



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

The 33rd Legislature, State of Hawaii
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
March 10, 2025

Testimony on
H.B. 692 – RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of H.B. 692, H.D. 1** which expands the preschool open door program's eligibility criteria to allow more keiki and their ohana to be served by this program.

Access to preschool is a social justice issue in our state and we know that children who attend high-quality preschool are much better prepared for success. H.B. 692, H.D. 1 aligns with our *Ready Keiki* initiative, the Administration's multi-faceted plan to expand access to high-quality childcare and preschool. Our focus is on ensuring that our keiki are ready for Kindergarten and creating economic stability for families returning to the workforce. The success of *Ready Keiki* depends on a multi-pronged approach which includes building and refurbishing classrooms, creating teaching pathways for educators, and expanding the Preschool Open Doors program for local families. The amendments proposed in H.B. 692, H.D. 1 are critical to ensuring we have enough classrooms for all keiki.

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 7, 2025

TO: The Honorable Senator San Buenaventura, Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 692 HD1 – RELATING TO PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM.**

Hearing: Monday, March 10, 2025, Time 1:00 p.m.
Conference Room 225 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the bill and provides comments.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this bill is to expand the Preschool Open Doors Program's eligibility criteria. Repeals the requirement that Preschool Open Doors Program providers be accredited. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1).

DHS appreciates the amendments of the Committee on Human Services & Homelessness as follows:

- 1) Clarifying that the Preschool Open Doors Program shall continuously serve children who are in the three years prior to kindergarten entry until they enter kindergarten;
- 2) Clarifying the types of child care programs that are eligible to participate in the Preschool Open Doors Program;
- 3) Specifying that a parent or guardian of a child enrolled in the Preschool Open Doors Program may share in the costs of the Program through a copayment based on need, rather than an amount of up to one dollar;
- 4) Changing the effective date to July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion; and
- 5) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

The Department and the proponents of this bill have discussed to gain a better understanding of the need for inclusion of family child care homes for the Preschool Open Doors program and the Department's concerns with ensuring the child care setting is suitable in preparing children for their eventual entry into kindergarten. The conversations also addressed ensuring that children participating in one Preschool Open Doors program year are given consideration to continue their participation in the subsequent Preschool Open Doors program year, provided they are still eligible. As a result of these discussions, the Department has reviewed the proponent's suggested amendments and agrees with the suggestions.

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'āina
2759 South King Street, Room C6
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

TO: Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

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

SUBJECT: Testimony on H.B. No. 692, H.D. 1 – RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM.
Committee: HHS
Date: Monday, March 10, 2025
Time: 1:00 p.m.
Location: Conference Room 225

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

The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) offers the following comments in support of H.B. No. 692, H.D. 1 and defers to the Department of Human Services (DHS) regarding implementation and funding.

The Preschool Open Doors program plays a crucial role in helping families afford quality child care. This legislation will expand access to early learning opportunities for Hawai'i's families by expanding eligibility for the Preschool Open Doors program to include 2-year-olds (children three years prior to kindergarten entry) and by repealing the accreditation requirement for program providers.

Community-based early learning providers are vital to a strong, mixed-delivery early learning system, offering families flexibility in choosing care that best meets their needs. Many of these providers also have the capacity to offer full-day and year-round care, which is not offered by most free public prekindergarten programs but is essential for many working families.

Reducing financial barriers to community-based early learning programs also enables more parents and caregivers to participate in the workforce while ensuring their children receive the early childhood development and learning experiences critical to lifelong well-being.

We appreciate the Legislature's continued investment in our youngest keiki and their families. Thank you for the opportunity to share these comments in support of H.B. No. 692, H.D. 1.



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

March 7, 2025

To: Senator San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Aquino, Vice-chair
Senate Health and Human Services Committee

From: Elaine Yamashita, Chair
Early Learning Board

Re: HB692 HD1 support

Aloha, Honorable Chair San Buenaventura,, Vice-chair Aquino, and members of the Senate Health and Human Services 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 ELB supports HB 692 HD1, which would allow families with children ages two up to kindergarten entry to apply for Preschool Open Doors (POD) subsidies. This expansion of state subsidies will greatly benefit Hawai'i's working families.

POD subsidies to families support families who need care and education for their child beyond the school day and school year. Consistency and routine help optimize each child's development, and being able to stay in the same program year round, with caring teachers, provides that.

While the Dept. of Human Services will still provide accreditation support, allowing all licensed early learning programs to receive POD funding regardless of accreditation status will help more families access the subsidy.

The Early Learning Board oversees the EOEL, and both ELB and EOEL have a responsibility to coordinate the many systems that make up early learning opportunities in our state. Support of the expansion of POD funding is one of the ways the board can support all children in Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your consideration of this bill.

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

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 4:18:45 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hope Bennett	Testifying for Honolulu County Committee on the Status of Women	Support	Written Testimony Only

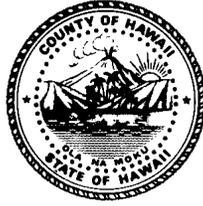
Comments:

The Honolulu County Committee on the Status of Women **strongly supports** HB692. This Committee's responsibilities include addressing women's issues in the County and advancing the status of women "through education, awareness, development, and training."

Access to affordable, high quality childcare is essential in supporting the needs of our local families. Far too many women in our state find themselves in the impossible situation of having to care for their young children and simultaneously provide economic support for their families. They deserve more options. By expanding the Preschool Open Doors Program (POD), HB692 aids in both preparing keiki for a successful educational journey and allowing parents to maintain their jobs and contribute to their family's economic stability.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong support** of HB692.

Jennifer Kagiwada
Council Member District 2 South Hilo



Office: (808) 961-8272
jennifer.kagiwada@hawaiicounty.gov

HAWAI'I COUNTY COUNCIL - DISTRICT 2

25 Aupuni Street • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

DATE: March 7, 2025
TO: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
FROM: Jennifer Kagiwada, Council Member
Council District 2
SUBJECT: HB 692 HD1

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and members of the Committee,

I am writing to you in strong support of HB 692 HD1, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill. This bill enhances access to childcare opportunities for families with young children and continuously serves keiki who are three years old up to kindergarten.

Childcare in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford acceptable childcare or cannot afford it at all. HB692 would help working families afford necessary childcare. The POD program benefits our economy because families that can access childcare have more work opportunities and stability. This program is also a meaningful public-private partnership that shows mutual benefit.

Please support this program by passing this bill.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jenn Kagiwada", is written over a light blue circular stamp.

Jenn Kagiwada

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

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RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR
MEIA



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

March 7, 2025

The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
And Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
State Capitol, Conference Room 225
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair San Buenaventura
And Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

SUBJECT: Measure H.B. No. 692 H.D. 1 – Relating to the Preschool Open
Doors Program

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H.B. No. 692 H.D. 1.

As it stands, the Preschool Open Doors Program (POD) is a vital resource for families with 3- and 4-year old children, offering much-needed financial assistance to make child care more affordable and accessible. By expanding eligibility to include 2-year olds, this bill acknowledges the importance of early childhood development during these formative years and addresses a substantial gap in child care support for families with younger children.

Child care expenses are one of the largest financial burdens for families on O'ahu, with some households paying upwards of 48 percent of their income on child care tuition. Expanding the POD program to include 2-year olds will help alleviate these pressures, allowing families to remain in the workforce, achieve greater economic stability, and provide a strong foundation for their keiki to grow and thrive.

We also strongly support efforts to enhance quality in early learning programs. The Department of Human Services recently established an accreditation program to promote accreditation and other quality improvement measures. Since the POD program is vital in expanding family access to early learning opportunities, we support removing the accreditation requirement in this bill. Other complementary programs are already in place to support quality improvement efforts, ensuring that expanded access is not done at the expense of quality.

