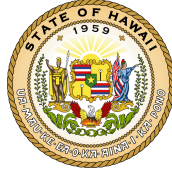


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



ROY M. TAKUMI
CHAIRPERSON

**STATE OF HAWAII
BOARD OF EDUCATION
PAPA HO'ONA'AUAO**
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Senate Committee on Education
Wednesday, March 18, 2026
1:00 p.m.
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 229

Measure: House Bill 1872 HD1, Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

Purpose of Measure:

Establishes an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program to be administered by the University of Hawaii to provide financial support for early learning program service providers in the State to participate in state- or federally-approved early learning apprenticeship programs. Requires an annual report to the Legislature. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000.

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

The Board of Education (Board) supports House Bill 1872 HD1 as a means to recruit and retain the professionals who are paramount to the high-quality learning experiences needed to fulfill the promise of early education.

The ability to expand access to early learning opportunities also relies heavily on efforts to grow and support our early educator workforce.

The Board defers to the University of Hawaii regarding implementation and funding.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify on behalf of the Board.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Education
Wednesday, March 18, 2026 at 1:00 p.m.

By

Nathan Murata, Dean
College of Education

and

Vassilis Syrmos, PhD
Interim Provost

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 1872 HD1 – RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony offering comments on HB 1872 HD1 which establishes an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program. We respectfully offer the following comments that College of Education believes that such an apprenticeship program provides the necessary financial support for early learning programs service providers in the State.

This bill offers a tangible solution to these pressing issues by:

- 1. Support and Develop Career Pathways:** The grant program will provide funding to support new early learning apprentices, with financial assistance to cover costs related to earning a credential or degree, on-the-job training while earning a wage, and wage increases when completing RA milestones. This investment will not only enhance the quality of care but also improve recruitment and retention in the early care and education field that has historically faced high turnover due to low wages and limited growth opportunities. By funding apprenticeships, the program will offer a structured pathway for career entry and advancement, that will enhance the recruitment of new individuals into the early learning profession.
- 2. Increasing the Supply of Early Learning Slots:** By incentivizing individuals to enter and advance in the field, this program has the potential to add many more slots for infants and toddlers under the age of three. These additional slots will directly benefit families who

are on waiting lists or forced to make difficult compromises in their work and other responsibilities.

3. **Strengthening Economic Stability:** For families in Hawai'i who struggle with the high cost of living, access to reliable child care is often the key to maintaining stable employment and achieving economic security. The proposed program will play a critical role in ensuring parents can participate fully in their jobs and careers, knowing their children are in safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate settings.

This legislation aligns with our shared vision of prioritizing early learning as a cornerstone of our state's future. By investing in the apprenticeship grant program, we are not only addressing immediate needs but also laying the groundwork for long-term systemic improvements in early care and education for our young children's success in school and in life.



STATE OF HAWAII

Executive Office on Early Learning

Ke'ena Ho'okele Ho'ona'auao Pae Kamali'i o Hawai'i Moku'āina
2759 South King Street, Room C6
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

TO: Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Yuuko Arikawa-Cross, Director
Executive Office on Early Learning

SUBJECT: Testimony on H.B. No. 1872, H.D. 1 – RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM.

Committee: EDU
Date: Wednesday, March 18, 2026
Time: 1:00 p.m.
Location: Conference room 229

Executive Office on Early Learning Position: **SUPPORT**

The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) offers the following comments in support of H.B. No. 1872, H.D. 1, and defers to the University of Hawai'i regarding implementation and funding.

This measure aligns with the Early Learning Board's current framework of policy priorities, which are grounded in the Hawai'i Early Childhood State Plan. Specifically, the bill advances State Plan Building Block 4: Early Childhood Workforce by expanding opportunities for early learning providers to participate in a state or federally approved Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Program.

Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Programs (ELRAPs) create structured pathways for aspiring early childhood professionals to gain hands-on experience, earn credentials, and advance their careers through apprenticeships that integrate employer-paid classroom learning with on-the-job training and comprehensive wraparound support.

This bill creates a grant program to mitigate financial barriers to participation in state-approved or federally approved ELRAPs for licensed or registered early learning program service providers, with priority given to infant and toddler programs.

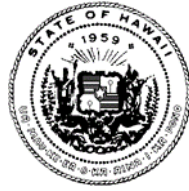
EOEL is committed to improving recruitment, retention, and career pathways for our early learning workforce and recognizes that our capacity to expand access to early learning opportunities for Hawai'i's keiki depends on our ability to grow and support our workforce. ELRAPs help build long-term capacity by:

- Addressing shortages through targeted recruitment and retention strategies;
- Offering competitive compensation and benefits that recognize and value educators;
and
- Creating clear pathways for professional growth and advancement.

EOEL would be happy to collaborate with the University of Hawai'i to develop the award criteria for this grant program, as directed in this bill.

We appreciate the Legislature's ongoing investment and shared commitment to strengthening Hawai'i's early learning system for our youngest keiki and their 'ohana. Thank you for the opportunity to share these comments in support of this bill.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



RYAN I. YAMANE
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

March 17, 2026

TO: The Honorable Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 1872 HD1– RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM.**

Hearing: March 18, 2026, 1:00 p.m.
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this measure and defers to the University of Hawaii. DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation not reduce or replace a priority identified in the executive budget.

