



STATE OF HAWAII
Executive Office on Early Learning
2759 South King Street
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

February 20, 2022

TO: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Coleen Momohara, Interim Director
Executive Office on Early Learning

SUBJECT: **Measure:** S.B. No. 2701 S.D. 1 – RELATING TO EARLY EDUCATION
Hearing Date: Wednesday, February 23, 2022
Time: 10:05 a.m.
Location: Videoconference

Bill Description: Establishes a one-year Early Child Care Worker Subsidy Pilot Program to assist in retaining the existing early child care workforce. Appropriates funds for the pilot program to be expended by the Department of Human Services. Appropriates funds for the Early Learning Special Fund to be expended by the Executive Office on Early Learning for the Hawaii Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program. The pilot program repeals on 7/1/2023. (SD1).

EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING'S POSITION: Support

Aloha. I am Coleen Momohara, Interim Director of the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL). EOEL supports S.B. 2701 S.D. 1, which would establish an early child care worker subsidy pilot program and makes an appropriation to the Hawaii Early Childhood Educator Special fund and defers to the Department of Human Services (DHS) on other parts of the bill.

EOEL is committed to increasing access while building the infrastructure needed to make sure the State's investment reaps the intended returns. **One of the things we've learned from our Program, as well as our collaborative work across private and public partners in the field, is that most, if not all, of us cannot find enough qualified staff to expand quickly.** We must be sure this workforce is in place if we want new classrooms and programs to have qualified educators and for successful expansion.

Challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified staff are a significant barrier to sustaining the early learning workforce. Despite working in a specialized field with health, safety, and educational requirements and having higher levels of education than the average American worker (Whitebook et al., 1990), many early childhood care and education providers remain at the second or third percentile in the Bureau of Labor and Statistics rankings of occupation, making wages comparable to that of parking lot attendants, bartenders, and laundry service workers. The median wage of child care workers in Hawaii is \$12.43. Sixteen percent of child care workers are living in poverty, compared to the 10 percent of the general population in Hawaii (Early Childhood

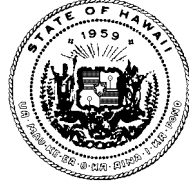
Workforce Index, 2020). **EOEL recognizes that increasing compensation is an effective way to increase recruitment and retention of a qualified early learning workforce**, and we defer to the DHS regarding the components of the early child care worker subsidy pilot program and its implementation.

Act 210, SLH 2021, established the Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program. This program, administered by EOEL in partnership with the University of Hawaii, currently leverages private source funding that would provide upfront financial support, covering early childhood tuition and fees, to individuals in the early care and education system. **This program targets individuals already working in the sector and appropriations to the program would provide sustainability and much-needed support for educators and providers who are an undervalued and under-supported workforce.**

We have been in discussions with legislators and are working with higher education and other stakeholders statewide to understand how we can find creative ways to increase our early learning workforce to achieve the Legislature's vision. We look forward to continue working with the Legislature to expand access to high-quality early learning programs and services in the state and make its vision a reality.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

February 22, 2022

TO: The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways & Means

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 2701 SD1 – RELATING TO EARLY EDUCATION.**

Hearing: February 23, 2022, 10:05 a.m.
Via Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent, appreciates the SD1 amendments, requests further amendments and clarification, and provides comments. DHS defers to the Executive Office on Early Learning for relevant parts. DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation not reduce or replace priorities identified in the executive budget.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the bill is to establish a one-year Early Child Care Worker Subsidy Pilot Program to assist in retaining the existing early child care workforce. Appropriates funds for the pilot program to be expended by the Department of Human Services. Appropriates funds for the Early Learning Special Fund to be expended by the Executive Office on Early Learning for the Hawaii Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program. The pilot program repeals on 7/1/2023. (SD1) The SD1 amended the measure by:

- (1) Clarifying that the purpose of the one-year Early Child Care Worker Subsidy Pilot Program is to retain the existing early child care workforce;
- (2) Amending section 1 to reflect its clarified purpose;

- (3) Clarifying that the pilot program participants shall not be employed by the Department of Education, Executive Office on Early Learning, or public charter schools;
- (4) Making the recipient of the appropriations for the Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program the Early Learning Special Fund, established pursuant to section 302L-5, Hawaii Revised Statutes; and
- (5) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

For clarity and consistency, DHS requests that the bill use consistent and broader terms when referencing "child care workers." The Department provides child care subsidies to parents who choose the type of child care they feel most comfortable with caring for their child. For the Legislature's information, DHS regulates an array of child care facilities, from family and kin care to child care centers that may include early education components. DHS respectfully requests the following amendments, in Sections 1 and 2 as follows:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds that a strong **early** child care and **early** education workforce is necessary to support Hawaii's children, working families, and communities. The Legislature further finds that the demand for quality **early** child care and **early** education far exceeds the number of qualified **early** child care and **early education** professionals currently available in the State. The Legislature also finds that disruptions to the **early** child care and **early** education system caused by the ongoing coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic have created more challenges to expand access to quality, affordable early child care and education programs.

Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

- (1) Establish a one-year **early** child care worker subsidy pilot program to retain the existing early child care workforce;
- (2) Appropriate funds for **early** child care worker subsidy pilot program to be expended by the Department of human services; and
- (3) Appropriate funds for the early learning special fund to be expended by the executive office on early learning for the Hawaii early childhood educator stipend program.

SECTION 2. (a) The Department of human services shall establish and implement a one-year ~~early~~ child care worker subsidy pilot program.

(b) The Department of human services shall develop standards and qualifications for participation in the pilot program by ~~early childhood educators~~ ~~child care workers~~, which at a minimum shall require that the:

- (1) Pilot program serve five per cent of the ~~early childhood educators~~ ~~child care workers~~ in the State;
- (2) ~~Early childhood educators~~ ~~Child care workers~~ not be employed by the Department of education, executive office on early learning, or public charter schools;
- (3) ~~Early childhood educators~~ ~~Child care workers~~ include those working in rural areas and child care deserts; and
- (4) ~~Early childhood educators~~ ~~Child care workers~~ who apply for participation in the pilot program be selected by lottery.