The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
And Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
March 7, 2025
Page 2

This bill reflects a balanced approach to supporting families by addressing affordability, expanding access and ensuring quality remains uncompromised. By removing barriers, this bill will open doors for more families to access affordable and reliable care while creating better economic opportunities. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

Sincerely,

Anton C. Krucky
Director Designate



Kamehameha Schools®

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Time: 1:00 p.m.

Date: March 10, 2025

Where: Conference Room 225

TESTIMONY

By Dr. Wai‘ale‘ale Arroyo
Kamehameha Schools

RE: HB 692, HD1, Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program

E ka Luna Ho‘omalua San Buenaventura, ka Hope Luna Ho‘omalua Aquino, a me nā lālā o kēia Kōmike o ka ‘Aha Kenekoa, aloha kākou. My name is Dr. Wai‘ale‘ale Arroyo, Vice President of Hi‘ialo at Kamehameha Schools.

Kamehameha Schools **supports** HB 692, HD1, which expands the eligibility for the Preschool Open Doors (POD) Program making it easier for Hawai‘i’s families to access early learning opportunities.

The expansion to 2-year-olds will allow all families, including Native Hawaiian families, to access early learning opportunities earlier, essentially giving keiki three years of preschool preparation. We also commend the adjustments to the administration of the child care provider accreditation program. These additions minimize costs, giving providers a supportive pathway to achieve accreditation.

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.



**International Union of Painters and Allied Trades
District Council 50**

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Honolulu, HI 96826

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DRYWALL TAPERS,
FINISHERS
808.946.6621

March 7, 2025

Representative Joy San Buenavetura, Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 213

Re: House Bill 692, HD1
Hearing date: March 10, 2025
Hearing time: 1:00 p.m.

Chair San Buenavetura and Committee Members:

Thank you for hearing this bill and for this opportunity to testify in **support** of House Bill 692, HD1.

The International Union of Painters and Allied trades, District Council 50, is an organization that consists of five (5) local unions: the Painters, Local 1971; the Glaziers Architectural and Glass Metal Workers, Local 1889; the Carpet Linoleum and Soft Tile, Local 1926; the Drywall, Tapers Finishers, Local 1944; and the Pearl Harbor Metal Trades Specialty Workers, Local 1941 – in all, approximately two thousand (2000) members statewide.

Our members start work very early in the day and continue to face serious challenges with finding affordable childcare and education. We have members who dropped out of work simply because they had no childcare options available to them.

This bill expands the number of children who will be eligible for the Preschool Open Doors program by lowering the minimum age limit for the program, removing economic restrictions and increasing the number of community-based child-care providers.

The expanded child-care opportunity created by this measure will be a great aid to our members, allowing them to continue their careers in the construction workforce without interruption as well as preparing their children for future success.

We therefore ask for your support in passing House Bill 692, HD1. Thank you again for this opportunity to voice our **support** for this measure.

LATE

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 1:49:11 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnetta Jordan-Piper	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: Testimony in Strong Support of H.B. No. 692 H.D. 1 – Preschool Open Doors Program Expansion

Aloha e Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and esteemed members of the committee,

My name is Johnnetta Jordan-Piper and I am submitting testimony in strong support of H.B. No. 692 H.D. 1. As a family child care provider and early childhood advocate, I have witnessed firsthand the financial struggles that families face in securing early education.

The Cost of Childcare is Unsustainable for Many Families

Hawai‘i families are being priced out of early childhood education. When I sought care for my then three-year-old granddaughter, I faced a staggering cost of nearly \$2,500 per month—an amount that exceeded what our household could realistically sustain. That equates to **\$30,000 per year**, far surpassing the reported statewide average of **\$14,500 annually for infant care**. The disparity between reported averages and actual costs raises concerns about the accuracy of available data and highlights the severe financial strain families face when seeking high-quality childcare. Had we needed care from birth to age three, the financial burden would have been even greater.

For many families, these costs are simply not feasible, forcing parents to leave the workforce or rely on inconsistent and potentially lower-quality care. Expanding POD to include more families will not only provide relief but also allow more parents to remain in their jobs, strengthening Hawai‘i’s economy.

Hawai‘i Must Keep Pace with Other States Investing in Early Childhood Education

Many states have recognized that early investment in childhood education yields long-term benefits. **Washington, D.C.** provides free, full-day preschool for all three- and four-year-olds, leading to one of the highest preschool enrollment rates in the country. **Vermont** ensures universal pre-K access by offering state-funded, part-time preschool to all three- and four-year-

olds. **New York** has expanded access by providing free pre-K statewide for four-year-olds and increasing opportunities for three-year-olds in New York City. **Colorado** recently introduced a universal preschool program that provides 15 hours of free pre-K per week to all children in the year before kindergarten. **New Mexico, Illinois, and Oregon** offer subsidized care for two-year-olds through state-funded initiatives, ensuring that children receive early educational experiences essential for their cognitive and social development.

Hawai‘i has the opportunity to take a similar step forward. While the current POD program successfully supports three- and four-year-olds in childcare center settings, expanding eligibility to include two-year-olds and raising income thresholds will provide more children with the developmental foundations they need to succeed. Investing in early education at this critical stage will help reduce disparities in kindergarten readiness and allow families to better balance financial stability with quality care options.

Why Families Need Family Child Care Homes

I became a family child care provider because I believe that children thrive in environments where they feel safe, nurtured, and understood. My background includes a **Master’s degree in Elementary Education (PreK-8)** and a **second Master’s in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health**, equipping me with the expertise to support early development comprehensively. My passion has always been to provide high-quality, individualized care, especially for children with exceptional needs.

Not every family can, or wants to, place their child in a large center-based program. Some children require smaller settings where they receive consistent, individualized attention. Family child care homes offer a level of flexibility and familiarity that larger programs simply cannot. Parents working nontraditional hours, families who want a caregiver with a deep understanding of child development, and children who need a calmer, lower-stimulation environment all benefit from the unique qualities of family child care. I have always limited the number of children in my care because I believe **caregiver attunement** is critical to children’s emotional and cognitive development. When children are seen, heard, and valued in their early years, they are more confident, resilient, and prepared to learn.

Despite the importance of family child care, the current POD program does not fully recognize our contributions. To ensure equitable access to early learning, family child care providers should be included in the POD program and meet one of the following criteria:

1. Accreditation through the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) or National Early Childhood Accreditation (NECPA).
2. Participation in a partnership program aligned with federal Head Start or state prekindergarten program standards.
3. Achievement of a satisfactory score on a nationally recognized quality rating or assessment tool approved by the department.

By expanding provider eligibility, Hawai‘i can increase access to high-quality early learning opportunities while supporting the sustainability of family child care businesses that are essential for many communities.

The Time for Action is Now

Hawai‘i cannot afford to delay this investment in its youngest residents. States that have prioritized early childhood education have seen measurable improvements in student outcomes and workforce stability. Expanding POD will enable more families to afford quality child care, ensure providers receive adequate support, and give Hawai‘i’s children a strong foundation for future success.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to pass H.B. No. 692 H.D. 1. This bill is a necessary step toward making early learning more accessible and affordable for Hawai‘i’s families.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Johnnetta Jordan-Piper

Mililani Family Childcare Provider



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To: HHS Committee
Re: Support for HB692
From: Deborah Bond-Upson, President
Date: March 6, 2025

Founded following Furlough Friday, PPS-Hawai'i supports public education, serving the needs of students and families. We listen to and work with families, community members, and policymakers to enhance communication, raise awareness of educational policies, support family engagement, and involve communities in decision-making processes that improve schools and student outcomes.