The purpose of this measure is to establish an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program to be administered by the University of Hawaii to provide financial support for early learning program service providers in the State to participate in state- or federally-approved early learning apprenticeship programs.

The Department supports efforts to increase the supply of qualified early learning professionals and expand the State's child care capacity, as the early learning field faces growing demand for well-trained professionals and a significant workforce shortage.

Programs across the state are struggling to recruit and retain a qualified, well-compensated workforce, and that instability directly affects children and working families. Apprenticeships provide accessible training pathways that support the recruitment, retention, and professional development of early learning professionals. By integrating on

the job training with formal education and recognized credentials, apprenticeships strengthen workforce quality while reducing barriers to entry into the field. The first early learning registered apprenticeship program established in 2023 between Honolulu Community College and Keiki O Ka 'Aina Family Learning Center is evidence of a successful recruitment and retention strategy, and this measure, if passed, would expand opportunities for the early care and education workforce.

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

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



MAKALAPUA ALENCASTRE, ED. D.
CHAIRPERSON

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION
('AHA KULA HO'ĀMANA)

<http://CharterCommission.Hawaii.Gov>
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1100, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Tel: (808) 586-3775 Fax: (808) 586-3776

FOR: HB 1872 HD1 Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program
DATE: March 18, 2026
TIME: 1:00 P.M.
COMMITTEE: Committee on Education
ROOM: Conference Room 229 & Videoconference
FROM: Ed H. Noh, Ed. D., Executive Director
State Public Charter School Commission

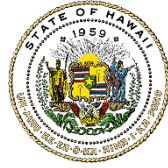
Chair Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Committee:

The State Public Charter School Commission ("Commission") appreciates the opportunity to offer testimony with **STRONG SUPPORT on HB 1872, HD1**, which establishes an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program to be administered by the University of Hawai'i to provide financial support for early learning program service providers in the State to participate in state- or federally-approved early learning apprenticeship programs.

As charter schools prepare for the expansion of pre-K classrooms across the state, creating supportive pathways to develop HTSB-approved, licensed teachers and credentialed educational assistants is critical. This nationally certified apprenticeship program provides mentoring support to improve educators' success. It also provides financial incentives which contribute to livable wages while encouraging participants to complete the program. Kamaile Academy Public Charter School is in the process of piloting this project. Kamaile Academy is located in a hard-to-staff area and is challenged with securing qualified staff. Having this apprenticeship program will support Kamaile Academy to meet the statutory staffing requirements which support the expansion of high-quality pre-K programs for children and families in their community.

This, in turn, helps create an economically stable workforce. The long-term outcomes of these efforts will support Hawai'i's ALICE households (asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed families), enabling them to fully contribute to Hawai'i's labor force.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.



STATE OF HAWAII
Early Learning Board
2759 South King Street, Room C6
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

March 17, 2026

To: Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michele Kidani, Vice-Chair
Senate Committee on Education

From: Elaine Yamashita, Chair
Early Learning Board

Re: HB1872 HD1 support

Aloha Honorable Chair Kim, Vice-Chair Kidani, and members of the Senate Education Committee:

The Early Learning Board (ELB) formulates statewide policy relating to early learning, and directs the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL).

The Early Learning Board supports HB 1872 HD1, which will expand the current early childhood registered apprenticeship program. This directly affects and supports much needed expansion of the early childhood workforce. Recruitment and retention of our important early educators is key to providing high quality care and education for our youngest keiki.

It is a specialized body of knowledge and experience based on child development and effective relationships, and apprenticeships provide both. The bill would also allow community-based providers resources to provide incentives for apprentices to continue and for the program as a whole.

We realize that these are uncertain times and ask that you consider any funding for this program as an important investment in early educators who will have positive impact on keiki and their 'ohana.

Mahalo for your consideration and support of this bill.

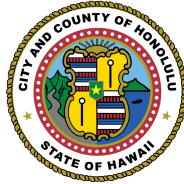
Sincerely,

Elaine Yamashita
Early Learning Board Chair
elb@eoel.hawaii.gov

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA LAWELAWE KAIĀULU
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

222 NORTH SCHOOL STREET • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96817
PHONE: (808) 768-7762 • FAX: (808) 768-7792 • WEBSITE: honolulu.gov/dcs

RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR
MEIA



ANTON C. KRUCKY
DIRECTOR
PO'O
AEDWARD LOS BANOS
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
HOPE PO'O

**TESTIMONY OF ANTON C. KRUCKY
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Wednesday, March 18, 2026, 01:00 PM
Conference RM 229 and Via Videoconference**

TO: Sen. Donna Mercado Kim, Chair, Sen. Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee on Education

RE: SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1872 HD 1

The Department of Community Services (DCS), City and County of Honolulu (City), **supports** House Bill 1872 HD 1, which would establish an early learning apprenticeship grant program to be administered by the University of Hawai'i.

Access to reliable child care is essential for Hawai'i families and the economy, particularly as the high cost of living requires most households to rely on stable workforce participation. Despite this need, our State continues to face a critical shortage of affordable, high-quality child care options.

DCS recently conducted a survey of 819 households on O'ahu, and 68% percent reported that they left a job, declined a job opportunity, or reduced their work hours due to a lack of child care. These impacts ripple beyond individual families, contributing to labor and workforce challenges and constraining economic growth across many industries.

