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LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU
State of Hawaii
State Capitol, Room 446
415 S. Beretania Street
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Written Comments

SCR13/SR7

REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU TO CONDUCT A STUDY ON THE FEASIBILITY OF THE STATE ESTABLISHING A UNIVERSAL, NO-COST PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

Charlotte A. Carter-Yamauchi, Director
Legislative Reference Bureau

Presented to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

April 5, 2022, 10:40 a.m.
Conference Room 211 and Videoconference

Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee:

Good morning Chair Dela Cruz and members of the Committee. My name is Charlotte Carter-Yamauchi, and I am the Director of the Legislative Reference Bureau. Thank you for providing the opportunity to submit written **comments** on S.C.R. No. 13/S.R. No. 7, Requesting the Legislative Reference Bureau to Conduct a Study on the Feasibility of the State Establishing a Universal, No-Cost Pre-Kindergarten Program.

The purpose of these measures is to request that the Legislative Reference Bureau conduct a study on the feasibility of the State establishing a universal no-cost pre-kindergarten program. As a part of the study, the Legislative Reference Bureau is requested to:

- (1) Research other states that have implemented a universal pre-kindergarten program, including how they have addressed transportation, the provision of school lunches, and other ancillary service for students;
- (2) Research other states that have plans to or are in the process of implementing universal pre-kindergarten programs;

- (3) Explore the potential positives and negatives of implementing a universal pre-kindergarten program in the State;
- (4) Work with the Department of Education and Executive Office of Early Learning on examining how universal pre-kindergarten may be implemented in the State;
- (5) Explain the existing pre-kindergarten programs in the State and the efficacy of those programs;
- (6) Examine how a universal pre-kindergarten program in the State may include the following:
 - (A) Appropriate school staffing;
 - (B) Fair teacher compensation;
 - (C) Adequate credentialing requirements; and
 - (D) Staff professional development or continuing education;
- (7) Discuss child assessment requirements, appropriate curriculum, and school schedules for a universal pre-kindergarten program in the State; and
- (8) Provide fiscal analysis and projections, including funding mechanisms that would be relevant to the implementation of a universal pre-kindergarten program in the State.

The measures also request that the Legislative Reference Bureau submit a report of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2023.

The Bureau takes no position on these measures but submits the following comments for your consideration.

The Bureau notes that **the study requested by these measures seem to be largely unnecessary since section 26-61, Hawaii Revised Statutes,¹ already requires that the State, through the Department of Human Services and the Executive Office on Early Learning, provide fifty percent of three- and four-year-old children with access to preschool by the end of 2027, and access for one hundred percent by the end of 2032.** At least some of the foundation for expanding current preschool capacity to meet the one hundred percent mandate is already in the process of being established, pursuant to Act 46, Session Laws of Hawaii 2020, and Act 210, Session Laws of Hawaii 2021. **Progress**

¹ Effective July 1, 2024.

reports on implementing these programs are already required to be submitted to the Legislature prior to the 2025 through 2027 regular sessions. Consequently, the more efficient means of obtaining the information being requested in the measures would be to amend section 26-61, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to require the Department of Human Services and the Executive Office on Early Learning to include the information in their annual reports.

We note that the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) has published some of the information requested by the measure. The 427-page 2020 report² by NIEER contains extensive information about the public preschool systems of other states. It also indicates that **Hawaii is one of six states that currently meets all ten pre-kindergarten benchmarks, including standards for curriculum supports, teacher degree, teacher specialized training, staff professional development, and a continuous quality improvement system.** The same report estimates that providing universal high-quality full-day preschool to all three- and four-year-old children in Hawaii would require expanding preschool to an additional 14,697 three-year-old children and 13,597 four-year-old children (28,294 total children) and would cost an additional \$346,205,384 per year.

Finally, since the Bureau lacks any specific expertise or particular experience in matters relating to early education or in fiscal analysis and projections for the implementation of such programs, it would most likely need to contract the services of an entity with the requisite experience on these issues. Unfortunately, the Bureau does not have funding in its current budget to contract for such services, nor does it possess an exemption from the State Procurement Code to meet the reporting timeframe contained in the measures. Consequently, it is unlikely that the Bureau would be able to respond with any authoritative assessments of current universal prekindergarten or other public early learning programs in the State within the timeframe provided. Further, the Bureau submits that other entities in the State whose primary focus is on early learning would be better positioned to evaluate and assess a number of the issues specified in the measures, including issues relating to staffing, compensation, credentialing, professional development, child assessments, curriculum, and schedules.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit written comments.

² The State of Preschool 2020, State Preschool Yearbook, The National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers Graduate School of Education, 2021, *available at* https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/YB2020_Full_Report_080521.pdf.



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

April 5, 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:** SCR 13 / SR 7
Hearing Date: Tuesday, April 5, 2022
Time: 10:40 a.m
Location: Videoconference & conference room 211

Bill Description: Requesting the Legislative Reference Bureau to conduct a study on the feasibility of the state establishing a universal, no-cost pre-kindergarten program.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING'S POSITION: Comments

Aloha. I am Coleen Momohara, Interim Director of the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL). EOEL provides comments on SCR 13 / SR 7 and defers to the Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB) regarding implementation and funding needs.

EOEL is statutorily responsible for the development of the State's early childhood system that shall ensure a spectrum of high-quality development and learning opportunities for children throughout the State, from prenatal care until the time they enter kindergarten, with priority given to underserved or at-risk children.