We write in strong support of HB 692. The expansion of preschool open door programs eligibility criteria can increase the families and children participating in this vital service. The expansion of state subsidies and adjustment of policies will greatly benefit Hawai'i's working families. Moreover, early childhood education sets up students for success for the rest of their lives, rewards families with healthy productive participation in our commonwea, and supports school harmony and success.

Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman found that every \$1 invested in quality early childhood programs generates \$4 to \$16 in returns. The earlier we act, the greater the impact—for kids, families, businesses and communities. The first five years of life are a once-in-a-lifetime window to shape a child's future. With 90% of brain development happening before kindergarten, this is when essential skills like problem-solving, communication and collaboration take root.

We strongly support this measure to help Hawai'i families to ensure that our children will be able to thrive in the present and future. We know that this is in the interest of our Hawai'i economy and our future as a state needing to attract industry with well educated and future ready employees.

Mahalo for the opportunity to share our thoughts.

Date: March 6, 2025

To: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: Support for **HB692 HD1**, Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program



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 supports, with amendments, HB692 HD1, which would expand the Preschool Open Doors program's eligibility criteria and significantly increase access to early learning programs for young children and their families. *No appropriation is requested as part of this measure.*

High-quality early learning programs provide children with the experiences and environments that are pivotal to school readiness and lead to improved educational, economic, health and well-being outcomes for children, lasting into adulthood. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program currently provides key financial assistance to families to facilitate access for 3 and 4-year-old children to these child care and early learning programs. The POD program changes proposed in this measure would expand eligibility to 2-year old children and decrease some of the additional barriers that have restricted and/or are projected to limit full uptake of the assistance available to, and critically needed by families.

By expanding POD eligibility to include 2-year-olds, this bill acknowledges the importance of early childhood development during these formative years and addresses a substantial gap in child care support for families with younger children. Hawai'i has some of the highest child care tuition rates in the nation, with expenses for families comparable to, and at times even exceeding, housing costs. Assistance for 2-year olds, as well as the proposed adjustment to continuous services will significantly reduce the financial burden of child care expenses for our youngest, enabling families to remain in the workforce and achieve greater economic stability, while simultaneously laying a strong foundation necessary for our keiki to grow and thrive.

Expansion of the child care settings in which POD assistance may be applied, will also be instrumental to increasing children's access to early learning opportunities. Inclusion of family child care homes, and removal of the accreditation requirement for child care centers will significantly increase the availability of child care seats for children in the current landscape where capacity and vacancies are highly limited. We strongly encourage the continued promotion of program quality through the accreditation support programs recently established by the Department of Human Services, and the rate incentives embedded in the POD payment structure, without the limitations to choice and access posed by an accreditation *requirement*.

We would like to especially highlight the inclusion of family child care providers as a much-needed option for local families to access early learning opportunities for their children. Family child care providers can often better meet the

needs of families with non-traditional parental work hours, match the cultural and linguistic preferences of families, and are often found in rural communities in which larger child care centers cannot be sustained. Enacting policy that recognizes family child care providers as eligible for POD funding would result in immediate growth in the number of available early learning slots for local keiki.

Related to quality practices that promote school readiness, we would also like to note that high quality early learning experiences that prepare children for kindergarten can be made available to children as much in family child care settings as in formal child care center classroom settings.

To address inclusion of family child care homes as eligible POD providers, with quality safeguards, we respectfully recommend the following amendments to Section 2, subsection (c), page 4, lines 1-2:

(3) An exempt center-based provider that meets the 2 requirements of section 346-152.5-; or

(4) A family child care home that is registered by the department in accordance with section 346-171, provided that they meet at least one of the following quality standards:

- i. is accredited through the National Association for Family Child Care or National Early Childhood Program Accreditation;
- ii. participates in a partnership program that aligns with federal Head Start or state prekindergarten program standards; or
- iii. achieves a satisfactory score on a nationally-recognized quality rating or assessment tool, as approved by the department.

Relatedly, we recommend amending Section 6, page 7, line 8 to:

Section 6. This act shall take effect on July 1, 3000-; provided that:

(1) Section 2, sections 346-181, Hawaii Revised Statutes, as set forth in section c(4) shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

Finally, to support the continuity of care and enrollment of children who have multiple years of age-eligibility for POD, we respectfully recommend the following amendment to Section 2, subsection (b), page 2, lines 10-13:

(b) Subject to the availability of funds, the program shall continuously serve [~~three and four year old~~] children who are in the [~~two~~] three years prior to kindergarten entry until they enter kindergarten pursuant to section 302A-411- and each year prioritize children who were participating in the program in the year prior, provided they continue to meet program eligibility requirements.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **HB692 HD1**.

To: Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

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

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 692 H.D. 1 – Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program

Hearing: Monday, March 10, 2025, at 1:00 PM, Conference Room 225

POSITION: STRONG SUPPORT



Aloha e Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, 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. 692 H.D. 1**, which expands the eligibility criteria for the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program and removes the requirement that POD providers be accredited. This measure is essential in increasing access to early learning opportunities for families across Hawai'i, particularly those with young children who face financial barriers to participation. ***The proposed expansion of the POD program requires no additional funding, as existing funds have already been allocated within the base budget; as such, this bill requests no appropriation.***

1. **The Need for Subsidies for Families with Two-Year-Olds** – The early years of a child's life are crucial for cognitive, social, and emotional growth. However, the cost of early learning remains a significant burden for many families. Expanding POD eligibility to include two-year-olds ensures that more children receive the early learning experiences necessary for future success, reducing long-term disparities in opportunities.

Research consistently shows that early intervention and structured environments significantly impact a child's future achievements and overall well-being. Providing subsidies for families with younger children would allow more parents/guardians to enter or remain in the workforce, ultimately strengthening Hawai'i's economy while ensuring children receive the foundational experiences they need.

2. **Removing Accreditation Requirement to Increase Accessibility** – Currently, a limited number of group child care centers and infant-toddler centers in Hawai'i hold accreditation from organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA). While accreditation is one indicator of standards, it is costly and time-consuming

for providers. The high costs associated with accreditation, which can exceed \$4,000 for initial fees alone, often create barriers for smaller, community-based child care centers.

Since the number of child care centers in Hawai'i has been declining, removing the accreditation requirement will allow more providers to participate in the POD program, expanding options for families. Many non-accredited centers still maintain strong care and development programs but cannot afford the financial and administrative burden of accreditation. This change will ensure families have a broader selection of preschools without limiting access due to accreditation requirements.

3. **Including Family Child Care Homes** – In addition to expanding eligibility, it is crucial that family child care homes be included as providers under the POD program. Family child care homes offer a nurturing and flexible environment that many working families rely on. These providers often serve smaller groups, allowing for individualized attention and care that supports early development. By ensuring family child care homes are eligible for participation in the POD program, the state can broaden the options available to parents and caregivers, making early learning more accessible to families in urban and rural communities.

To address the inclusion of family child care homes as eligible POD providers, with quality safeguards, we respectfully recommend the following amendments to Section 2, subsection (c), page 4, lines 1-2:

- (3) An exempt center-based provider that meets the 2 requirements of section 346-152.5; or
- (4) A family child care home that is registered by the Department, in accordance with sections 346-171, provided that they meet at least one of the following quality standards:
 - i. is accredited through the National Association for Family Child Care or National Early Childhood Accreditation;
 - ii. participates in a partnership program that aligns with federal Head Start or state prekindergarten

program standards; or

iii. achieves a satisfactory score on a nationally-recognized quality rating or assessment tool, as approved by the department.

(5) The inclusion of Family Child Care homes in the program shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

Additionally, to support the continuity of care and enrollment of children who have multiple years of age eligibility for POD, we respectfully recommend the following amendment to Section 2, subsection (b), page 2, lines 10-13:

(b) Subject to the availability of funds, the program shall continuously serve [~~three and four year old~~] children who are in the [~~two~~] three years prior to kindergarten entry until they enter kindergarten pursuant to section 302A-411, and each year, prioritize children who were participating in the program in the year prior, provided they continue to meet the program eligibility requirements.