(c) The Department of human services shall establish best practices to bring all ~~early childhood educators'~~ ~~child care workers'~~ pay to, at a minimum, \$17.00 per hour.

(d) The Department of human services shall submit a report on the pilot program, including any proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2023.

(e) For the purpose of this section, "child care desert" means any geographic area where child care supply meets less than one-third of the potential demand.

Additionally, the proposed section 2, subsection (b), indicates the minimum standards and qualifications for participation in the pilot program. It is challenging to develop a program when the total value is unknown; for example, we may know the total number of regulated child care facilities in the State, but we do not know the total number of child care workers to target 5% of them.

Additionally, to provide a subsidy for one year, the appropriation will have to be large enough to cover the cohort as well as administrative and operational costs; so, it may be prudent to set a target number of child care workers versus a percentage for the first year to calculate the subsidy amount that would be available for the first year. The subsidy would need to be substantial enough to make it worth applying.

The Department is concerned about the proposed definition of "child care desert" and prioritizing subsidies to child care workers in "child care deserts." There is no easy calculus to estimate the potential demand for child care in an area as working parents and caregivers make their child care choice based on multiple factors. For example, pre-pandemic, parents used factors such as reliability, available times, staff qualifications, learning activities, location, and costs to choose child care.¹ However, given COVID-19's impact on the child care industry and low-wage jobs, a small study finds that factors that influence low-income mothers' choice of child care are constricted to their child's safety and financial need or necessity.²

The Department further requests clarification whether the distinction or preference for subsidies to rural areas or child care deserts is the Legislature's priority; these applicants would lose any priority if made to participate in the lottery.

Also, DHS does not have subject matter expertise and purview regarding wages; DHS would defer to the private sector to help bring all early childhood educators' pay to, at a minimum, \$17.00 per hour as stated in section 2.

It will be challenging to implement the measure as drafted. Therefore, DHS suggests eliminating or simplifying the minimum program parameters in (b). DHS respectfully requests that the effective date be set after or later than December 31, 2022, to give DHS the time to

¹ <https://nces.ed.gov/blogs/nces/post/what-do-parents-look-for-when-choosing-an-early-childhood-care-arrangement>

² Radey, M., Langenderfer-Magruder, L., & Brown Speights, J.(2021). "I don't have much of a choice": Low-income single mothers' COVID-19 school and care decisions. *Family Relations*, 70(5), 1312–1326. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12593>, found at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/fare.12593>.

make the necessary program and system changes and develop administrative processes and rules.

Given the one-time appropriation, the Department suggests an alternative, that these general funds be distributed similarly to the federal child care stabilization grant available to child care facilities through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). To effectuate the federal child care stabilization grant, DHS has developed a process and infrastructure to distribute the ARPA funds. The Department could implement a similar approach. In addition to reducing certain administrative and operational resources needed to develop a new program, providing subsidy funds to child care facilities may encourage workers to stay with a particular program and allow taxes and other necessary deductions to be taken from workers' pay. In addition, child care facilities may have more ability to address staff retention if their staff was compensated equitably versus individually by luck of a lottery.

The Department's current program demands and efforts are focused on complying with provisions of the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant, which provides approximately \$30 million annually in federal Child Care and Development Fund grants. Additionally, DHS is in the process of distributing \$70 million in child care stabilization funds appropriated through the American Rescue Plan Act. As the session progresses, DHS will update the resources needed to implement the proposed program.

Lastly, we ask that any appropriation not supplant fiscal priorities identified in the Executive Budget.

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

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR

GLORIA CHANG
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
P.O. BOX 150
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND
MANAGEMENT DIVISION
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT (OFAM)

WRITTEN ONLY
TESTIMONY BY CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
ON
SENATE BILL NO. 2701, S.D. 1

February 23, 2022
10:05 a.m.
Room 211 and Videoconference

RELATING TO EARLY EDUCATION

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

Senate Bill No. 2701, S.D. 1: 1) establishes a Child Care Worker Subsidy Pilot Program within the Department of Human Services (DHS) for a period of one year; 2) sets applicant eligibility and selection requirements, a target for the percentage of early childhood educators to be served, and reporting and other requirements for DHS; 3) appropriates an unspecified amount of general funds to DHS in FY 23 for the pilot program; and 4) appropriates an unspecified amount of general funds to the Executive Office on Early Learning in FY 23 for deposit into the Early Learning Special Fund to support the Hawai'i Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program.

B&F notes that, with respect to the general fund appropriation in this bill, the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act requires that states receiving Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) II funds and Governor's Emergency Education Relief II funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

Further, the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act requires that states receiving ARP ESSER funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

The U.S. Department of Education has issued rules governing how these maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements are to be administered. B&F will be working with the money committees of the Legislature to ensure that the State of Hawai'i complies with these ESSER MOE requirements.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

SB-2701-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2022 7:56:40 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Michael Ching, MD, MPH	Testifying for American Academy of Pediatrics, Hawaii Chapter	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Committee on Ways and Means:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, Hawaii Chapter, supports SB2701, which would establish a one-year Early Child Care Worker Subsidy Pilot Program. High quality child care is a critically important mechanism for supporting our working families and the development of their children. This bill would improve the recruitment and retention of child care workers and, by increasing the workforce, would provide better access to high quality child care. It would have the added benefit of reducing poverty and food insecurity among child care workers. Thank you for your consideration on this bill.

Sincerely,

Michael S.L. Ching, MD, MPH, FAAP
President
American Academy of Pediatrics, Hawaii Chapter



To: Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Hearing Date/Time: February 23, 2022 10:05AM
Place: Hawaii State Capitol, Room 211 & Video Conference
Re: Testimony in STRONG SUPPORT of SB2701

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and the Members of Committees,

Members of AAUW of Hawaii thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support of SB2701 SD1 which would create a pilot wage subsidy program and appropriate funding into the Early Childhood Educator Stipend program to retain and recruit childcare educators.