Efforts are currently underway, within EOEL and across various departments, to achieve the provisions set forth in Act 046, SLH 2020, which aims to increase access of early learning programs for all 3- and 4-year-olds across the early learning system. The act includes provisions that would support expansion of the mixed delivery system, which includes private and public sector programs.

Similarly, the Universal Pre-K and Child Care Entitlement provisions that were included in the Build Back Better federal legislation recognized that efforts to achieve universal prekindergarten must include a mixed delivery system. To meet the needs of our young children in Hawaii, collaboration within and across both sectors will be necessary.

To meaningfully assess feasibility, there are critical factors that should be considered, including:

- Current capacity and potential areas of expansion;
- Impact of implementation of a universal, no-cost pre-k system to current capacity;
- Parent/family needs;
- Workforce supports, including compensation and other recruitment and retention efforts;
- Effective governance structures;
- Quality standards that promote successful child outcomes; and
- Long-term and sustainable financing mechanisms and sources.

There are many entities, individuals, and stakeholders that can help inform this study should this resolution pass. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

Date: April 3, 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: **Comments on SCR13/SR7, Relating to a Study on Universal No-Cost Pre-Kindergarten**

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 appreciates the intent of **SCR13/SR7**, which request the Legislative Reference Bureau to conduct a study on the feasibility of the state establishing a universal, no-cost pre-kindergarten program, and offers the following comments:

- The state has previously researched and developed plans for preschool expansion. If a Universal Pre-Kindergarten feasibility study were to move forward, efforts should **build from existing research**, including the Hawai'i Early Childhood State Plan, the Hawai'i Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five Early Childhood Comprehensive Needs Assessment, and the soon-to-be released Hawai'i Early Childhood Educator Excellence and Equity (ECE3) Project.
- The Early Learning Educational Task Force Report (Act 259, 2006), identified workforce as the major barrier for expanding preschool services to four-year-olds. Since that time, workforce conditions have only worsened, particularly as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Any new Universal Pre-Kindergarten feasibility study should place **workforce concerns** and proposed strategies for addressing recruitment, retention, compensation and professional development needs at the center.
- A **mixed-delivery system**, which administers funds across licensed center- and family-based child care programs, Head Start, Early Head Start, public schools, and community-based organizations, has been identified as the most cost-effective and sustainable solution for delivering affordable high-quality early care and education to all children. New research into the feasibility of Universal Pre-Kindergarten in Hawai'i should specifically explore utilization of a mixed-delivery system in its approach to universal prekindergarten.
- Limited private-participation or public-only delivery systems for prekindergarten can have significant negative consequences on families and the early care and learning system, particularly in relation to child care for **infants and toddlers**. In addition to an examination of a mixed-delivery system approach to universal prekindergarten, any new research should include a review of impacts of other universal prek approaches on infant/toddler care and measures for mitigating potential negative consequences on the availability, cost and quality of child care and early learning services for infants and toddlers.

- Finally, any recommendations emerging from a Universal Pre-Kindergarten feasibility study should be in-line with the **Executive Office on Early Learning's** nationally recognized public preschool program and be inclusive of the **State Public Charter School Commission's** early learning/preschool programs.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on these resolutions.

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:** SCR 13/ SR 7
Hearing Date: Tuesday, April 5, 2022
Time: 10:40 A. M.
Location: Conference Room 211 and videoconference

Description: Requesting the Legislative Reference Bureau to conduct a study on the feasibility of the State establishing a universal, no-cost Pre-Kindergarten Program.

Early Learning Board Position: Comments

Aloha. I am Robert G. Peters, Chair of the Early Learning Board (ELB). Thank you for this opportunity to offer comments about SCR 13/ SR 7 on behalf of the ELB.

Through Act 202, Session Laws of Hawaii 2017, ELB transitioned from an advisory to a governing board for the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) and is charged with formulating statewide policy relating to early learning. The ELB is composed of 17 representatives from across the early childhood field, in both the public and private sectors.

Currently, the ELB along with the Executive Office on Early Learning and its associated partners, are engaged in planning the implementation of Act 046/Act 210 to expand access to early care and learning for all 3- and 4-year olds as defined by statute benchmarks. The ELB has hired an Institutional Analyst to coordinate efforts and to work with the public agencies responsible for expanding access to quality early learning opportunities, including expansion of the Public Pre-K.

As part of this effort, and to achieve the benchmark outcomes, it is assumed that a mixed-delivery approach incorporating both public and private options will be needed. In addition, offering family choice to meet cultural and community needs as planned will require mixed-delivery options especially in the rural areas of our State.

If a feasibility study is conducted, it will be important to consider,

- Assessment of current capacity (seats/options/certified providers/locations);
- Potential impact of a universal, no-cost system on current seat availability;
- Exploration of capacity requirements for a universal pre-K (workforce, facilities, educational training);
- Consideration of compensation issues to attract and retain certified professionals;
- Investment required for long-term sustainability;
- Challenges/barriers to expansion and development of a no-cost program.

If the Resolution moves forward, it is recommended that it build upon existing research and strategies in the Hawai'i Early Childhood State Plan, the Hawai'i Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five Early Childhood Comprehensive Needs Assessment recommendations, and the forthcoming research

through the Hawai'i Early Childhood Educator Excellence and Equity (ECE3) Project. Furthermore, its recommendations should be aligned with the state's Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) nationally recognized public preschool program and seek no negative impact on infant and toddler care.

Mahalo for the opportunity to offer comments on this Resolution.