By passing **H.B. No. 692 H.D. 1**, the Legislature can take a crucial step toward making early learning more accessible and affordable for Hawai'i's families. I respectfully urge you to support this bill to expand early learning opportunities and strengthen our state's commitment to the well-being and future success of our keiki.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of **H.B. No. 692 H.D. 1**.



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 HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Item: HB 692 – RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM

Position: Support

Hearing: Monday, March 10, 2025, 1:00 pm, Conference Room 225

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

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association (HSTA) **supports** HB 692 HD 1, which expands the Preschool Open Doors Program's eligibility criteria, and repeals the requirement that Preschool Open Doors Program providers be accredited.

As educators, we know the critical importance of early childhood care for future development. Many of our educator members have also shared their struggles in finding care for their own young children, and being able to afford the current care options.

By passing HB 692 H.D. 1, the Legislature can make early learning more accessible and affordable for Hawai'i's families. We urge you to support this bill to expand early learning opportunities and strengthen our state's commitment to the care and growth of our youngest keiki.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of this measure.



To: HHS Committee
Re: Support for HB692
From: Deborah Bond-Upson, HE'E Interim Director
Date: March 6, 2025

Hui for Excellence in Education, or "HE'E," is a statewide coalition of diverse stakeholders committed to working collaboratively to identify opportunities to improve public education. We work to provide Hawai'i families and organizations with a resource for educational policy.

We write in support of HB692 in order to expand the preschool open door programs eligibility criteria. This measure would allow families with children ages two up to kindergarten entry to apply for Preschool Open Doors (POD) subsidies. This expansion of state subsidies will greatly benefit Hawai'i's working families.

The return on investment of providing access to quality early learning for children is extremely high. As we look at the difficulty of raising student attendance and achievement in upper grades, we can know that quality early learning for children would result in more secure, confident, achieving students.

We strongly support this measure to help Hawai'i families to ensure that their children will be able to thrive in the present and future. Thank you for this opportunity to share our thoughts.

HE'E Coalition Members and Participants -----

Academy 21
Alliance for Place Based Learning
American Civil Liberties Union
Atherton YMCA
Education Institute of Hawai'i
*Faith Action for Community Equity
Fresh Leadership LLC
Girl Scouts Hawai'i
*HawaiiKidsCAN
*Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance
*Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
*Hawai'i Association of School Psychologists
Hawai'i Athletic League of Scholars
*Hawai'i Children's Action Network
Hawai'i Education Association
Hawai'i Nutrition and Physical Activity Coalition
* Hawai'i State PTSA
Hawai'i State Student Council
Hawai'i State Teachers Association
Head Start Collaboration Office
It's All About Kids*INPEACE

Joint Venture Education Forum
Junior Achievement of Hawaii
Kamehameha Schools
Kanu Hawai'i
Kaua'i Ho'okele Council
Keiki to Career Kaua'i
Kupu A'e
*Leaders for the Next Generation
Learning First
McREL's Pacific Center for Changing the Odds
Native Hawaiian Education Council
Our Public School
*Pacific Resources for Education and Learning
*Parents and Children Together
*Parents for Public Schools Hawai'i
Special Education Provider Alliance
*Teach for America
The Learning Coalition
US PACOM
University of Hawai'i College of Education
* Youth Service Hawai'i

Voting Members () Voting member organizations vote on action items while individual and non-voting participants may collaborate on all efforts within the Coalition.*

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 4:26:45 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lehua Kaulukukui	Testifying for Puakalehua Early Learning Consortium	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members:

I strongly support HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 would help working families afford necessary child care. The POD program benefits our economy because families that can access child care have more work opportunities and stability. This program is also a meaningful public-private partnership that shows mutual benefit.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony!

Lehua Kaulukukui, Chair

Puakalehua Early Learning Consortium

North and West Hawai'i Island



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 692 HD1
RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM**

TO: Chair San Buenaventura, Vice-Chair Aquino, & Members,
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
FROM: Ryan Kusumoto, President & CEO
DATE: March 10, 2025 at 1:00 PM

Parents and Children Together (PACT) supports HB 692 HD1 Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program, which expands the program’s eligibility criteria, resulting in more local keiki being able to access early learning services at a younger age.

Research continues to show that—despite the expansion of state-funded early learning services and programs—less than 40% of 4-year-olds and less than 15% of 3-year-olds are enrolled in state-funded programs—clearly demonstrating a continued lack of access for many children and families. The bill will reduce the significant financial burden many families face regarding child care expenses. The cost of child care is one of the largest expenses for many families on Oahu and across the State, often exceeding housing or other essential needs.

While family child care providers are generally limited in their inclusion in state-funded early learning offerings and programs, research indicates that they can play an outsized role in a community’s overall early learning framework. Studies have also found that family child care providers are an important option. Low-income families, those with non-regular work hours, and ethnic or racial minorities are likely to utilize family child care providers. Making family child care providers eligible for POD funding would result in immediate growth in the number of available early learning slots for local keiki.

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 if you have any questions.



Hearing Date: **Monday, February 24, 2025, 12:00 PM, Conf. Rm 308**

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

Re: **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 692, HD1, Relating to the Preschool Open Doors 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 692, HD1, Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program** which will expand eligibility criteria and remove the accreditation mandate, but will continue to require licensure. This measure has no appropriation and requires no additional funding.

Hawai'i is experiencing a child care crisis. The demand for available, quality, and affordable child care far exceeds the current capacity in Hawaii. There is only one opening for every four children ages six and below. The situation is even worse for those seeking a child care space for infants and toddlers with only one opening for every 37 children. This leaves families, and single parent households in particular in a bind. Without available child care services, many parents end up in a no-win position. They can either stay home with their young children and face increasing economic hardship or be stuck scrambling to find someone to "watch" their children. These informal child care settings often do not provide the necessary early childhood educational and developmentally appropriate activities which lead to a child being ready to enter kindergarten.

In Hawai'i, family members, especially grand parents have often stepped in to provide child care. Unfortunately, kupuna are finding it financially necessary to remain in, or return to, the workforce in order to make ends meet in our ever increasing expensive state.

In addition, having children actually penalizes women in the workforce. The Institute for Women's Policy Research reports 50.5% of households with children in Hawai'i have mothers who are the main source of family income. However, women working full time experience what's known as the "Motherhood Penalty". Working mothers make only \$.74 for every dollar working fathers make in Hawaii while the overall gender wage gap in Hawai'i where working women make \$.84 for every dollar a working man make. The cost of licensed child care ranges from approximately \$13,000 to \$23,000 per year depending on the age of the child. The median income for a single parent family is

\$43,050, which means that child care for an infant would use up over 50% of the salary; leaving little left over to pay for transportation, parking, food, housing and taxes.

One of the major obstacles preventing mothers from securing a well-paid, stable job is finding and retaining available, affordable, quality childcare.

In order for this measure to be the most impactful to families in Hawaii, we request that:

1) Family Child Care centers be included as an option to families. This alternative child care setting is especially important to families in rural areas where center-based services are few and far between and provide quality care.

2) In addition, we would like to see this measure to allow for continuous eligibility for children from three years prior to kindergarten entry and until they begin kindergarten. It has been shown that continuity of child care provides children with the best preparation to succeed in future schooling.

This measure increases the availability and access to the quality and affordable early child care which is so important for early childhood development and also allows parents the stability to continue in the workforce to provide for their family.

In order to

Please pass this measure and mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 10:16:35 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy Redfeather	Testifying for Ka Ohana O Na Pua	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Open Doors Program has always been and will continue to be an important program for Hawaii's keiki and their working mothers who need support also. Mahalo!



