



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

April 17, 2017

TO: The Honorable Senator Josh Green, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services

FROM: Pankaj Bhanot, Director

SUBJECT: **HCR 7 HD1 – URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO EXAMINE
THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM
TO ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL WHO QUALIFY**

Hearing: Monday, April 17, 2017, 10:20 a.m.
Conference Room 229, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT’S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of the resolution and offers comments.

PURPOSE: The purpose of HCR 7 HD1 is to request the Department of Human Services to provide information regarding the cost of transitioning to a paperless or cost-free application process for the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program and to submit its findings and recommendations to the Legislature for the 2018 session.

The House Committee on Human Services made technical, non-substantive amendments to the measure.

Act 169, Session Laws of Hawaii (SLH) 2013, established the POD program as the statewide school readiness program. The POD program assists low and moderate income families who are least able to afford preschool and provide their children with the opportunity to be ready for kindergarten by providing child care subsidies for preschool costs.

Since the 2015-2016 POD year, the current POD contractor, People Attentive to Children (PATCH), has accepted and continues to accept electronic, cost-free applications through faxed and emailed applications submitted to the POD office on Oahu. Furthermore,

PATCH offices on Kauai, Maui, and 2 offices on Hawaii assist families with submitting the POD applications to the Oahu POD office, via fax, if the families go to the PATCH offices on those islands. The POD program will continue to accept applications submitted through electronic means (e.g. fax or email).

As to an on-line paperless application process, DHS is continuing to develop and design the DHS Enterprise system to update the Department's 30 year old legacy data systems. The DHS Med-QUEST division's KOLEA eligibility application for medical insurance coverage was the first to provide on-line eligibility and determination capabilities as required by the Affordable Care Act.

DHS is in the procurement process to add additional functionality to the DHS Enterprise system for the financial assistance programs, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, and Child Welfare Services and Adult Protective and Care Services' systems.

Through its 'Ohana Nui initiative, DHS is integrating its programs using a multi-generational approach. The 'Ohana Nui framework involves streamlining existing programs' business processes to improve case outcomes and system efficiencies for the greatest return on investment. Once programs are aligned through 'Ohana Nui and the DHS Enterprise system is built, nearly all of DHS information systems will be interoperable, easing access to and delivery of services. The development of multi-generational programs and interoperable systems through 'Ohana Nui and improvements to the IT operating system are essential for DHS to move toward a single on-line application for all DHS programs, including medical, financial, SNAP, and child care subsidies, which would include POD subsidies.

To leverage currently available funding from the federal Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the DHS Enterprise initiative is the Department's priority, with targeted completion date of the end of federal fiscal year 2018.

DHS asks for the Legislature's continued commitment and support for the development and maintenance of the DHS Enterprise system. The cost to develop, implement, secure and maintain the DHS Enterprise system are significant, however, at this time providing the cost for a single on-line application process for POD is not available until the DHS Enterprise system is further along in the IT development. It would not be fiscally prudent for

DHS to procure for a POD program only on-line application portal knowing that the larger DHS Enterprise on-line application is forthcoming.

The priority of the DHS Child Care Programs Office (CCPO) is to bring the state into compliance with changes in federal law. In addition to state funded POD, Hawaii receives \$22 million annually in Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) grants from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care. The CCDF grant funds provides for Hawaii's child care licensing, quality initiatives, and federally funded child care subsidy programs.

On November 19, 2014, President Obama signed the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014, Public Law 113-186, reauthorizing the CCDF. The CCDBG Act made significant changes to the health and safety requirements for child care providers and made public access to information a priority. Final regulatory changes, 45 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 98, were issued September 30, 2016 and became effective on November 29, 2016. While certain deadlines are imminent, the deadline for DHS to complete all of the required changes is September 30, 2018. DHS is focused on complying with these federal law and regulatory changes to preserve Hawaii's access to the federal CCDF grant funds.

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

To: Senator Josh Green, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services

Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services

Subject: **HCR7**

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My name is Jessica Mallow and I am submitting this testimony in **support of HCR7** as a private citizen. As a child care provider, social worker, and private citizen, I believe that children need to be taken care of first. Our children need to have adequate access to education, support, and resources. HCR7 focuses on the inability for eligible families to apply for the Preschool Open Doors Program due to lack of funds to complete a paper or mail-in application. HCR7 suggests the consideration of implementing an electronic application and/or a cost-free application in order to assist families who are eligible to apply for the program. This is critical as it will increase access to care programs through eligibility to more families.

Child care and early education is expensive and not all families have access to quality care or services for their children. Families have many financial responsibilities, basic needs that need to be met such as food, transportation, and shelter. After paying for these necessities families may not have enough to cover the expenses associated with early education and that is why programs like Preschool Open Doors are a vital part of our community. Eligible families need increased access so their children can have the opportunity for education and enrichment through their participation in the program.

For these reasons, I am in **support of HCR7** which urges the department of Human Services to examine the application process for the Preschool Open Doors program to ensure accessibility for all who qualify.

Thank you for your time in reading this testimony.

Jessica Mallow, BSW
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4/15/17

To: Senator Josh Green, Chair, Chair Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair, and members of the Human Services Committee
From: Nicole Trost

Re: Testimony in support of HCR7 HD1, Relating to examining the application process for the preschool open doors program to ensure accessibility for all who qualify.

Thank you for hearing HCR7 HD1, which authorizes the Department of Human Services to re-evaluate the process of the application process for the Preschool Open Doors Program ensuring that applications are cost free and providing a paperless option for submitting applications.

As a service provider, this would highly benefit the related resource families (foster parents) who are most times struggling financially to care for their grandchildren, niece/nephew(s), sibling(s), cousin(s), etc. Relative resource families who may not be able to afford the application fee on top of caring for the children that are in foster care that may in turn hinder them applying for such a program as this. Children that are in foster care sometimes regress developmentally in areas such as speech, language, and cognitive areas. Preschool would not only be helpful for these children but it also provides support and respite for the families who are caring for them.

Passing HCR7 HD1 will give the opportunity for children at risk to receive more assistance, education, and opportunity for them to grow, heal, and learn in a safe stimulating environment. Please help us improve children, families, and our community in Hawaii by passing HCR7 HD1.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.