

JAN 17 2025

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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

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RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1       SECTION 1. The legislature finds that early learning costs  
2 in the State have significantly increased, creating barriers for  
3 families seeking to enroll their young children in center-based  
4 care. According to ProCare Software's 2024 Childcare Cost  
5 Analysis, the average annual cost of center-based infant care in  
6 the State was approximately \$22,585 in 2024, representing  
7 approximately 23.2 per cent of the State's median household  
8 income. Hawaii's center-based care costs far exceed the United  
9 States Department of Health and Human Services' guidelines  
10 recommending that childcare costs not exceed seven per cent of a  
11 family's income, underscoring the significant financial burden  
12 on working families in the State.

13       The legislature also finds that parent-staff cooperatives  
14 offer an innovative and affordable solution by incorporating  
15 professional expertise with structured community and parental  
16 support. Cooperatives can reduce operational costs, enabling  
17 families to access affordable childcare while stimulating the



1 local economy by allowing more parents, especially mothers, to  
2 remain in the workforce. Further, high-quality early childhood  
3 education provided through cooperatives improves long-term  
4 educational outcomes, workforce readiness, and the overall  
5 economic vitality of the State.

6 The legislature further finds that cooperatives align with  
7 the State's unique cultural values by incorporating Native  
8 Hawaiian principles such as aloha (love and compassion), malama  
9 (care and stewardship), and kuleana (responsibility). By  
10 fostering a sense of belonging and culture, cooperative programs  
11 can meet the diverse needs of local families while strengthening  
12 community ties. Developing innovative childcare models, such as  
13 parent-staff cooperatives, will help address the pressing  
14 childcare challenges faced by Hawaii's families.

15 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish  
16 parent-staff early learning cooperatives for early childcare  
17 within the department of human services.

18 SECTION 2. For the purposes of this Act:

19 "Cultural and place-based learning" means educational  
20 practices that integrate the unique cultural heritage, history,  
21 and natural environment of Hawaii.



1 "Department" means the department of human services.

2 "Early learning cooperative" means a childcare program  
3 operated as a parent-staff partnership, combining professional  
4 early learning services with structured parental involvement.

5 SECTION 3. (a) The department shall facilitate the  
6 establishment of early learning cooperatives across the State.

7 (b) Early learning cooperatives shall:

- 8 (1) Blend professional early childcare services with  
9 structured parental involvement to create a  
10 collaborative and inclusive learning environment;
- 11 (2) Provide comprehensive and ongoing training for parents  
12 in early childhood education practices, including  
13 strategies to support child development, classroom  
14 management, and cultural education;
- 15 (3) Incorporate cultural and place-based learning to  
16 reflect the State's unique heritage and environment by  
17 partnering with local cultural practitioners,  
18 educators, and community leaders, who may collaborate  
19 with the design of the early learning cooperative  
20 program;



1 (4) Meet established quality standards, including adequate  
2 staff-to-child ratios, certified childcare  
3 professionals, and safe learning environments;

4 (5) Utilize local resources and environments as components  
5 of curriculum; and

6 (6) Incorporate Hawaiian language and Native Hawaiian  
7 cultural practices.

8 (c) The department shall prioritize establishing early  
9 learning cooperatives in rural and underserved communities by:

10 (1) Conducting a needs assessment to identify priority  
11 areas based on childcare availability, demographic  
12 trends, and community input;

13 (2) Collaborating with local organizations, schools, and  
14 nonprofit organizations to ensure early learning  
15 cooperatives are accessible and responsive to  
16 community needs; and

17 (3) Offering additional financial and technical support to  
18 cooperatives in high-need areas to promote equitable  
19 access to high-quality early learning services.

20 (d) To ensure the sustainability and scalability of early  
21 learning cooperatives, the department shall:



- 1       (1)   Develop a phased implementation plan for expanding  
2           early learning cooperatives, including timelines,  
3           resource allocation, and benchmarks for future growth;
- 4       (2)   Conduct evaluations at the end of each phase to assess  
5           program performance using the following benchmarks for  
6           success:
- 7           (A)   Enrollment rates that aim to achieve at least  
8                eighty per cent capacity utilization within the  
9                first year of operation for each early learning  
10              cooperative;
- 11          (B)   Reduction in childcare costs as a percentage of  
12                household income for participating families, with  
13                a target of decreasing costs to not more than  
14                fifteen per cent of household income; and
- 15          (C)   Economic impact, measured by the percentage  
16                increase in workforce participation among parents  
17                benefitting from the program, with a goal of at  
18                least a ten per cent increase; and
- 19       (3)   Monitor and evaluate the performance of established  
20           early learning cooperatives to identify best practices  
21           and areas for improvement, with a focus on family



1 satisfaction, educational outcomes, and operational  
2 efficiency.