2345 Nuuanu Avenue #15 Honolulu, Hawaii 96817
<https://familyhuihawaii.org>

March 9, 2025

To: Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair,
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair, and
Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

On behalf of Family Hui Hawai'i, I would like to provide our strong support for House Bill 692 HD1 that would expand the Preschool Open Doors eligibility criteria.

In August 2024, the U.S. Surgeon General issued a nationwide advisory describing our nation's families under extreme levels of parental stress, the consequences resulting in increased risk of domestic violence, child abuse and neglect and chronic health diseases. Finding and being able to afford high quality child care is one of the highest stressors of families with young children. Preschool Open Doors expands access to the choices that families have to entrust the care of their precious children, allowing families to seek and maintain employment. Productivity and employee retention increase contributing to strong families and a stronger economy.

Family Hui Hawai'i is dedicated to strengthening families and communities, reducing violence against children, and promoting the healthy development of children, socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively, through peer to peer connection, parenting education and links to community services. Family Hui Hawai'i is a first contact provider to families with young children, prenatal-5 years serving over 1000 parents and children statewide each year. Our peer parenting support programs provide the opportunity for families to learn and grow together, sharing and helping each other through their parenting journey, discussing child development and age-appropriate effective parenting strategies, access to community resources, parental resilience and the social emotional development of their children. We see the struggles that families face every day and the difficulty they have in accessing resources and services. .

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for HB692 HD1. Please support this bill.

Respectfully,

Cherilyn Shiinoki
Executive Director

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 12:15:51 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Larry Smith	Testifying for Kupuna Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

The Kupuna of the Democratic Party of Hawaii strongly supports HB692 HD1 which will allow our Keiki access to preschool experiences and better prepare them to excell in school and later in life.

Larry Smith

Chair,

Kupuna Caucus

Democratic Party of Hawaii



LATE

March 10, 2025

Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

Chair Joy A. San Buenaventura
Vice Chair Henry J.C. Aquino
Sen. Troy N. Hashimoto
Sen. Jarrett Keohokalole
Sen. Kurt Fevella

Re: HB692 HD1 Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

The Hawai'i State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (HSCADV) addresses the social, political, and economic impacts of domestic violence on individuals, families, and communities. We are a statewide partnership of domestic violence programs and shelters.

On behalf of HSCADV and our 25 member programs statewide, I respectfully submit testimony in strong support of HB692 HD1.

This bill addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for survivors of domestic violence - childcare access. Survivors cite housing and access to childcare as the top two reasons they stay with an abusive partner, especially if the partner's family is providing childcare. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide much-needed assistance to hardworking families.

Please support this program expansion to support survivors and increase childcare services in our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Sincerely,
Angelina Mercado, Executive Director

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 7:24:39 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joell Edwards	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha, Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members:

I strongly support HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 would help working families afford necessary child care. The POD program benefits our economy because families that can access child care have more work opportunities and stability. This program is also a meaningful public-private partnership that shows mutual benefit.

As a business owner and community leader I've watched first hand the struggles families encounter due to lack of safe, reliable and affordable childcare.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony!

March 7, 2025

To: The Honorable Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Henry Aquino, Vice Chair
and members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 692 HD 2– Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program

Aloha,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H.B. No. 692 HD 2.

My name is Dr. Terry Lock. Currently, I am the Director of the Hawai'i Early Childhood Educator Excellence and Equity (ECE³) Project at the University of Hawai'i Mānoa College of Education.

HB 692 HD 2 seeks to expand the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program to more young children of Hawai'i's families and reduce one of the barriers for families to access POD programs. This measure lays a strong foundation for the future success of more of our youngest keiki.

As it stands, the POD program is a vital resource for families with 3- and 4-year-old children, offering much-needed financial assistance to make child care more affordable as the cost of child care is one of the largest expenses for many families on O'ahu and across the State, often exceeding housing or other essential needs.

With HB 692 HD 2, the POD program will expand to add 2-year-olds. This expansion will alleviate financial pressures so more families will remain in the workforce and achieve greater economic stability, while simultaneously laying a strong foundation for their 2- year olds to grow and thrive. With the added 2-year olds, POD will be serving children in their three years prior to kindergarten.

Furthermore, I am in support of expanding the types of early learning programs for eligible families. This includes licensed group child care centers, licensed group child care homes, licensed infant and toddler child care centers, registered family child care programs, and exempt center-based providers that meet the requirements of section 346—152.5.

Because I believe that all young children and their families deserve high quality early learning programs that are accredited using industry standards of quality, I commend the inclusion of the statements on p. 4, line 20-21: "SECTION 3. Section 346-188, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by amending subsection"; and on p. 5, lines 1-14: "(b) The department shall develop standards, policies, and procedures for the administration of the child care accreditation program, which shall , at a minimum: (1) Provide upfront grant funding to cover the cost of accreditation by one of the national early learning accrediting organizations, [as identified in section 346—184 (b), or] as approved by the director; (2) Provide grant funding for technical assistance to assist an eligible child care provider through the accreditation process; and (3) Be available to licensed group child care centers, licensed group child care homes, licensed infant and toddler child care centers, and registered family child care homes."

Again, mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of HB 692 HD 2.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 12:35:00 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Wendy Dame	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Supporting access to childcare for preschoolers is so critical in diminishing the gender pay inequality that is so rampant today because of the inability for working mothers to find adequate childcare, thus forcing them leave the workplace to stay home with their children.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/6/2025 6:23:12 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy D Moser	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support our children and families in their early learning experiences.

Man\halo,

Nancy Moser, a grandmother on Waikoloa on Hawai'i Island

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 1:20:58 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Maya Gunther	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 4:07:27 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rachel Ebert	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members:

I strongly support HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 would help working families afford necessary child care. The POD program benefits our economy because families that can access child care have more work opportunities and stability. This program is also a meaningful public-private partnership that shows mutual benefit.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony!

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 3:47:54 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alfred Castle	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this measure. Hawaii needs equity in early education and this, along with philanthropic commitments to tuition assistance, allows more access to high quality educational and care settings.

Let us do the right thing and get this done!

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 3:32:14 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lukas Petersons	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members:

I strongly support HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 would help working families afford necessary child care. The POD program benefits our economy because families that can access child care have more work opportunities and stability. This program is also a meaningful public-private partnership that shows mutual benefit.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony!

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 3:29:44 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michdelle Melendez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This bill will support families. Please help pass it.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 3:12:23 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Reinalyn M. Terrado	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members:

I strongly support the intent of HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

The POD program plays a crucial role in helping families afford quality child care. This legislation will expand access to early learning opportunities for Hawai'i's families by expanding eligibility for the POD program to include 2-year-olds (children three years prior to kindergarten entry) and by repealing the accreditation requirement for program providers.

I, however, believe that the types of child care programs that are eligible to participate in the expanded POD Program should be clarified. Since the POD program is vital in expanding family access to early learning opportunities, I am hoping that expanded access is not done at the expense of quality. Mahalo.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 3:06:09 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marjorie Tayao	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members:

I strongly support HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 would help working families afford necessary child care. The POD program benefits our economy because families that can access child care have more work opportunities and stability. This program is also a meaningful public-private partnership that shows mutual benefit.

Personally, I've taken out over 20k in debt through credit cards to pay for my children's child care. I know others who have taken out equity from their homes in order to pay for child care. It causes unnecessary burden for families and pushes them further into debt.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 2:39:17 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessie L Gonsalves	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members:

I strongly support HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 would help working families afford necessary child care. The POD program benefits our economy because families that can access child care have more work opportunities and stability. This program is also a meaningful public-private partnership that shows mutual benefit.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony!

