



The Senate

STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

MEDIA RELEASE
June 28, 2012

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Governor Signs Bill to Establish the Office on Early Learning

Honolulu – Today Governor Neil Abercrombie signed Senate Bill 2545, Relating to Education, into law. The measure establishes the Executive Office on Early Learning.

Currently, Hawaii is just one of eleven states without a publically funded preschool program. SB 2545 works in concert with the Governor’s Early Childhood Education Initiative to help the State join the rest of the country and meet its goal of providing a viable early learning system for Hawaii’s youngest keiki.

“What we know as parents and what the research tells us is clear: access to developmentally and age appropriate educational opportunities makes a difference,” said Senate Committee on Education Chair Jill Tokuda.

SB2545 establishes the Executive Office on Early Learning to provide for the necessary coordination and cooperation amongst all relevant governmental departments and agencies. In addition, the existing Early Learning Council will transition into its new role as the Early Learning Advisory Board, providing guidance and perspective from the public and private sector.

To assist in the implementation of a uniform early learning program SB 2545 will phase out Junior Kindergarten, repealing the program at the end of the 2013-2014 school year. In 2008 Hawaii established Keiki First Steps, a statewide early learning system, focused on maximizing public and private resources to ensure the delivery of services throughout our communities.

“SB2545 represents the very first steps of Keiki First Steps,” said Senator Jill Tokuda. “ The measure calls on the Office to develop an implementation plan and projected financials to ensure a seamless transition to an early learning system, focusing on those targeted four year olds most impacted by the loss of Junior Kindergarten”.

The measure also clarifies a law passed in 2010 by making clear that a child must be at least 5 years old by July 31st in order to enter kindergarten, but pushes back this mandate back to the 2014-15 year to align with the implementation of Keiki First Steps, and focused on ensuring all children have meaningful options.

(Photo Courtesy: Senate Communications)

(Photo Caption: Senate Education Chair Jill Tokuda, Representative Della Au Belatti, Senator Michelle Kidani, Senator David Ige, and join Governor Neil Abercrombie for the signing of Senate Bill 2545 into law.)