3 (e) The department shall partner with early childhood  
4 education experts, community organizations, and existing  
5 childcare providers to implement the early learning  
6 cooperatives.

7 (f) The department shall adopt rules in accordance with  
8 chapter 91, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to implement early learning  
9 cooperatives pursuant to this Act. The rules shall include but  
10 not be limited to:

- 11 (1) Standards for early learning cooperatives operations;  
12 (2) Eligibility criteria for participating families; and  
13 (3) Procedures for applying for funding and grants.

14 SECTION 4. (a) The department shall develop and implement  
15 a standardized training program for parents participating in  
16 early learning cooperatives. The training shall include:

- 17 (1) Basic principles of early childhood education;  
18 (2) Techniques for supporting professional staff; and  
19 (3) Best practices for cultural and place-based learning.

20 (b) Parent participation shall be a core component of the  
21 early learning cooperatives, with structured opportunities for



1 involvement in daily activities, administration, and program  
2 design.

3 SECTION 5. (a) The department shall secure federal  
4 funding through the child care and development block grant to  
5 support early learning cooperatives programs. The department  
6 shall collaborate with federal agencies to ensure compliance  
7 with grant requirements and maximize funding allocation. The  
8 department shall establish a dedicated team within the  
9 department to oversee the grant application process, manage  
10 awarded funds, and ensure efficient use of funding.

11 (b) The department shall integrate child care and  
12 development block grant funds with state appropriations by:

13 (1) Allocating federal funds toward establishment and  
14 operational costs for early learning cooperatives,  
15 prioritizing rural and underserved communities;

16 (2) Utilizing state appropriations to cover costs not  
17 eligible for federal funding such as specific cultural  
18 and placed-based learning initiatives; and

19 (3) Ensuring that federal funds are utilized first to  
20 offset state appropriations for long-term  
21 sustainability.



1           SECTION 6. (a) There is established an early learning  
2 cooperative advisory council to assist the department in the  
3 establishment and administration of early learning cooperatives.

4           (b) The advisory council shall include:

5           (1) Early childhood education professionals;

6           (2) Parent representatives; and

7           (3) Cultural practitioners.

8           SECTION 7. (a) The department shall submit a report of  
9 its findings and recommendations, including any proposed  
10 legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior  
11 to the convening of each regular session.

12          (b) The report shall include:

13          (1) The number of early learning cooperatives established,  
14 including enrollment rates;

15          (2) Cost reduction on the overall cost of childcare  
16 expenses;

17          (3) Workforce participation improvements;

18          (4) Federal and state funds utilized to administer the  
19 early learning cooperative program; and





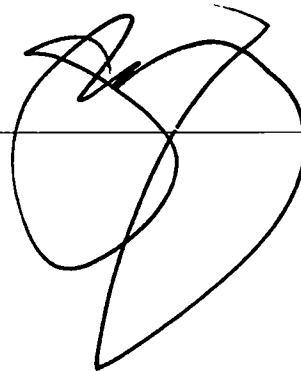
1 (5) Outcomes, including accessibility to early childhood  
2 education and educational achievement of early  
3 learning cooperative participants.

4 SECTION 8. There is appropriated out of the general  
5 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$3,850,000 or so much  
6 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the  
7 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year  
8 2026-2027 for the administration of the early learning  
9 cooperative program established pursuant to this Act; provided  
10 that the department shall secure federal funding through the  
11 child care and development block grant.

12 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department  
13 of human services for the purposes of this Act.

14 SECTION 9. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

15 INTRODUCED BY: \_\_\_\_\_

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# S.B. NO. 1125

**Report Title:**

DHS; Early Learning Cooperatives; Early Childhood Education; Cultural and Place-Based Learning; Advisory Council; Rules; Reports; Appropriations

**Description:**

Establishes an Early Learning Cooperative Program within the Department of Human Services. Establishes an Advisory Council to advise on the goals of the Early Learning Cooperative Program. Requires the Department of Human Services to secure federal funding through the Child Care and Development Block Grant for the administration of the Early Learning Cooperative Program. Requires the Department of Human Services to adopt administrative rules. Requires annual reports to the Legislature. Appropriates funds.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