In 2020, Hawaii had an estimated 59,000 children under 6 needing care and only 24,000 spaces in licensed & regulated programs. The median wage of childcare educators in Hawaii is \$12.43 and many leave for a better paying job. The living wage in Hawaii is \$19. We simply need to pay the childcare educators better. The childcare programs rely on tuition to stay open and that cost is already way too high for most of the families in Hawaii.

Women shoulder a disproportionate burden of child care responsibilities: about 27% of mothers stay at home (versus 7% fathers), three fourth of the mothers who stay at home do so to care for family (versus one fourth of the fathers) according to a 2018 survey from Pew Research. Being forced to leave the labor force to do unpaid care work limits women's advancement and corresponding pay increases, contributing to the gender pay gap. On average, women spend 12 years less in the workforce than men. The gender pay gap also continues into retirement, with the 2019 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey showing a nearly 30% difference in total retirement income between men and women. There are serious and disproportionate financial barriers to seniors aging in place and avoiding institutionalization.

By increasing the number of childcare spaces by raising the wage of childcare educators while keeping the licensed child care programs affordable, SB2701 SD1 allows mothers to remain in the workforce. SB2701 SD1 allows mothers a chance for better pay for themselves and their family, and for better retirement income and savings.



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, Kua'i, Kona, Maui, and Windward Oahu. UH Hilo, UH Manoa, UH Maui College, and Windward Community College are also AAUW partners. AAUW's mission is to advance gender equity for equal opportunities in education, at workplace and for economic security, and in leadership.

Please pass this important measure.

with Aloha,
Younghee Overly

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Y. Overly", is positioned below the typed name.

Public Policy Chair, AAUW of Hawaii
publicpolicy-hi@aauw.net



Date: February 21, 2022

To: Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: **Support for SB2701, Relating to Early Education**

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

ECAS strongly supports passage of SB2701, which would 1) establish and fund a child care worker subsidy pilot program and 2) make an appropriation to the Hawaii Early Childhood Educator Special Fund.

High-quality child care and early learning programs are fundamental to thriving children, flourishing families, and a robust economy. An effective, well-trained, early childhood workforce is the backbone of these programs. This workforce, however, suffers from chronically low wages and turnover.

According to the 2020 National Early Childhood Workforce Index (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment) there are an estimated 3,410 members of the early childhood teaching workforce providing services to Hawai'i's children. The median hourly wage for child care workers in Hawaii is \$12.43 and the poverty rate for early educators in Hawaii is 16.3%, much higher than the poverty rate for Hawaii workers in general (6.1%) and 4.5 times as high as for K-8 teachers (3.6%). Studies nationally estimate annual turnover rates between 26-40% for early childhood educators in licensed child care facilities.

The pandemic has only exacerbated the problem, with the risks and burdens of COVID-19 making it all the more difficult to both retain child care professionals and replace those who leave. As of September, 2021, the child care industry, nationally, was down 126,700 workers, more than a 10% decline from pre-pandemic levels and was facing one of the most dire of hiring situations across employment sectors.

The wage supplements and education stipends supported by **SB2701** are a critical measure designed to aid in the recruitment, education, and retention of the early care and learning workforce. Fifteen states and the District of Columbia have used child care compensation programs to address the high rates of turnover and critical shortage in the workforce, and increasing compensation has been cited as the #1 way to increase retention and recruitment for child care and early learning in Hawai'i.

In order for Hawai'i to rebuild from the pandemic and meet the education, employment, and economic needs of the state, the state must support and sustain the child care sector and improve families' access to child care and early learning programs by prioritizing strategies, such as those in **SB2701**, to stabilize and expand the early childhood workforce.

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

SB-2701-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2022 12:02:29 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Doris Segal Matsunaga	Testifying for Save Medicaid Hawaii	Support	No

Comments:

Save Medicaid Hawaii supports this bill



Hawai'i
Children's Action Network Speaks!
Building a unified voice for Hawai'i's children

To: Senator Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Re: **SB 2701 SD1, relating to early education**
10:05 AM, February 23, 2022

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and committee members,

On behalf of HCAN Speaks!, thank you for the opportunity to **testify in STRONG SUPPORT of Senate Bill 2701 SD1, relating to early education. We need bold efforts to stabilize the early care and learning workforce*. Piloting a compensation program and funding the Early Childhood Educator Stipend program help us keep our current qualified and dedicated workforce and builds the workforce for tomorrow.**

We need to prioritize maintaining our current child care workforce. This bill pilots a compensation program aimed to prevent child care workers from leaving the profession. Low compensation has been an on-going issue for early care and learning. Although the problem has been recognized, there has been no action to improve compensation. **The average hourly wage of a child care worker in Hawai'i is under \$13.** As a result, our early care and learning workforce is shrinking. Without the professionals in the programs, we will continue to see a reduction of spaces for children. The ripple effect in our community will be outstanding.

Supporting new early care and learning educators helps us grow the programs children and families need. The Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program (Act 210, 2021) supports recent graduates entering into the early care and learning profession. Educators are eligible for the education stipend if they provide early care and learning services to children between the ages of birth and five years old for at least two consecutive years. While the measure was passed last session, no appropriation was made. We cannot grow our programs if we have no one to work in them.