House Bill 1872 HD 1 offers a meaningful and strategic solution by strengthening the child care workforce—the single greatest barrier to expanding child care capacity. By supporting apprenticeship opportunities, this measure creates an accessible pathway for individuals to enter the profession while equipping them with the training and experience needed to succeed. It also provides career advancement opportunities for those already in the field and it supports both recruitment and retention, helping to stabilize and grow the industry over the long-term.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support** of this measure.

Date: March 18, 2026

To: Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Education

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: House Bill 1872 HD1, Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

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 House Bill 1872 HD1 which would establish an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program to be administered by the University of Hawai'i.

ECAS recognizes that families around our state continue to struggle to find and access affordable, high-quality early learning opportunities for their young children. We further recognize that there is a distinct need to better recruit, train, and support a robust early learning workforce.

We feel strongly that this measure represents a meaningful attempt to address these issues in the following ways:

- Creating viable entry points to the early learning profession for individuals whether they are brand-new to the workforce or interested in pursuing a new career
- Establishing a proven and structured pathway for early learning professionals to enter and advance within the field
- Providing paid, on-the-job training for early learning professionals
- Increasing the number of qualified early learning professionals by incentivizing them to enter and advance within the field, thereby increasing the overall supply of early learning slots

ECAS's position is that the Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program laid out in this measure would play a critical role in addressing numerous issues currently facing local families while also having a positive impact on the local early learning workforce.

For these reasons, we strongly support House Bill 1872 HD1.

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Education
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair**

**Thursday, March 18, 2026, at 1:00PM
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference**

RE: HB1872 HD1 Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Program

Aloha e Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports House Bill 1872 HD1 (HB1872 HD1), which establishes an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program to be administered by the University of Hawai'i to provide financial support for early learning program service providers in the State to participate in state- or federally-approved early learning apprenticeship programs.

HB1872 HD1 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Economic Action by addressing a critical workforce bottleneck that affects both families and employers statewide. The early learning sector is experiencing significant shortages of qualified professionals, in part due to high labor costs and limited access to structured pathways for recruitment and retention.

The Chamber believes that quality early learning is foundational to Hawaii's economy. Investment in early learning workforce capacity through HB1872 HD1 represents an opportunity to catalyze diverse economic benefit by nurturing the Hawaii's future workforce, lowering labor cost barriers for early learning providers, enabling parents to more fully participate in the labor force, and improving labor stability for the companies that employ parents of young children. All these benefits contribute towards a more resilient economy, a more productive workforce, improved business sustainability, and overall quality of life improvement.

We respectfully ask to pass House Bill 1872 HD1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.

To: Senate Committee on Education
Re: HB 1872 HD1 – Relating to an Early Childhood Apprenticeship Grant Program
Hawai'i State Capitol Room 229 & Via Videoconference March 18, 2026, 1:00 PM

Dear Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Respected Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **STRONG SUPPORT of HB 1872 HD1**. This bill will establish an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program to be administered by the University of Hawai'i.

To ensure families have access to high quality early childhood care and education from birth to kindergarten, we must fairly compensate our early care and education workforce and provide them with opportunities for professional advancement. Early learning registered apprenticeship programs are a proven recruitment and retention strategy, offering apprentices higher compensation and valuable on-the-job learning experiences as they work towards earning a higher education degree. ELRAPs have also been successful at increasing the quality of early learning programs as they develop a well-prepared, well-supported, and well-compensated ECE workforce.

However, many early learning providers are unable to participate in ELRAPs because they cannot afford to pay the higher wages of apprentices and ensure wage parity for existing staff. The ELRAP grant would remove this financial barrier by providing funding for eligible providers to participate in state- or federally-approved ELRAPs. The grant would also allow providers to pay their existing staff higher wages, ensuring that wages are comparable to federal wage requirements or prevailing industry standards.

This bill would give priority to licensed and/or regulated child care providers serving infants and toddlers (I/T) due to the greater challenges families face in accessing high-quality, affordable I/T care. I/T care and education has the highest unmet need among all early learning services in Hawai'i. Starting with our I/T child care providers will help families access quality care from the time children need it most.

In short, ELRAPs are a proven recruitment and retention strategy for the early care and education workforce. This grant would enable more providers to participate, benefiting Hawai'i's children, families, and early education professionals. Additionally, it would support businesses by helping employees with young children, particularly mothers, stay in the workforce, addressing the common challenge of inaccessible and unaffordable child care.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Please **PASS HB 1872 HD1**.

March 18, 2026

To: Senator Donna Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Education

Hawai'i State Capitol
415 South Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

Subject: Measure H.B. No.1872 HD 1 – Relating to the Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H. B. No. 1872 HD1

Aloha,

My name is Dr. Terry Lock. I am the Director of the Hawai'i Early Childhood Educator Excellence and Equity (ECE³) Project at the University of Hawai'i Mānoa College of Education. Since 2022, the ECE³ Project has been gathering, reviewing and disseminating research on apprenticeship programs in the early learning industry.

Families across our state are struggling to find affordable, high-quality early learning programs that support their young children's development while families maintain their own economic stability. At the same time, there is a desperate need to support the recruitment, retention, and stabilization of our specially trained early learning workforce.

HB 1872 HD1 offers a tangible solution to these pressing issues by establishing an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program to be administered by the University of Hawai'i to provide financial support for early learning program service providers in the State who participate in state- or federally-approved early learning registered apprenticeship programs or ELRAPs.

