

JAN 30 2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS PROGRAM.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that it is difficult for
2 the State to attract sufficiently qualified foster parents to
3 care for young foster children. Added childcare expenses
4 further reduce the pool of suitable foster parents. The
5 legislature further finds that the State's preschool open doors
6 program provides subsidies to eligible families to help pay
7 preschool tuition, for up to two years prior to entering
8 kindergarten. Preschool and other early learning opportunities
9 help children gain essential skills, be prepared for school, and
10 chart a course for lifelong success. The legislature also finds
11 that explicitly including foster children as eligible
12 participants in the preschool open doors program may help expand
13 the pool of potential foster parents for young foster children.

14 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

15 (1) Clarify that the preschool open doors program is open
16 to all children, including children in foster care,



who meet the eligibility requirements of the program;

and

(2) Expand the pool of potential foster parents for young foster children by explicitly including authority for foster parents to enroll their foster child in the preschool program.

SECTION 2. Section 346-181, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is

amended to read as follows:

"§346-181 Preschool open doors program. (a) There is

10 established within the department's child care assistance

11 program a preschool open doors program. The program is intended
12 to support families in accessing early learning services for
13 young children. The program shall:

(1) Provide access to early learning services that address children's physical, cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional development;

(2) Require each provider to conduct early learning assessments; and

(3) Prepare children for school through either of the State's two official languages.



5 (c) A child care program chosen by a parent [or],
6 guardian, or foster parent for the purposes of this chapter
7 shall be limited to:

8 (1) A group child care center that is licensed by the
9 department under section 346-161;

10 (2) A group child care home that is licensed by the
11 department under section 346-161; or

12 (3) An exempt center-based provider that meets the
13 requirements of section 346-152.5.

14 (d) Participation in the program shall not require group
15 child care centers or group child care homes to be accredited by
16 an approved accredited body.

17 (e) Enrollment in the program shall be voluntary [–] and
18 shall be open to all children, including children in foster
19 care, who meet the age and income eligibility requirements for
20 the program. A parent [or], guardian, or foster parent of a
21 child enrolled in the program may share in the costs of the



1 program through a copayment according to a sliding fee scale
2 that is based on need pursuant to rules adopted by the
3 department.

4 (f) The department may adopt interim rules to carry out
5 the purposes of this section without regard to chapter 91 or
6 201M; provided that:

7 (1) The department shall hold at least one public hearing
8 prior to the adoption of interim rules;
9 (2) The interim rules shall comply with all applicable
10 state and federal laws; and
11 (3) The interim rules shall be effective for no more than
12 one year after their adoption.

13 (g) For purposes of this section:

14 "Foster care" has the same meaning as in section 587A-4.

15 "Foster parent" has the same meaning as in section 587A-4."

16 SECTION 3. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
17 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

18 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

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INTRODUCED BY:

Carol Fahrmeier



S.B. NO. 3299

Report Title:

Preschool Open Doors Program; Eligibility; Foster Children; Foster Parents

Description:

Clarifies that the Preschool Open Doors Program is open to all children, including children in foster care, who meet the eligibility requirements of the program.

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