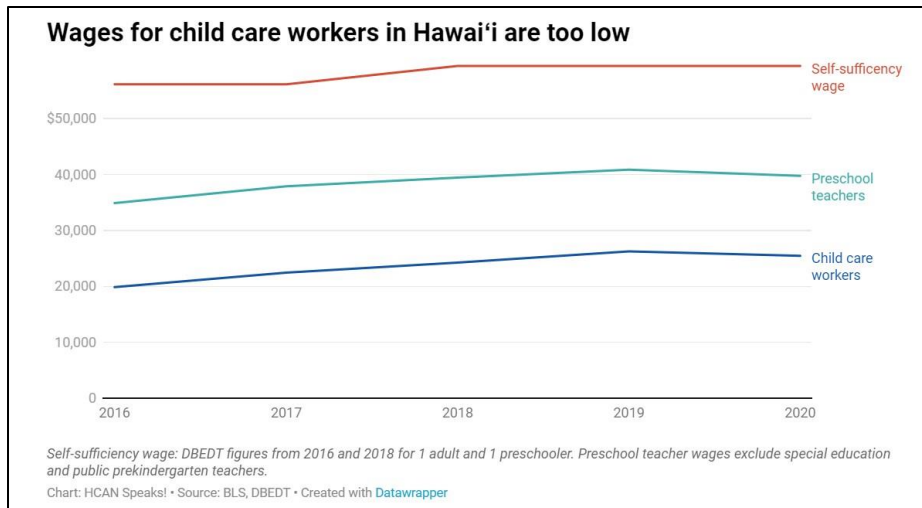
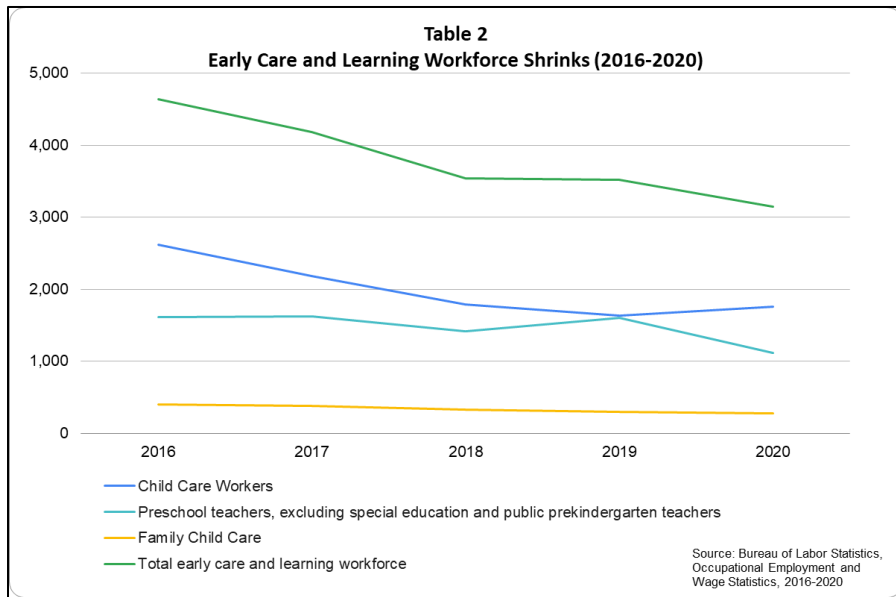
"Recruitment, development and retention of qualified child care staff remains problematic in most areas of the state. A major contributing factor is low compensation for teachers which deters interested and qualified individuals from entering or remaining in the child care profession. The high rate of turnover among child care staff negatively affects the consistency and quality of care provided to children."
Department of Human Services¹

Our shrinking workforce directly contributes to the loss of child care programs. While we've seen a reduction in the number of child care programs since the start of the pandemic, we've been in a steady decline for the last five years (Table 1). It is not a coincidence that we have also seen a reduction in the early care and learning workforce (Table 2). Demand remains high for early care and learning programs and parents are sometimes waiting months for a spot. But we can stop and reverse these trends. We can invest in our early care and learning workforce the same way we do for other public goods. Several states and the District of Columbia have launched initiatives to do this. Recently, Washington D.C passed a bill to give child care workers a one-time payment between \$10,000 and \$14,000. They also adopted a plan to raise wages permanently.¹

¹ dcist, February 2, 2022, "D.C. Child Care Workers To Get \$10,000 Checks As Part Of Pay-Raise Plan", <https://dcist.com/story/22/02/02/dc-child-care-worker-payment/>

Table 1	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total Regulated Child Care Licensed Capacity	35,988	36,070	35,548	35,548	35,418
Number of Children Under Age 6 Needing Care	66,000	65,000	64,000	61,000	59,750

Sources: Kids Count, "Children under age 6 with all available parents in workforce"; Department of Human Services regulated child care licensed capacity



Child care programs cannot increase wages without increasing the costs to families. But for most families, child care is already too expensive.

* The terms 'early care and learning', 'early childhood educator', and 'child care worker' are used interchangeably.

In the fall, early care and learning professionals were asked what came to mind when they heard “Early childhood professionals deserve worthy wages for worthy work”, here are a few of their responses:

“ABSOLUTELY! They are doing the work with our youngest children whose brains are growing exponentially! Why are they getting paid so little when they have the MOST important work!”

“Like my dream come true, to get paid what I am worth”

“Employee retention is getting more difficult as the years go by.....Its so hard to give an employee the pay they deserve for all the hard work they do. Benefits such as retirement are unheard of!”

Let’s take the steps to support children, families, and our early care and learning professionals. Investing in the early childhood workforce is an investment in our children. For these reasons, HCAN Speaks! respectfully requests the Committee to support this measure.

Thank you,

Kathleen Algire
Director of Early Learning and Health Policy

SB-2701-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2022 8:40:55 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Heidi Teraoka	Testifying for Neighborhood Place of Kona	Support	No

Comments:

2/22/2022

We are in favor of SB # 2701.

This bill seeks to help retain and recruit early childhood educators. We need to make investments in our early childhood workforce to support children, our working families, and our state. Early care and learning programs are the cornerstones of our communities. They support our youngest learners and our working families. Without support for these programs and the workforce, families will have fewer options for the care and education of their children.

We are in strong support of SB # 2701 and ask for your assistance in its passing during this legislative session.