1. **Creating Career Pathways for Early Learning Apprentices:** Growing studies show that state- or federally-approved early learning registered apprenticeship programs or ELRAPs are associated with increases in employment, skills, and earnings for apprentices and with greater retention and recruitment of skilled staff for employers and the broader economy. The grant program will provide funding to support new early learning apprentices, with financial assistance to cover costs related to earning a credential or degree, on-the-job training while earning a wage, and wage increases when completing ELRAP milestones.
2. **Increasing the Supply of Early Learning Slots:** By incentivizing individuals to enter and advance in the field, this program has the potential to increase slots for infants and toddlers, and increase slots for three- and four-year-olds, in early learning program services

providers, who are Department of Human Services (DHS) licensed group child centers/ homes and registered family child care homes. The additional slots will directly benefit families with young children, who are on child care center/homes' waiting lists or forced to make difficult compromises in their work and other responsibilities.

3. **Support Early Learning Program Services Providers and the Early Learning Industry:** The grant program will not only help early learning program service providers recruit new early learning apprentices, but also retain existing early learning professionals by addressing their low wages with wage supplements. This investment will support the early learning industry.
4. **Strengthening Economic Stability:** For families in Hawai'i who struggle with the high cost of living, access to reliable child care is often the key to maintaining stable employment and achieving economic security. The proposed grant program will play a critical role in ensuring parents can participate fully in their jobs and careers, knowing their children are in safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate settings.

For example, in the summer of 2023, Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers' (KOKA) gained approval as our state's first ELRAP. Recently, I spoke to one of KOKA's apprentices, who is employed at KOKA's Ka Pua Preschool, located in Mā'ili, 'Oahu. This apprentice, a mother of four children, shared, "To be in a job, while going to school, has made a huge difference. This apprenticeship program fits the type of learner that I am. I love that I get to apply what I learn from my mentor and my college instructors, while interacting with preschool children." She also credits her "very encouraging" early childhood education instructors at Honolulu Community College (HonCC). At the end of this Spring 2026 semester, she will complete her second milestone, a certificate of achievement in early childhood education from HonCC.

HB1872 HD1 will help to grow our ECE workforce and aligns with the shared vision of prioritizing early learning as a cornerstone of our state's future. By investing in this early learning apprenticeship grant program, we are addressing immediate workforce development needs and laying the groundwork for long-term systemic improvements in early learning for our young children's success in school and in life.

Mahalo for your support of H. B. No.1872 HD1.



Date: March 18, 2026

To: Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Education

From: Commit to Keiki

Re: House Bill 1872 HD1, Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

Commit to Keiki is a statewide, non-partisan, public-private collaborative to ensure a brighter start for Hawai'i's youngest keiki. Led by a diverse Steering Committee, Commit to Keiki's mission is to increase Hawai'i's investments in its youngest keiki by collaborating with elected officials and serving as a trusted partner and reliable resource for information on issues related to early childhood.

Commit to Keiki strongly supports House Bill 1872 HD1 which would establish an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program to be administered by the University of Hawai'i.

We recognize that families around our state continue to struggle to find and access affordable, high-quality early learning opportunities for their young children. We further recognize that there is a distinct need to better recruit, train, and support a robust early learning workforce.

We feel strongly that this measure represents a meaningful attempt to address these issues in the following ways:

- Creating viable entry points to the early learning profession for individuals whether they are brand-new to the workforce or interested in pursuing a new career
- Establishing a proven and structured pathway for early learning professionals to enter and advance within the field
- Providing paid, on-the-job training for early learning professionals
- Increasing the number of qualified early learning professionals by incentivizing them to enter and advance within the field, thereby increasing the overall supply of early learning slots

Our position is that the proposed Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program laid out in this measure would play a critical role in addressing numerous issues currently facing local families and the early learning sector while also positively impacting the local early learning workforce.

For these reasons, we strongly support House Bill 1872 HD1.

Our Mission

Increase Hawai'i's investments in its youngest keiki by collaborating with elected officials and serving as a trusted partner and reliable resource for information on issues related to Hawai'i's youngest keiki and families.



Contact Info

700 Bishop Street, Suite 1701
Honolulu, Hawai'i 93813
info@committokeiki.org
committokeiki.org



TESTIMONY ON HB 1872 HD1 – IN SUPPORT RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM

TO: Chair Kim, Vice-Chair Kidani, & Members,
Senate Committee on Education
FROM: Trisha Kajimura, PACT Vice-President of Strategy and External Affairs
DATE: March 18, 2026, 1:00 PM

Parents and Children Together (PACT) supports HB 1872 HD1, which would establish an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program to be administered by the University of Hawaii.

Founded by residents of Kuhio Park Terrace in 1968, PACT is a statewide community-based organization providing a wide array of innovative and educational social services to families in need. Assisting more than 18,000 people across the state annually, we help identify, address, and successfully resolve challenges through our 20 programs. Among our services are early education programs, domestic violence prevention and intervention programs, child abuse prevention and intervention programs, childhood sexual abuse supportive group services, child and adolescent behavioral health programs, sex trafficking intervention, poverty prevention and community building programs.