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 2:38:46 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jordan Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members:

I strongly support HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 would help working families afford necessary child care. The POD program benefits our economy because families that can access child care have more work opportunities and stability. This program is also a meaningful public-private partnership that shows mutual benefit.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony and for supporting this important bill.

Best,

Jordan Smith

Honolulu, 96817

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 5:02:51 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I have two children. I wanted to put my eldest into preschool this year since he was turning 4 years old. Unfortunately, even with open doors subsidy, preschool was not affordable because of my income. I am a teacher so I understand the value of education. Unfortunately, I am a teacher so my income puts me in a difficult position. On paper I make enough money that I don't qualify for help, but in reality I am struggling on affording a life in Hawaii. My sons would benefit so much from everything a preschool would offer them. They need the education. They need the socialization. Right now my husband has to stay home to care for them because it is cheaper for him to be a stay at home dad than it is to send our kids to preschool.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 9:10:24 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sharleen Nakamoto Levine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members:

I strongly support HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Having raised two children on O‘ahu, I know that child care is essential, but in Hawai‘i it is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 would help working families afford necessary child care and prepare their children to be successful in school and in life. The POD program benefits our economy because families that can access child care have more work and educational opportunities and stability, which benefits the wider community. They are also less isolated while dealing with the challenges of raising their children and more connected to their communities. Finally, this program is a meaningful public-private partnership that shows mutual benefit and enhances child care options for families.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 9:26:47 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lois Langham	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill for child care to be extended to include 2 yr. olds.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 9:27:42 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Denise L Martinez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this measure to increase number of affordable childcare

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 9:42:50 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rachel Coles	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this measure to increase number of affordable childcare. Mahalo

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 10:00:13 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kayla Marie	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this measure

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 10:06:18 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
B.A. McClintock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this important bill. Mahalo.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 1:51:07 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kanani Kai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I SUPPORT this bill.

Kanani Kai

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 2:22:16 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lorna Farnum	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 5:52:27 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Younghee Overly	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for hearing HB692. Please pass this measure to make child care accessible and affordable. Some of the young people are leaving Hawai'i because they cannot afford to raise children in Hawai'i.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 7:48:31 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caroline Kunitake	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members:

I strongly support HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 would help working families afford necessary child care. The POD program benefits our economy because families that can access child care have more work opportunities and stability. This program is also a meaningful public-private partnership that shows mutual benefit.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony!

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 8:41:03 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Babcock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this measure to increase number of affordable childcare

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 8:51:07 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha, Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members:

I strongly support HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 would help working families afford necessary child care. The POD program benefits our economy because families that can access child care have more work opportunities and stability. This program is also a meaningful public-private partnership that shows mutual benefit.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony!

Pamela Anderson

(808) 351-7281

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 8:55:17 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mecca Monson-Gere	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha. Please support HB692, showing your continued support of early education, and affordable early education at that.

Mahalo for prioritizing our keiki.

Mecca Monson-Gere

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 9:31:45 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leah Morse	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this measure to increase number of affordable childcare.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 9:41:02 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Margaret Ledward	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this measure to increase number of affordable childcare.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 11:42:23 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deanna Espinas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill. Thank you.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 11:51:59 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deborah G. Nehmad	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

"Please pass this measure to increase access to affordable childcare" .

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 12:18:10 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jason Ellinwood	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As working families struggle more than ever, this is a necessary step to increase access to affordable childcare.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 12:20:47 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erika Cabell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure because an accessible child care system is good for Hawai'i.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 12:24:12 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brenda DuFresne	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this!!!!!!

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 12:33:23 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shay Chan Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I **strongly support HB692**, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai‘i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 would help working families afford necessary child care. The POD program benefits our economy because families that can access child care have more work opportunities and stability. This program is also a meaningful public-private partnership that shows mutual benefit.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony!

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 2:34:04 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Beth Anderson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I am urging you to support HB 692 because it will expand access and increase affordability for families to high quality early childhood care and education for 2 year olds.

Many families need full day, year round access to quality day care for their young children. This bill will expand the Preschool Open Doors program and reduce significant barriers that face families trying to access child care for their children. By doing so, our State will contribute to a strong foundation for our youngest keiki.

The Preschool Open Doors program is a vital resource for families with 3-4 year old children because it offers much needed financial assistance to make child care affordable and accessible. By expanding eligibility to include 2 year olds, this bill acknowledges the importance of early childhood development during these formative years and addresses the substantial gap in child care resources and support for families with younger children.

The bill also recognizes the significant financial burden many families face regarding child care expenses. The cost of child care is one of the largest expense for many families on O'ahu and across the State.

According to the First Five Years 2024 Fact Sheet, Hawai'i loses up to \$476 million per year due to lack of child care. Child care and preschools are essential infrastructure that allow businesses and an economy to thrive. Quality child care is essential for promoting healthy families and a successful future for families of young children.

Thank you for supporting quality, affordable early childcare and education for our 2 years olds in Hawaii by supporting HB 692.

Aloha,

Beth Anderson

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 3:57:55 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael R Guritz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Michael Guritz and I'm a resident of Waimea. As a constituent planning on becoming a parent soon, local support of early education is very important to me. As someone who likes to live in a town with intelligent people, it's also very important to me. Study after study shows the importance of early childhood education and I hope the committee takes these seriously.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 4:02:38 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Steve Hiramami	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support this bill.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 4:05:09 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Akiko Miyata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Representative / Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Representative / Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Akiko Miyata

Monday, March 10, 2025

Support for HB 692 – Relating to Preschool Open Doors Programs

As a mother, and an early childhood educator, I strongly support HB 692, relating to Preschool Open Doors Programs, expanding eligibility for more families to qualify for financial support. I have been in the early childhood field for 15 years as a teacher and a school director. This bill is crucial so our children can have meaningful and quality experiences at a young age, while parents and extended family members are able to go to work or contribute to their communities in other ways. I feel this bill can positively affect families and strengthen our early learning system.

The expansion of state funded pre-k programs are servicing a great need for many communities. However, according to the First Five Years Fund only 2% of Hawai'i's three and four year olds are enrolled in public pre-k programs. This leaves an astonishing number of keiki in this age group, as well as ALL children under the age of two, who need other opportunities for early care and education. For those who do not receive a spot into public pre-k schools, children who aren't age eligible, or families who do not live close enough and have access to such programs, the Preschool Open Doors subsidy allows many more families the opportunity and choice to place their child(ren) in care that most suits their needs and lifestyle, while at the same time contributing to shore up financially fragile

community based early childhood programs. A mixed delivery system where many types of care are accessible to families is the only way to successfully meet our families' needs and contribute to Hawai'i's economic growth.

When my children were preschool aged my family did not qualify for a spot in the state funded pre-k programs. And even if they did, the hours of operation for those sites would not have worked in relation to my job. I needed care past the hours PreK provides. My daughters are only two years apart, so our family's finances were greatly impacted by having two preschoolers in school simultaneously for multiple years from the age of two all the way through five, with an additional year of preschool for both because they are late born. In 2023 the average cost for a four year old to attend a full-time center in Hawai'i was over \$13,000 annually, excluding additional costs such as after hours or summer care. Most up-to-date data reported by Child Care Aware of America also shows that in 2023 Hawai'i was ranked to have the least affordable center-based toddler care, consuming at least 15% of a married couple's annual salary, and at least 40% for single parent households. In my family, it was extremely difficult to recover from the financial burden, even after children have moved on. It is no wonder families are fleeing to other parts of the nation where they are able to find better financial balance and a sense of peace. We must do better!