Mahalo,

Heidi Teraoka

Executive Director

Neighborhood Place of Kona

75-166 Kalani St., #104

Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i 96740

(808) 331-8777



S E A C
Special Education Advisory Council
1010 Richards Street Honolulu, HI 96813
Phone: 586-8126 Fax: 586-8129
email: spin@doh.hawaii.gov
February 23, 2022

**Special Education
Advisory Council**

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

Ms. Sara Alimoot
Ms. Virginia Beringer
Ms. Mary Brogan
Ms. Deborah Cheeseman
Ms. Annette Cooper
Ms. Shana Cruz
Mr. Mark Disher
Dr. Kurt Humphrey
Ms. Mai Hall
Ms. Melissa Harper Osai
Mr. Kerry Iwashita
Ms. Melissa Johnson
Ms. Tina King
Ms. Jennifer Leoiki-Drino
Ms. Dale Matsuura
Ms. Cheryl Matthews
Dr. Paul Meng
Ms. Kiele Pennington
Ms. Carrie Pisciotto
Ms. Kau'i Rezentos
Ms. Rosie Rowe
Ms. Ivalee Sinclair
Mr. Steven Vannatta
Ms. Lisa Vegas
Ms. Paula Whitaker
Ms. Jasmine Williams

Ms. Annie Kalama, *liaison to
the Superintendent*
Dr. Bob Campbell, *liaison to
the military community*

Amanda Kaahanui, Staff
Susan Rocco, Staff

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

RE: SB 2701, SD 1 - Relating to Early Education

Dear Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee,

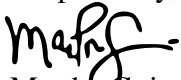
The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC), Hawaii's State Advisory Panel under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), supports the intent of SB 2701, SD 1 which makes an appropriation to the Hawaii Early Childhood Educator Special Fund for SY 2022-23. This fund was established last year as a source of stipends to early educators to enable them to receive coursework in early education through the University of Hawaii.

Numerous research studies have shown the long term benefits of quality early childhood education programs for students with and without disabilities, including higher high school graduation rates, lower grade retention and drop out rates, and greater social and emotional maturity. There is also ample evidence that access to quality preschool programming can lessen referrals for special education services by providing prevention and early intervention strategies to meet students' diverse needs.

Additionally, high quality preschool teachers are better prepared to accommodate children with IEPs in inclusive classrooms. By creating a larger pool of these teachers through the stipend program, we are potentially increasing the availability of inclusive placements.

Mahalo for this opportunity to submit testimony. If you have any questions, we are happy to answer them.

Respectfully,


Martha Guinan
Chair

To: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Gilbert S. C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee On Ways and Means

From: Robert G. Peters, Chair
Early Learning Board

Subject: **Measure:** SB 2701 SD 1, Relating to Early Learning
Hearing Date: Wednesday, February 23, 2022
Time: 10:05 A.M.
Location: Conference Room 211 and Videoconference

Description: Establishes a one-year Early Child Care Worker Subsidy Pilot Program to assist in retaining the existing early child care workforce. Appropriates funds for the pilot program to be expended by the Department of Human Services. Appropriates funds for the Early Learning Special Fund to be expended by the Executive Office on Early Learning for the Hawaii Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program. The pilot program repeals on 7/1/2023. (SD 1)

Early Learning Board Position: Support

Aloha. I am Robert G. Peters, Chair of the Early Learning Board (ELB). Thank you for this opportunity to support the intent of SB 2701 SD 1.

The Early Learning Board (ELB) appreciates the Legislature's continued support of early learning, despite the challenges the State has had to face because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are grateful for your continued efforts to increase access to early care and education and the recognition that the need for quality early child care and education far exceeds the current State's capacity to deliver it. One of the critical capacity issues arises from the inadequacy of compensation for providers, who are challenged to afford Hawaii's cost of living. The median wage for child care workers is well below the living wage of \$20.61/hr. calculated for a single adult in our State. This situation is a barrier to attracting and retaining quality providers and child care workers and accounts, in part, for the high early childhood educator turnover rate not only in Hawaii but across the nation.

This bill, SB 2701 SD 1, aligns with the ELB annual priorities which include, "Supporting efforts to expand workforce capacity building" and the Board's support of the University of Hawaii's College of Education's effort to conduct a compensation study with recommendations about achieving equity with sustainable living wages for early educators, a vital part of our State's economic infrastructure.

Act 210, SLH 2021, established the Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program but without an appropriation. This program, administered by EOEL in partnership with the University of Hawaii, currently leverages private source funding that would provide upfront financial support, covering early childhood tuition and fees, to individuals in the early care and education system. One of the greatest barriers for early childhood professionals to pursue higher education is not having the money to pay for tuition; the appropriation in this bill would help to address this critical need and help to guarantee that our community workforce can be served with quality, much needed child care.

Mahalo for the opportunity to offer this testimony supportive of SB 2701 SD 1.

LATE

SB-2701-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2022 10:20:36 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Ashley Galacgac	Testifying for AF3IRM Hawai'i	Support	No

Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB 2701, relating to early education. This bill seeks to help retain and recruit early childhood educators. We need to make investments in our early childhood workforce to support children and our working families. **Investment into our child care system will ultimately help relieve the burden of caregiving that has fallen on the shoulders of women and may be one step closer to affordable quality child care for all families in Hawai'i.**

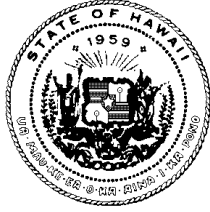
Early care and learning programs are the cornerstones of our communities. They support our youngest learners and our working families. But they are facing a crisis. Low-compensation has forced dedicated professionals to leave the field and prevented others from joining. Three key facts about child care in Hawai'i are:

- **\$12.43 The median wage of a child care worker in Hawai'i**
- **16% The percent of child care workers in poverty in the state**
- **35,000 The estimated number of child care spaces we need to serve all children needing care**

Without support for these programs and the workforce, families will have fewer options for the care and education of their children. Growing quality, affordable programs won't happen without ensuring we have the workforce we need and our children deserve.

To ensure the funding for the Early Educator Stipend Program can be delivered successfully, we support the Executive Office on Early Learning's suggested amendments.

I respectfully request the committee support working families and the dedicated early care and learning professionals by voting favorably on SB2701 SD1.



LATE

‘O kēia ‘ōlelo hō’ike no ke
Komikina Kūlana Olakino o Nā Wāhine

Testimony on behalf of the
Hawai‘i State Commission on the Status of Women

Prepared for the S. Committee on Ways and Means

In Support of S.B. 2701 SD1

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Honorable Members:

The Hawai‘i State Commission on the Status of Women writes in strong support of S.B. 2701 SD1 which establishes and makes an appropriation for an early child care worker subsidy pilot program. The measure also makes an appropriation to the Hawaii Early Childhood Educator Special Fund.