PACT is an active member of the early learning community in Hawaii, operating Early Head Start and Head Start programs on Oahu and Hawaii Island. PACT also founded Parkway Village Preschool, the state's first Pre-K-Only public charter school in Kapolei. The workforce shortage in early learning is an everyday challenge for PACT. There is a pressing need to better recruit, train, and support a robust early learning workforce. This measure will:

- Create viable entry points to the early learning profession for individuals whether they are brand-new to the workforce or interested in pursuing a new career
- Establish a proven and structured pathway for early learning professionals to enter and advance within the field
- Provide paid, on-the-job training for early learning professionals
- Increase the number of qualified early learning professionals by incentivizing them to enter and advance within the field, thereby increasing the overall supply of early learning slots

The proposed Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program laid out in this measure would play a critical role in addressing numerous issues currently facing local families and the early learning sector.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact me at (808) 847-3285 or tkajimura@pacthawaii.org if you have any questions.



Hearing Date: Wednesday, March 18, 2026 1:00 PM , Rm. 229

To: Senate Committee on Education
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

**Re: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1872, HD1 Relating to Early Learning
APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM**

Dear Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and the Members of the Committee,

Members of AAUW of Hawaii thank you for this opportunity to testify in **strong support of HB 1872, HD1** which establishes an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program to be administered by the University of Hawaii to provide financial support for early learning program service providers in the State to participate in state- or federally-approved early learning apprenticeship programs.

Hawaii has a shortage of qualified child care employees to fill these many vacant, but critical positions. Early childhood care and educational professionals are undervalued in Hawaii, averaging just \$13 to \$17 per hour wage. It is no surprise that the number of professionals in this sector has been decreasing, although they are in high demand.

Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Programs (ELRAP) are a proven recruitment and retention strategy, offering apprentices higher compensation and valuable on-the-job learning experiences as they work towards earning a higher education degree. AAUW of Hawaii supports this measure that will aid Hawaii in retaining and recruiting qualified child care workers, including women who want to work in the field, but cannot, or will not, due to the current low wage. An important feature in this bill will provide funding to eligible providers participate in state- or federally-approved ELRAPs to adequately compensate these workers in training as well as allow providers to pay their existing staff higher wages, ensuring that wages are comparable to federal wage requirements or prevailing industry standards.

Please pass this important measure and mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jean Evans".

Jean Evans
Public Policy Committee, AAUW of Hawaii
publicpolicy-hi@aauw.net

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, Kaua'i, Kona, Maui, and Windward Oahu. AAUW's mission is to advance gender equity through research, education, and advocacy. Our goal is economic security for women and their families.

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Education
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair**

**Wednesday, March 18, 2026, at 1:00 PM
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference**

RE: HB1872 HD1 Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

Aloha e Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Monty Pereira, GM and Head of Sales and Marketing at Watanabe Floral, Inc. I am providing testimony in my personal capacity. My comments reflect my own views and are informed by the priorities outlined in the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii.

I am writing in **SUPPORT of House Bill 1872 House Draft 1 (HB1872 HD1)**, which establishes an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program through the University of Hawaii to provide financial support for early learning providers participating in state- or federally approved apprenticeship programs.

Watanabe Floral, like most companies in Hawai‘i face ongoing workforce and economic challenges. As the February 2026 UHERO report notes, limited local job opportunities and stagnant economic growth continue to contribute to outmigration and a shrinking workforce.¹ At the same time, shortages in infant and toddler care create barriers for working families and employers, increasing absenteeism, reducing productivity, and driving higher turnover across critical sectors such as health care, tourism, construction, and defense.

Childcare is not just a family issue; it is a core component of Hawaii’s economic infrastructure. Reliable childcare supports today’s workforce, develops tomorrow’s workforce, and enables businesses across industries to operate effectively. A report from the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii Foundation and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation highlights the scale of the challenge: insufficient childcare costs the state \$1.18 billion annually in lost economic activity, including \$787 million from absenteeism and turnover, \$396 million in lost tax revenue, and widespread workforce disruptions.² More than half of families report leaving, turning down, or significantly changing jobs due to childcare challenges.

This dual impact, supporting early learning providers while enabling parents to participate fully in the workforce, reinforces childcare as essential economic infrastructure. HB1872 HD1 aligns with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii’s Economic Action policy pillar³, which emphasizes workforce development, employer-led talent pipelines, and targeted investments that strengthen a resilient and competitive labor force.

¹ University of Hawai‘i Economic Research Organization (UHERO), *Beyond the Price of Paradise: Economic Challenges and Opportunities for Hawai‘i*, February 2026. University of Hawai‘i at Manoa. Available at: <https://uhero.hawaii.edu>

² Chamber of Commerce Hawai‘i Foundation and U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, *Untapped Potential: Economic Impact of Childcare Breakdowns in Hawai‘i* (2025), <https://www.cochawaii.org/childcare-in-hawaii/>.

³ Chamber of Commerce Hawaii, 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii Economic Action policy committee (2026), <https://www.cochawaii.org/2030-blueprint/economic-action>

HB1872 HD1 helps address these challenges by supporting qualified early learning providers as Hawai'i expands early learning opportunities statewide, including in rural and underserved communities. By strengthening the early learning workforce and supporting provider participation in apprenticeship pathways, the program helps build a locally trained pipeline of early childhood educators while ensuring providers have the resources needed to recruit, train, and retain talent.

HB1872 HD1 provides targeted financial support to offset wages, training, and mentorship costs for qualified early learning providers participating in apprenticeship programs. These resources help providers meet compensation standards, strengthen workforce development in the early childhood sector, and expand access to quality childcare statewide. With built-in fiscal accountability through annual reporting on grant usage, apprentices hired, wages paid, and other measurable outcomes, the program ensures a clear return on investment for state funds.