I know first hand this bill will not only impact families, but can uplift the early childhood workforce as well. The widening of the Preschool Open Doors Program eligibility would provide support to the many dedicated early childhood educators and programs that currently exist in our communities. Many have not fully recovered after COVID-19. Based on statistics shared by the First Five Years Fund, In 2023 alone 25 licensed child care centers and family child care homes closed. An extremely disheartening number that has displaced and negatively impacted many dedicated members of the early childhood workforce. Centers continue to struggle through teacher shortages as well as maintaining enrollment while tuition costs for their families rise in response to inflation. Expanding eligibility to POD for more families and amending the accreditation criteria relieves the providers of additional pressures and burdens. Providers can allocate their time to focus on the children and the families they serve.

In order to provide our keiki with quality education, to build a strong foundation for positive developmental outcomes, we all need to come together. The wellness of all our keiki is a collective effort and the outcome of this bill will impact us all. The health of our future depends on the wellness of keiki and their 'ohana today.

I urge the committee to pass HB 692.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my position.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 4:06:49 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
liz anne	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

strongly support. we need help! paying for childcare!

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 4:16:36 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tori	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support the Open Doors Program as it supports families of young children and allows these children to attend a preschool program during the most formative years of their development.

With the cost of living, many families cannot afford a preschool tuition. Research shows that having children attend preschool better prepares them for school and life. Open Doors has provided and I hope continues to provide this much need and appreciated program.

Mahalo

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 4:26:47 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carie Lunsford	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 4:34:00 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Doris Segal Matsunaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My family and I strongly support HB692 HD1. As a grandmother of 3 including a 2-year old in Waimea on Hawaii Island, we are in a childcare desert and greatly in need of services, esp. for this age group. The parents are teachers and cannot continue working without this resource.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 4:57:08 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Judith White	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support; our keiki are our future. We have solid evidence that early, good education is one of the best investments we can make as a society.

Mahalo,

Judith C. White,

Kapaa

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 5:06:46 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Leake	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

Early learning is essential for the development and academic success of our keiki, but Hawaii seriously lags in this area. I strongly support this bill because it will help us start to catch up

Best regards,

David Leake

Kaneohe

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 6:12:32 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jane Aquino	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this measure to increase number of affordable childcare

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 6:38:40 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sheryl Summers	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill which expands the Preschool Open Doors Program's eligibility criteria to include two year olds. Hawaii needs to increase the number of affordable childcare options.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 6:58:17 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melissa Yamaguchi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a parent in the state of Hawaii who has a teenager, I feel he has benefited greatly by having access to early education and preschool. We need to continue supporting these measures and programs that will give our kids the greatest advantage to compete intellectually, and with learning basic skills.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 7:22:46 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lynn Otaguro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members:

I strongly support HB692, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 would help working families afford necessary child care. The POD program benefits our economy because families that can access child care have more work opportunities and stability.

The program also provides important support for the early learning of our young. It helps prepare them for school so that they can better go and thrive.

Please support this bill.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 7:47:56 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Donna Mae Buscemi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this measure to increase number of affordable childcare

Thank You,

Donna Buscemi

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 10:04:49 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Kuzmier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I believe expanding the Preschool Open Doors Program to include two-year-olds is a good idea and will help many people in our state. Mahalo.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 10:20:04 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gaye Chan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

You must pass this measure to increase affordable childcare options

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 9:51:53 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy Taylor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB692

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 11:48:09 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcela Montalto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill. It is important for families in Hawaii

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 3:40:07 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tonee Burley	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Our keiki deserve more access to quality early learning. I am writing in support of of the preschool opwn doors expansion as a former speech and language pathologist on the big island of Hawaii. Mahalo!

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 4:09:09 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Terri Yoshinaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 5:57:57 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Please pass this measure to increase number of affordable childcare.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 8:09:06 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristy Arias	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha! Please support bill HB692 which helps our Hawai'i families to access early childhood care. This helps our families with work opportunities. For my family and I child care has always been expensive. Tinkering between one parent staying home vs both parents working. How much will childcare make us in the negatives by both parents working and needing to pay for childcare. No family should have to think that way. This bill will help our families and I urge you to support this bill.

Thank you for listening!!

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 9:44:20 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Constance	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this measure to increase the number of affordable childcare facilities. Many working parents are desperately searching for affordable care. Without proper care our families are in daily stressful situations, I know I have been a working single mother.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 8:35:43 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James E Raymond	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please show your constituents that you care about families as well as the tourism and development lobbies. Please pass this measure to increase the number of affordable childcare spots.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 11:47:08 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee members,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H.B. No. 692, which seeks to expand the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program and reduce significant barriers to accessing child care for families across our state while laying a strong foundation for the future success of our youngest keiki.

As it stands, the POD program is a vital resource for families with 3- and 4-year-old children, offering much-needed financial assistance to make child care more affordable and accessible. By expanding eligibility to include 2-year-olds, this bill acknowledges the importance of early childhood development during these formative years and addresses a substantial gap in child care support for families with younger children. My son started preschool at 2.8 years old and as a late born 3 year old, we still do not qualify for this vital support.

The bill will also reduce the significant financial burden many families face regarding child care expenses. The cost of child care is one of the largest expenses for many families on O‘ahu and across the State, often exceeding housing or other essential needs. Expanding the program to include 2-year-olds will alleviate financial pressures, enabling families to remain in the workforce and achieve greater economic stability, while simultaneously laying a strong foundation necessary for our keiki to grow and thrive. This is especially supportive for toddler-age care which is sparse and more expensive than preschool.

The balanced approach of this bill, which reflects a commitment to expanding access to early learning programs will help to continue to remove barriers for families. This bill will open doors for more families to access affordable and reliable care and better economic opportunities.

Please support this measure.

Mahalo,

C. Pua'ena Vierra-Villanueva

'Ohana Leadership Council

March 9, 2025

To: Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J. C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services

Subject: HB 692 HD1, Relating to Preschool Open Doors Program
Date: Monday, March 10, 2025
Time: 1:00 PM
Place: Conference Room 225

Position: Support with Comments

Aloha,

Thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony in support of HB 692 HD1 with comments.

I am Robert G. Peters, former Chair of the Early Learning Board and testifying as an individual advocate for quality early learning opportunities for young children and their families.

Preschool Open Doors is a vital program supporting family choice by making preschool experience affordable. It supports a mixed-delivery system offering families much needed care beyond regular public school hours and annual schedules, making it possible for families to pursue work opportunities knowing their children will be cared for. Community-based early learning providers are vital to a strong, mixed-delivery early learning system, offering families flexibility in choosing care that best meets their needs. HB 692 HD1 expands that opportunity and the current statute provisions to include 2-year olds which would help alleviate some of the financial stress of young families associated with private child care in Hawaii where the cost of living is so challenging.

The bill also eliminates the mandatory accreditation requirement for providers to be eligible for POD funds. This provision of HB 692 HD1 opens up many more options for families by expanding POD provider eligibility and recognizes the financial burden especially of securing and maintaining early childhood accreditation. While I appreciate the expanded opportunities for families, I also respect the value inherent in accreditation and urge DHS to move forward expeditiously with its commendable program to support accreditation and urge them to recommend it as well.

Thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony and for your on-going support of expanding quality early childhood care and learning for Hawaii's keiki.

Robert G. Peters, EdD

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 12:53:04 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Janet Morse	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I wasn't able to work full time until my children were in high school. I worked at part time and temporary jobs until then. Those jobs didn't bring in enough to pay for child care. So I started my career in my forties. This affects the amount of Social Security income that I am receiving now.

I support this measure because finding and retaining available, affordable, quality childcare is a major obstacle preventing mothers from securing well-paid, stable jobs and a secure retirement.

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 1:00:22 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
KELEN R CASEY	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this measure to increase access to affordable child care for Hawai'i's families.

LATE

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 1:16:47 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
gabrielle davidson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this measure to increase the number of affordable childcare programs. Thank you!