S.B. 2701 SD1 will tackle the worsening gender wage in Hawai‘i, disproportionate burden of the COVID-19 pandemic on women, and logistical nightmare of childcare in the State. This pilot compensation program is critical to stem high turnover and shortages in child care workers, who experience higher poverty rates than the general population. This will also provide knowledge on how to design long-term, sustainable childcare in the long-term.

Please pass S.B. 2701 SD1.

Sincerely,

Khara Jabola-Carolus
Executive Director



COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

BILL SB 2701 SD1
POSITION: SUPPORT

Hearing Date: February 23 2022; Hearing Time 10:05am

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Committee Members:

Mahalo for taking the time to consider our testimony. **Aloha United Way supports Bill SB2701 SD1**, which relates to early education. This bill seeks to help retain and recruit early childhood educators and would make needed investments in supporting and expanding Hawaii’s early childhood workforce that is essential to the wellbeing of working families, and our state’s economy.

Early care and learning programs are an essential service in our communities and have been hit hard by COVID-19. However high the need for such services is, the sector cannot and will not be able to meet the need for childcare given the low compensation child care professionals receive, often wages that put their own households below the ALICE threshold and sometimes in poverty. Such low wages for critical care work also means it is incredibly hard or impossible to attract new employees to the workforce. Three key facts about the childcare in Hawai’i from HCAN are:

- **\$12.43** is the median wage of a childcare worker in Hawai’i, translating to only \$25,800 a year for full time work, and often not enough to even pay a year of rent.
- **16%** of childcare workers live in poverty in Hawaii, 50% higher than the average.
- **35,000 additional** childcare spaces must be created just to serve all families seeking care.

Without support for these programs and the workforce that operates them each day, families will have limited options for the care and education of their children, which further limits workforce participation and economic growth (UHERO). Having accessible, high-quality, affordable programs can only happen if the field can attract professionally trained and dedicated workers who see it as a viable career that can provide livable wage.

We also support the Executive Office on Early Learning’s suggested amendments to ensure funding for the Early Educator Stipend Program can be delivered successfully.

Thank you for considering this testimony and for your action to support and pass SB 2701 SD1.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Skjold
Chief Operating Officer

LATE

hiaeyc Hawai'i Association for the
Education of Young Children
An Affiliate
of **naeyc**
1806 S. King Street, Suite 30
Honolulu, HI 96826

TO:

Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Education
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair

FROM:

Brenda Watanabe, VP Public Policy, HiAEYC Board

SUBJECT: Measure: S.B. No. 2701 – RELATING TO EARLY EDUCATION

Hearing Date: Wednesday, February 23, 2022

Time: 10:05am

The mission of the Hawai'i Association for the Education of Young Children (HiAEYC) is to promote, support, and expand quality and professionalism in early childhood programs and services for Hawai'i's young children (birth to age 8) and their families. HiAEYC is the Hawai'i affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Early Child Care Worker Subsidy Pilot Program: HB 2701 establishes and appropriates funds for an Early Child Care Worker Subsidy Pilot program. Early care and learning programs are the cornerstones of our communities. They support our youngest learners and our working families; however low compensation has forced dedicated professionals to leave the field and prevented others from joining. We are experiencing a childcare crisis. Early childhood staff should be provided equitable salaries and benefits commensurate with their qualifications, experience and job responsibilities. We believe equitable compensation will reduce high staff turnover and keep qualified staff in the field. A pilot compensation program would address workforce retention and provide insight on how to structure a long-term, sustainable program for the future.

Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program: Early childhood professionals must have access to quality preparation programs and ongoing professional development. Barriers to this access

include the cost of higher education tuition. The Early Childhood Educator Stipend program was established through Act 210 in 2021 without appropriation. HB 2701 seeks to appropriate funding of this program. Funding of the stipend program is essential to retaining a qualified workforce already experiencing economic hardships through low compensation.

HiAEYC strongly supports the two programs of HB2701--the Early Child Care Worker Subsidy Pilot and the Early Childhood Educator Stipend. These measures support the mission of HiAEYC and we recommend these measures be passed.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to share our views and provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brenda Watanabe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brenda Watanabe,
VP of Public Policy,
HiAEYC Board

SB-2701-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2022 9:54:42 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Tricia-Lee Lum Ho	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Without support for these programs and the workforce, families will have fewer options for the care and education of their children. In UHERO’s economic forecast for the state, economist Carl Bonham noted, “By making early childhood education accessible to more families, these programs will increase labor force participation, particularly among women. They also represent an important investment in the development of the country’s future human capital and in the fight against poverty”. Growing quality, affordable programs won’t happen without ensuring we have the workforce we need and our children deserve.

To ensure the funding for the Early Educator Stipend Program can be delivered successfully, we support the Executive Office on Early Learning’s suggested amendments.

I respectfully request the committee support working families and the dedicated early care and learning professionals by voting favorably on HB 1940.

Thank you,

Tricia-Lee Lum Ho

SB-2701-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2022 10:01:40 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Tonee Burley	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB 1940, relating to early education. This bill seeks to help retain and recruit early childhood educators. We need to make investments in our early childhood workforce to support children, our working families, and our state.

Early care and learning programs are the cornerstones of our communities. They support our youngest learners and our working families. But they are facing a crisis. Low-compensation has forced dedicated professionals to leave the field and prevented others from joining. Three key facts about the child care in Hawai‘i are:

- \$12.43 The median wage of a child care worker in Hawai‘i
- 16% The percent of child care workers in poverty in the state
- 35,000 The estimated number of child care spaces we need to serve all children needing care

Without support for these programs and the workforce, families will have fewer options for the care and education of their children. In UHERO’s economic forecast for the state, economist Carl Bonham noted, “By making early childhood education accessible to more families, these programs will increase labor force participation, particularly among women. They also represent an important investment

in the development of the country’s future human capital and in the fight against poverty”. Growing quality, affordable programs won’t happen without ensuring we have the workforce we need and our children deserve.

