unable to provide the quality care my kids deserved. At the time, I was living under my parents’ roof, and so I did not have to pay for rent. But if I had to account for housing expenses, there would have been no possibility for me to fulfill my vocation as an early childhood educator. An early care and education apprenticeship program would have been perfect for me—allowing me to earn higher wages while gaining valuable professional development without needing to leave the classroom.

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.

Furthermore, 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.

Innovative recruitment and retention strategies such as apprenticeship programs are especially important because early learning programs depend on staff to maintain their operations. If more and more early childhood education professionals leave the field because of low wages, we will have no one to care for our keiki, and early learning programs may be forced to shut down. This will have devastating outcomes for children, who deserve safe, stable, and nurturing environments, particularly in the formative years of their lives.

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,  
Raya Esteban

Date: February 25, 2025

To: Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takeouchi, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Finance

From: Paula Yanagi, Preschool Director  
Subject: Measure H.B. No. 549 – Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

**Position: Strong Support**

Aloha Chair Yamashita , Vice Chair Takeouchi, and committee members,

**I am testifying in strong support of HB 549, which would incentivize early learning employers in Hawai'i to participate in Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Programs (ELRAPs).**

Hawai'i's economy relies heavily on access to childcare. When families are unable to access childcare it keeps them from participating in the workforce. This causes significant negative economic impacts not only for the family's economic stability but for Hawaii's economy as a whole.

While efforts have been made to increase access to early learning opportunities there is still a severe shortage of staff to meet the exorbitant demand for childcare and early learning. ELRAPs are a proven recruitment and retention strategy, offering apprentices the opportunity to earn a living wage, a higher education degree and valuable on-the-job learning experiences.

Unfortunately, many early learning providers are unable to participate in ELRAPs because they do not have the resources to provide for the requirements of paying a living wage for apprentices, coaching and mentoring and additional administrative costs associated with the ELRAP. The ELRAP grant would remove this financial barrier by providing funding for eligible providers to participate in state- or federally-approved ELRAPs.

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 children 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.

This will also support the current workforce of childcare alleviate teacher burnout. We need more staff in this very important field of work that will serve the future leaders of Hawaii!

Please support this measure.

Mahalo, Paula Yanagi

**HB-549-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 7:51:02 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Leilani Kailiawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha! Chair, Vice Chair and Committe Members

Mahalo for hearing this important bill! I am in strong support of HB549, which creates an apprenticeship program for early learning. This is an innovative strategy that will create more jobs and strengthen career pathways, which ultimately supports hard working families with children. Please vote yes on HB 549

Mahalo

Leilani K