LATE

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 4:34:50 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
G L Hutchinson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill to help provide more affordable childcare

Mahalo

LATE

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 7:51:22 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noelle Lindenmann	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB692 to support more access to quality early learning.
Please support Preschool Open Doors expansion.

Mahalo,

Noelle Lindenmann, Kailua-Kona

LATE

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 8:11:01 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Barbara J. Service	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB692 HD1 regarding the Preschool Open Doors program. Two year olds need this to get a head start on learning.

Mahalo for allowing me to testify.

Barbara J. Service. MSW

Child Welfare Supervisor (ret.)

LATE

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 7:44:32 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelly Ciurej	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this measure to increase number of affordable childcare.

LATE

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 6:38:23 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
pahnelopi mckenzie	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support HB692 HD1. This bill addresses one of the most pressing and costly concerns for survivors of domestic violence - childcare access. Survivors cite housing and access to childcare as the top two reasons they stay with an abusive partner, especially if the partner's family is providing childcare. The Preschool Open Doors (POD) program is a successful public-private partnership that, if expanded, could provide much-needed assistance to hardworking families.

Please support this program expansion to support survivors and increase childcare services in our state.

Thank you Pahnelopi McKenzie

LATE

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 6:10:02 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rachel Robinson	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully agree that Hawai'i needs more affordable preschool options, however, when it states that this bill "Repeals the requirement that Preschool Open Doors Program providers be accredited," for the safety and well-being of our preschool aged children, I don't believe that is a good idea. If I'm understanding this right, it's actually dangerous and it puts our children right in harm's way.

Have you seen or heard of the predators out there who prey on children? There are adults who love to have sex with children. They're called pedophiles. Have you seen or heard of teachers who are a horror to children? For any preschool to willingly waive its accreditation is a an open door to all kinds of influences walking right in.

As I understand it, accreditation makes sure a school's standards are up to par.

Preschool is expensive, yet has anyone who is pushing this bill, even considered what nightmares would unfold because of the removal of accreditation? Is saving money more important than protecting children?

LATE

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 5:57:45 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members:

I **strongly support HB692**, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 would help working families afford necessary child care. The POD program benefits our economy because families that can access child care have more work opportunities and stability. This program is also a meaningful public-private partnership that shows mutual benefit.

me ke aloha 'āina,

Nanea Lo

Mō'ili'ili, HI 96826

Sierra Club of Hawai'i Executive Committee Member

Board Member, Hawai'i Workers Center

Kanaka Maoli/Lineal Descendant of the Hawaiian Kingdom

LATE

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 9:56:01 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kee Lo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Vice Chair and Committee Members,

I strongly support HB692 HD1, the Preschool Open Doors (POD) expansion bill.

Child care in Hawai'i is expensive and hard to find. Many families struggle to afford it or can't afford it at all. HB692 HD1 would help working families afford necessary child care. The POD program benefits our economy because families that can access child care have more work opportunities and stability. This program is also a meaningful public-private partnership that shows mutual benefit.

Mahalo,

Kee

LATE

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 9:52:26 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alexandria Sisson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Date: March 10, 2025

To: Senator San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Aquino, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

From: Alexandria Sisson

Subject: Measure HB692_HD1 – Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program

Position: Strong Support

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and respected committee members,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB692_HD1, a bill that seeks to expand the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program and reduce significant barriers to accessing child care for families across our state. This legislation will also lay a strong foundation for the future success of our youngest keiki.

If passed, this bill will dramatically increase access to affordable early learning opportunities for Hawai'i's keiki. To maximize its impact, all components of the bill should be retained. Lowering the age limit and including registered family child care homes are essential to increasing access, particularly in rural and underserved communities. Family child care homes represent a significant portion of child care options in Hawai'i, and there is no reason to maintain the current exclusionary practices, especially at a time when Hawai'i's families are facing urgent child care shortages.

The First Five Years Fund, 2024 has estimated that Hawai'i's economy loses approximately \$476 million annually due to a lack of child care. To ensure a stable and resilient economy, we must increase access to quality child care. Families are being forced to choose between employment and caring for their children, and businesses are struggling to maintain a reliable workforce when child care options are scarce. Expanding access to child care is critical to supporting our families, businesses, and economy.

HB692_HD1 requires no new appropriation, yet its provisions could have a profound positive impact on our children, families, and businesses. We urge you to support and pass this bill for the benefit of all who call Hawai'i home.

Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,

Alexandria Sisson

LATE

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 9:45:17 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Raya Esteban	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and committee members,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H.B. No. 692. This bill does not require an appropriation. HB 692 will expand access to the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program reducing significant barriers to accessing child care for families across our state. This bill will help more families to enter and remain in the workforce and support Hawai'i's economy.

The bill helps to reduce the significant financial burden many families face regarding child care expenses. The cost of child care is one of the largest expenses for many families on O'ahu and across the state, causing many families to leave the workforce or choose between childcare and other essential needs. It is estimated that Hawaii loses upwards of \$476 million dollars per year due to the impacts of a lack of childcare.

Many rural areas in Hawaii are considered child care deserts, where there is little or no access to childcare, this is especially true for families with younger children. Expanding the program to include 2-year-olds and utilizing family child care homes will significantly expand access to childcare and help to alleviate financial pressures for families with young children, helping families across the state achieve greater economic stability.

We believe accreditation is a valuable marker of quality. However, requiring accreditation reduces the number of available seats due to the lower ratios required for accreditation than what is required by the Department of Human Services. The Department of Human Services recently established an accreditation program to support the pursuit of accreditation and other quality improvement measures. Removing the accreditation requirement in this bill broadens family access to early learning opportunities while allowing providers to enhance quality through other complementary programs.

The POD program provides a cost-efficient strategy while still meeting the need through supplemental funding. It's a public-private partnership that grows government's reach in a cost-effective and meaningful way. By removing barriers, this bill will open doors for more families to access affordable and reliable care and better economic opportunities.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this measure.

Mahalo,

Raya Esteban

LATE

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 12:17:07 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
vivienne aronowitz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Important support got childcare

LATE

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 11:17:04 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lori Rowley	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this measure to increase number of affordable childcare .

33rd Legislature, State of Hawaii
House on Health and Human Services



March 10, 2025

Testimony on:

H.B. 692 H.D. 1 – Relating to the Preschool Open Doors Program

Dear Chair San Buenaventura and Vice Chair Aquino,

My name is Olivia Davies, and I am a current post graduate student living here in Hawai'i. I am testifying in favor of H.B. 692, H.D. 1 which expands the preschool open door program's eligibility criteria and to have more access to childcare resources.

Access to preschool is exceedingly important with the growing demands of parents needing to work and provide for families. It is important for children to have proper developmental programs at younger ages to help with education and with social needs as well. The limits to affordable preschool programs prohibit these needs in ways that are detrimental to not only the children but they parents as well. From personal experience, I have seen how the lack of childcare opportunities has negatively affected children within my family. Due to the high cost of living, my sister and her husband both must work but cannot afford childcare. They thankful have family support but that does not expose my niece to the proper developmental care and support she needs. This is why I believe that H.B. 692 H.D. 1 beneficial for children and families across Hawai'i

I thank you for taking the time to read and hear my testimony. The work you do is greatly appreciated.

Olivia Davies

oliviahd@hawaii.edu

LATE

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 2:41:36 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Lu Kelley	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in total support for this bill that will expand the Preschool Open Doors Program's eligibility criteria to include two year olds.

PLEASE PASS THIS BILL!!!

Thank you.

LATE

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 2:58:29 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elba	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Children need help prior to starting school head start program does that! So when they start Kindergarden they aren't struggling, plus helps parents get work to propvid for their family.

Mahalo for your time,

Elba Reyes

LATE

HB-692-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 3:51:05 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anne Leake	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this measure to increase number of affordable childcare