To ensure the funding for the Early Educator Stipend Program can be delivered successfully, we support the Executive Office on Early Learning’s suggested amendments.

I respectfully request the committee support working families and the dedicated early care and learning professionals by voting favorably on HB 1940.

Thank you,

SB-2701-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2022 10:42:41 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Thomas Brandt	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Support!

SB-2701-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2022 10:57:54 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Marissa Baptista	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

As a resident of the Salt Lake/Moanalua area and Moanalua/Radford/Aiea Complex, I support SB2701.

Mahalo,

Marissa Baptista

SB-2701-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2022 11:22:31 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Calvert Chun	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My daughter, now a young adult, has asperger syndrome. This kind of legislation will help children with these life challanges.

SB-2701-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2022 11:34:24 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Nikki-Ann Yee	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB 1940, relating to early education. We need to make investments in our early childhood workforce to support children, our working families, and our state. Without support for these programs and the workforce, families will have fewer options for the care and education of their children. Please pass this bill. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify!

SB-2701-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2022 11:52:13 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Noreen Dougherty	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Senators,

I am in strong support of SB2701 and I ask the same of you.

During the last 42 years I have been working in Hawaii emmersed in early childhood education, after having gotten a degree in Elementary Ed. and Montessori Pre-primary Certification. I have run a Montessori State Licensed daycare for over 22 years on Kauai, worked in Kamuela Montessori School on the Big Island, and started Kauai's Island School's pre-K program in 2000.

I have trained college students studying ECE in Chaminade University's Castle Cook Outreach Program on Kauai, Hawaii, and Maui, as well assisting Chaminade and the students by being a cooperating instructor and supervising teacher for student that were doing student teaching.

Since 2007 I have been licensed by the Educational Kinesiology Foiundation and I confidently tell you that a child's youngest years are the most important of all.. All that this bill is proposing is necessary and can begin to improve the lives on our parents, children and Community.

Please support SB2701. You may contact me directly.

Noreen Dougherty

Kapaa Kauai

SB-2701-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2022 12:09:40 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Michele Mitsumori	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Increasing childcare compensation has been shown to be the #1 way to increase recruitment and retention for early childcare education in Hawai`i. Childcare workers in Hawai`i have a median wage of \$12.43, and 16% of childcare workers are in poverty, compared to 10% of the general population. I support SB2701 SD1.

SB-2701-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2022 7:06:46 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
tia pearson	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

When parents have to work and they don't earn much, who can they afford to pay to look after their children?

SB-2701-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2022 9:49:24 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Daniela Minerbi	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support SB2701,

thank you for this opportunity,

respectfully ,

Daniela Minerbi

SB-2701-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2022 10:25:46 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Evelyn Aczon Hao	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Early childhood educators are difficult to find. This bill will help towards getting staffing needed.

SB-2701-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2022 7:43:25 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Barbara Barry	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

As a kupuna who is providing child care to my grandchildren, I strongly support SB2701 SD1.

Mahalo,

SB-2701-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2022 2:25:18 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Laura Ramirez	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

My family and I strongly support SB2701 SD1 as it has been very difficult for us to find good affordable childcare near our home for our autistic child for the last few years. Even with the entire family helping we still need more hours of childcare to cover commute time and weekend work schedules.

Please pass this important bill for our keiki.

Mahalo,

Laura Ramirez and the Bettencourt family

To: Hawaii State Legislature – Committee on Ways and Means
Hearing: Date/Time: Tuesday, 2-23-2022 10:05am
Place: Hawaii State Capitol, Room CR 211 & Videoconference
Re: Judith Ann Armstrong is in support of SB2701 (RELATING TO EARLY EDUCATION.)

Aloha Chair Donovan M. Dela Cruz and Vice Chair Senator Gilbert S. C. Keith-Agaran and esteemed members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of SB2701 which seeks to address early care and learning workforce funding issues.

Early care and learning programs are the cornerstones of our communities. They support our youngest learners and our working families. But they are facing a crisis. Low-compensation has forced dedicated professionals to leave the field and prevented others from joining. Three key facts about the childcare in Hawai'i are:

- **\$12.43** The median wage of a childcare worker in Hawai'i
- **16%** The percent of childcare workers in poverty in the state
- **35,000** The estimated number of childcare spaces we need to serve all children needing care

Without support for these programs and the workforce, families will have fewer options for the care and education of their children. In UHERO's economic forecast for the state, economist Carl Bonham noted, "By making early childhood education accessible to more families, these programs will increase labor force participation, particularly among women. They also represent an important investment in the development of the country's future human capital and in the fight against poverty". Growing quality, affordable programs won't happen without ensuring we have the workforce we need and our children deserve.

To ensure the funding for the Early Educator Stipend Program can be delivered successfully, we support the Executive Office on Early Learning's suggested amendments.

I respectfully request the committee support working families and the dedicated early care and learning professionals by voting favorably on HB 1940.

Sincerely,
Judith Ann Armstrong
jaapfg@twc.com
Honolulu, HI 96815

SB-2701-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2022 3:47:46 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Cara Flores	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Childcare is essential to equity and a stronger society. We need to support the workers who are vital to keeping our communities running well. As a mom of three I can say great childcare workers help family stability and keep food on the table. Working families need childcare and childcare workers deserve to be compensated as critical frontline workers essential to our social infrastructure.

Feb. 21, 2022

To: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: Dr. Terry Lock, Director,
Hawai'i Early Childhood Educator Excellence and Equity Project
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa College of Education

Subject: Measure - SB 2701 SD1: RELATING TO EARLY EDUCATION.
Hearing Date - February 23, 2022
Time – 10:05 am
Location: Room 211 and videoconference

My name is Dr. Terry Lock. I am with the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa College of Education and currently serve as the director of the Hawai'i Early Childhood Educator Excellence and Equity Project. This project's goal is to transform early childhood education lead teacher preparation programs and compensation/ financing systems.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am in strong support of SB 2701 SD1. This bill seeks to help recruit and retain early childhood educators. We need to make investments in our early childhood workforce to support young children, our working families, and our state.