By stabilizing and expanding the early learning workforce, increasing licensed childcare capacity, and creating a pipeline of locally trained professionals who remain in Hawai'i, HB1872 HD1 supports families, strengthens early learning providers, and enhances overall economic productivity.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask **PASS House Bill 1872 House Draft 1**. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Education
March 18, 2026
RE: HB1872, HD1 Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Program**

Position: Support

Aloha Chair Senator Donna Mercado Kim and Members of the Committee,

The YMCA of Honolulu **strongly supports** HB1872, HD1, which establishes an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program to support early learning providers participating in state- or federally-approved apprenticeship programs.

The YMCA of Honolulu is one of the largest nonprofit providers of early learning and youth development programs in Hawai'i, serving working families across O'ahu, including infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children. Like many early learning providers, we face ongoing challenges recruiting, training, and retaining qualified early learning professionals as workforce shortages and labor costs continue to rise. HB1872, HD1 offers a practical, workforce-centered solution. The YMCA would take advantage of this apprenticeship program to strengthen our early learning workforce, upskill current staff, and create clear career pathways for individuals entering the field. Apprenticeship models that combine on-the-job training with classroom instruction allow providers to maintain high-quality learning environments while building a sustainable pipeline of qualified educators.

The grant funding proposed in this bill would help offset the wage, training, mentorship, and administrative costs associated with participating in apprenticeship programs—costs that often prevent nonprofit providers from participating despite strong interest. We also appreciate the bill's priority for providers serving infants and toddlers, where workforce shortages are most acute and stable, high-quality care is essential.

The YMCA of Honolulu respectfully urges your support of HB1872, HD1 as a critical investment in Hawai'i's early learning workforce, keiki, and working families. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

Kerri Bosworth Van Duyne
Vice President of Development

March 18, 2026

Senate Committee on Education
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

Wednesday, March 18, 2026, 1:00 p.m.
Conference Room #229 or via video conference



RE: HB 1872 HD1 Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

Dear Chair Mercado, Vice Chair Kidani and members of the Committee,

My name is Kiran Polk, and I am the Executive Director & CEO of the Kapolei Chamber of Commerce. The Kapolei Chamber of Commerce is an advocate for businesses in the Kapolei region including Waipahu, Kapolei, 'Ewa Beach, Nānakūli, Wai'anae, and Mākaha. We work on behalf of our members and the broader business community to improve the regional and State economic climate and to help West O'ahu businesses thrive.

The Kapolei Chamber **strongly supports HB 1872 HD1**, which establishes an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program to be administered by the University of Hawai'i. This measure provides critical financial support to early learning service providers participating in state or federally approved apprenticeship programs.

Hawai'i continues to face a dual challenge: families struggling to access affordable, high-quality early learning options, and providers facing severe workforce shortages driven by low wages, high costs, and limited career pathways. HB 1872 HD1 directly addresses both issues by supporting the early learning workforce while expanding access to care. By helping providers meet federally required wage standards and offset training, mentorship, and administrative costs, this program strengthens recruitment and retention for more than 500 early learning professionals statewide. Increased participation in apprenticeship programs also has the potential to expand childcare capacity, including new slots for infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children—relieving waitlists and improving access for working families.

This investment is especially critical for **West O'ahu**, the fastest-growing region in the state. With continued population and housing growth in Kapolei and 'Ewa, demand for early learning facilities and a qualified workforce will only intensify. Supporting apprenticeship-based career pathways ensures we are preparing a skilled, stable workforce to meet that demand.

The Kapolei Chamber is deeply committed to **workforce development and work-based learning, partnering with education institutions and employers across West O'ahu to strengthen pipelines from education into employment**. HB 1872 HD1 aligns directly with these efforts by creating sustainable, accessible career pathways in early learning—an essential sector for families, employers, and our broader economy.

We respectfully urge your support for **HB 1872 HD1** to strengthen the early learning workforce, expand childcare access, and promote economic stability for Hawai'i's families and businesses.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Best,

Kiran Polk
Executive Director & CEO



TO: Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair
Committee on Education

FROM: Deanna D'Olier, Executive Director
Hawaii Association of Independent Schools

RE: **HB 1872 HD1 – Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program – In Support**

DATE: Wednesday, March 18, 2026; 1:00 p.m.
Conference room 229 & Videoconference

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Hawai'i Association of Independent Schools (HAIS), I write in strong support of HB 1872 HD1, which establishes an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program to be administered by the University of Hawai'i to provide financial support for early learning program service providers participating in state- or federally-approved early learning apprenticeship programs.

HAIS supports policies that strengthen Hawai'i's early learning workforce and expand access to high-quality early learning opportunities for families across the state. HB 1872 HD1 is responsive to the Legislature's findings that early learning experiences support children's development, help working families sustain employment, and contribute to Hawai'i's broader economic vitality.

HB 1872 HD1 recognizes the value of registered apprenticeship programs as a proven workforce pathway while addressing a primary barrier for early learning providers: the high labor costs required to meet compensation standards, which can often disincentivize participation. By establishing a grant program to offset these participation costs, the bill bolsters recruitment, retention, and professional development within the early learning sector.