Research has shown that a diverse well-prepared, well-supported, and well-compensated workforce is essential for the delivery of high-quality early childhood programs (Institute of Medicine, 2015). Early care and learning programs are the cornerstones of our communities in Hawai'i. They support our youngest learners and our working families. But for decades, they have been facing a crisis that is only getting worse. Low-compensation has forced dedicated professionals, especially those working in community-based and home-based programs, to leave the field and this has prevented others from joining.

Three key facts about the child care in Hawai'i are: 1) \$12.43 is the median wage of a child care worker; 2) 16% is the percent of child care workers who live in poverty; and 3) 35,000 is the estimated number of child care spaces we need to serve all children needing care

SB 2701 SD1 seeks to create a pilot wage subsidy program for child care workers. The purpose of this pilot wage subsidy program is to prevent existing child care workers from leaving the early care and education field. This pilot program will also provide insight on how to structure a long-term, sustainable program for the future. I also support the recommendation that participants of this pilot program should not be employed by the Department of Education, Executive Office on Early Learning or public charter school.

Related to this, a common barrier to recruiting and retaining students who are pursuing early childhood education degrees in higher education is not having money to pay for tuition. Therefore, there needs to be funding for Hawai'i's Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program, whose purpose is to support the early learning workforce by providing financial assistance upfront to eligible individuals taking coursework in early childhood education. Hawai'i's Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program was established through Act 210 in 2021 without appropriation.

I am in support of appropriations for the Early Learning Special Fund to be expended by the Executive Office on Early Learning for Hawai'i's Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program.

Without support for these programs and the workforce, families will have fewer options for the care and education of their children. Growing quality, affordable programs won't happen without ensuring we have the workforce we need and our children deserve.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of SB 2701 SD1.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Terry Lock

February 22, 2022

I sincerely appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony for **Senate Bill 2701 SD1** related to early education. This bill seeks to help retain and recruit early childhood educators. We need to make investments in our early childhood workforce to support children, our working families, and our state. The early childhood education can better prepare the State's early childhood workforce to interact with young children (aged 0-5), whose brain development is critical for long-term learning and success individually which in turns have implications to the society and the country. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children 2021 annual report, the benefits of investing in high quality early childhood education are clear and extensive—for children, adults, and society at large, which is with a return on investment of up to 13% and a contribution of \$163 billion to the US gross domestic product. A substantial research base confirms that when children participate in highly quality early childhood education, they are: **1) More likely to experience improved cognitive and social outcomes; 2) More likely to graduate from high schools; 3) Less likely to require remedial education; 4) Less likely to commit crimes; 5) Less likely to be neglected and abused; 6) Less likely to be unemployed; and 7) Less likely to require public assistance.**

Early care and learning programs are the cornerstones of our communities. They support our youngest learners and our working families. But they are facing a crisis. Low-compensation has forced dedicated professionals to leave the field and prevented others from joining. Three key facts about the child care in Hawai'i are:

- **\$12.43** The median wage of a child care worker in Hawai'i
- **16%** The percent of child care workers in poverty in the state
- **35,000** The estimated number of child care spaces we need to serve all children needing care

In addition, a common barrier to recruiting and retaining students who are pursuing early childhood education courses through higher education is not having money to pay for tuition. There needs to be funding for Hawaii's Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program, whose purpose is to support the early learning workforce by providing financial assistance upfront to eligible individuals taking coursework in early childhood education. Hawaii's Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program was established through Act 210 in 2021 without an appropriation. **SB 2701 SD1** seeks to fund the Hawaii Early Childhood Educator Special Fund, which will be expended by the Executive Office on Early Learning for Hawaii's Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program.

Without support for these programs and the workforce, families will have fewer options for the care and education of their children. **In UHERO's economic forecast for the state, economist Carl Bonham noted, "By making early childhood education accessible to more families, these programs will increase labor force participation, particularly among women. They also represent an important investment in the development of the country's future human capital and in the fight against poverty"**. Growing quality, affordable programs won't happen without ensuring we have the workforce we need and our children deserve. I sincerely appreciate the Committee's time and consideration of my testimony. Please vote in support of this vital Senate Bill 2701 SD1 that would change the future and scenery of the early childhood education in the State of Hawaii.

Respectfully,

Helen Au, Ph.D., M.Ed.

SB-2701-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2022 9:41:38 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/23/2022 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Justina Acevedo-Cross	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB 2701, relating to early education. This bill seeks to help retain and recruit early childhood educators. We need to make investments in our early childhood workforce to support children, our working families, and our state. I personally see the struggles that a under-compensated early care and learning workforce faces. I am a parent of a three year old in preschool and his school has faced staffing shortages; recently the lead teacher resigned from her position. In turn that created havoc as a parent because the center needed to temporarily reduce the hours of preschool drop off and pick up because they were short staffed. I firmly believe if educators in all care and learning settings are valued and compensated as they are in other professions for their knowledge and skills, the early care and learning sector would not be having a deeply felt retention problem.

Hawaii ranks 43rd of 50 states, seventh from the bottom in its investments in children; this measure includes items such as support for the child care system. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown light on how early care and learning programs support our youngest learners and our working families. Low-compensation has forced dedicated professionals to leave the field and prevented others from joining. Three key facts about the child care in Hawai'i are:

- **\$12.43 The median wage of a child care worker in Hawai'i**
- 16% The percent of child care workers in poverty in the state
- 35,000 The estimated number of child care spaces we need to serve all children needing care

In addition, a common barrier to recruiting and retaining students who are pursuing early childhood education courses through higher education is not having money to pay for tuition. There needs to be funding for Hawaii's Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program, whose purpose is to support the early learning workforce by providing financial assistance upfront to eligible individuals taking coursework. Hawaii's Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program was established through Act 210 in 2021 without an appropriation. SB 2701 seeks to fund the Hawaii Early Childhood Educator Special Fund, which will be expended by the Executive Office on Early Learning for Hawaii's Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program.

I request that the committee advances this measure to show support for working families and take action to support a much needed staffing recruitment and retention.

Sincerely,

Justina Acevedo-Cross