H AIS specifically appreciates the thoughtful design of this program, which bridges the gap between workforce development and operational feasibility for early learning providers. By tying eligibility to licensed or registered child care providers engaged in approved apprenticeship programs, the bill ensures that grants directly support high-quality workforce pathways.

For early learning programs that are working to recruit and retain qualified staff, apprenticeships can be a powerful “earn-and-learn” pathway, but only if the economics make participation feasible. HB 1872 HD1 directly addresses that feasibility gap and helps build a stable, well-prepared early learning workforce for Hawai’i.

H AIS respectfully urges the Committee to PASS HB 1872 HD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.



March 17, 2026

Position: **SUPPORT** of **HB1872 HD1**, Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

To: Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Education

From: Llasmin Chaine, LSW, Executive Director, Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women

Re: Testimony in **SUPPORT** of **HB1872 HD1**, Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

Hearing: Wednesday, March 18, 2026, 1:00 p.m.
Conference Room 229, State Capitol

Thank you for hearing this important bill. The Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women **strongly supports HB1872 HD1** and the establishment of an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program. **Access to high-quality early learning opportunities is a foundational issue for women, as it directly addresses the need for a robust, well-trained early learning workforce, a sector predominantly staffed by women and critical to both child development and the broader economy.** By supporting early learning service providers through financial assistance and professional development, this bill addresses ongoing needs and persistent barriers faced by women, including those in the early childhood education workforce, who often shoulder disproportionate caregiving responsibilities.

The proposed grant program aligns with the Commission's commitment to gender equity, economic opportunity, and the advancement of women in the workplace. Research and best practices indicate that **apprenticeship models are effective in building skills, improving retention, and increasing the quality of care provided to young children.** By facilitating access to apprenticeship programs, this measure can help elevate standards, improve compensation, nurture children, and create viable career pathways for women, particularly those from marginalized communities.

Additionally, the requirement for annual reporting to the Legislature promotes transparency and data-driven decision making. This is essential for ensuring that the program effectively addresses workforce shortages, supports equitable access, and increases the quality of care provided.

The Commission respectfully encourages the Legislature to ensure that the program is inclusive of diverse providers and participants, including those in rural and underserved areas. Thank you for considering this **important step toward strengthening Hawaii's early learning workforce and supporting the economic security of women and families.**

We respectfully urge this Committee to **pass HB1872 HD1**. Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.



Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce

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Testimony to the Senate Committee on Education

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair

Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

Wednesday, March 18, 2026 at 1:00 PM

RE: HB1872 HD1 Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program - SUPPORT

Aloha e Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce, representing more than 350 businesses and individual members primarily on the east side of Hawai'i Island, writes in **support of House Bill 1872 House Draft 1** (HB1872 HD1), which establishes an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program through the University of Hawai'i.

Hawai'i continues to face workforce shortages and slow economic growth, while limited childcare, especially for infants and toddlers, creates barriers for working families and employers. These challenges contribute to absenteeism, reduced productivity, and workforce turnover across key industries.

Childcare is essential economic infrastructure. It enables parents to work, supports business operations, and helps build Hawai'i's future workforce. Yet inadequate childcare costs the state an estimated \$1.18 billion annually in lost economic activity and workforce disruptions.

HB1872 HD1 addresses these issues by supporting early learning providers participating in apprenticeship programs. By offsetting wages, training, and mentorship costs, the bill helps expand the early childhood workforce, strengthen local talent pipelines, and increase access to quality childcare, including in rural and underserved communities. Built-in reporting requirements also ensure accountability and measurable outcomes.

By investing in the early learning workforce, HB1872 HD1 supports families, strengthens businesses, and enhances Hawai'i's economic resilience.

For these reasons, **we respectfully urge passage of HB1872 HD1**. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

Carla Kuo
Executive Officer
Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce



holomua

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Page 1 of 2

Committee: Senate Committee on Education
Bill Number: HB 1872 HD1, Relating to An Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program
Hearing Date and Time: March 18, 2026, at 1:00pm (Room 229)
Re: Testimony of Holomua Collaborative in support

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Committee Members:

We write in support of HB 1872 HD1, Relating to An Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program. The purpose of HB 1872 HD1 is to establish an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program to provide financial support for early learning program service providers in the State to participate in state- or federally-approved early learning apprenticeship programs. This Program will help with the recruitment, retention, and upskilling of our early learning workforce so parents can fully participate in the workforce.

Multiple studies have shown that a person's most dramatic brain development occurs in the first three years of their life. Making sure that the frontline early learning workers—who are in charge of molding the minds of babies and other young children during these critical years—are paid well enough to stay in the profession benefits: (1) the workers who can now stay in the profession; (2) the children who will receive professional care during critical years; (3) businesses whose employees depend on child care; (4) parents who can stay at their jobs because of greater access to child care; and (5) society as a whole, because a new generation of children will be better prepared to learn, grow, and thrive.

Hawai'i is having an increasingly difficult time retaining and recruiting infant and toddler childcare workers. The RAND Corporation¹ has noted that as of May 2021, the typical childcare worker in Hawai'i earned just under \$13.79 on an hourly basis. When adjusting for cost of living, this is lower than the national median hourly wage for childcare workers. This is unsustainable.

Indeed, between 2018 and 2020 Hawai'i lost 20% of its childcare workforce. When childcare workers leave the profession, it becomes harder for childcare providers to stay open. This ultimately makes it harder for families to get childcare as demand increases while supply shrinks. And this disparity between supply and demand for childcare is why families struggle to pay for facilities that charge \$20,000 per year per child, because that is what they must do to stay afloat.

We know that early learning program service providers operate on miniscule financial margins with fixed costs that can't be negotiated or reduced, like rent or electricity. This means that when they need to lower expenses they must turn to wages. And in turn, early learning professionals leave the state.

¹ See "Early Childhood Educators in Hawai'i: Addressing Compensation, Working Conditions, and Professional Advancement," at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1908-1.html.



The Grant Program established by HB 1872 HD1 will allow early learning program service providers to cover costs associated with participation in state- or federally-approved early learning programs, including personnel expenses and wages, training expenses, mentorship stipends, administrative costs, wage supplements, wage or salary increases, and other compensation enhancements to attract and retain qualified employees.

The establishment of the Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program will help break this cycle of poor retention and recruitment, and put us on a path to greater affordability both for early learning workers and for those who need access to early learning. We are proud to support it.

Sincerely,

Matthew Prellberg
Policy and Communications Director

HB-1872-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 3:49:32 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM



Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melodie Vega	Testifying for Keiki O Aina Family Learning Centers	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

On behalf of the 8 employers currently participating in the only federally approved early childhood education apprenticeship program in this state- Keiki O Ka Aina stands in support of HB1872.

We will be happy to answer any questions relating to the program.

LATE



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

‘Ōlelo Hō‘ike ‘Aha Kau Kānāwai

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1872 HD1

RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING
APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM

Ke Kōmike ‘Aha Kenekoa o ka Ho‘ona‘auao

(Senate Committee on Education)

Ke Kapitala ‘o Hawai‘i

(Hawai‘i State Capitol)

March 18, 2026

1:00 PM

Room 229

Aloha e Chair Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Kidani and Members of the Senate Committee on Education:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) submits this testimony in **SUPPORT** of **HB1872 HD1**, which establishes an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program to be administered by the University of Hawai‘i. The program would provide financial assistance to licensed or registered early learning program service providers that participate in state or federally approved apprenticeship programs.

The Legislature recognizes that quality learning experiences during a child’s earliest years improve long-term, multigenerational outcomes and contribute to a strong, skilled workforce. Hawai‘i-specific data reinforces this connection. The University of Hawai‘i Economic Research Organization (UHERO) has documented that early childhood education participation is strongly correlated with improved educational attainment, workforce readiness, and long-term earnings in Hawai‘i. However, ongoing and persistent shortages in the workforce supply of early learning educators has constrained our ability to meet this important need for our keiki’s long-term well-being and success.

HB1872 HD1 would address this problem by creating a practical educational and career pathway to help fill this workforce gap. Importantly, **HB 1872 HD1** directs the University to consider wage gaps between current pay and statutorily required or prevailing industry wage rates when determining grant amounts and authorizes wage or salary increases to attract and retain qualified employees. This wage alignment component is critical. The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment reports that early childhood

educators in Hawai‘i earn wages significantly below comparable occupations requiring similar levels of education, contributing to chronic turnover and workforce instability.¹ By supporting wage parity and structured advancement, the program addresses a documented barrier to workforce participation and career sustainability.

Finally, programs that create paid, structured career pathways, such as registered apprenticeships, have demonstrated improved wage outcomes and employment retention for participants, particularly among historically underserved populations.² In other words, increasing early education workforce participation through the proposed apprenticeship program will have long-term benefits for industry participants themselves, as well as for our keiki, and expand career pathways for non-traditional students.

For these reasons, OHA respectfully urges the committee to **PASS HB 1872 HD1**. Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of this important investment in Hawai‘i’s keiki and workforce.

¹ Marcy Whitebook, Caitlin McLean, and Lea J.E. Austin, *Early Childhood Workforce Index 2020* (Berkeley: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley, 2020), Hawai‘i profile.

² U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship, *Registered Apprenticeship National Results Fiscal Year 2022* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, 2023).

HB-1872-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 3:58:18 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chelsea Ching	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this measure establishing an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program through the University of Hawai'i. This program will help address workforce shortages by providing financial support for early learning providers to participate in apprenticeship programs that combine hands-on training with education.

By reducing financial barriers, this bill will expand access to professional development, strengthen the early childhood workforce, and improve the quality of care for young children across Hawai'i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

Sincerely,
Chelsea Ching

HB-1872-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 4:42:05 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nicole Schlaack	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and COmmittee Members,

I strongly support HB1872 HD1. Investing in early childhood apprenticeship programs will strengthen Hawai‘i’s early childhood education workforce, support working families, and help ensure that young children have access to stable, high-quality care and learning environments.

Across our state, early childhood programs struggle to recruit and retain qualified educators. Despite the critical role they play in children’s development and family stability, many early educators remain underpaid and face significant barriers to entering or advancing in the field. For many individuals—particularly those already working, supporting families, or living in rural communities—pursuing traditional credentials through community college or university programs is not always a realistic or accessible pathway.

Apprenticeship models provide a practical and effective solution. By combining paid, on-the-job training with structured learning and mentorship, apprenticeships allow individuals to build skills while earning an income. This approach opens doors for new educators, supports career advancement for current practitioners, and recognizes the expertise developed through hands-on experience.

Apprenticeship programs have proven successful internationally in developing strong, skilled workforces. Hawai‘i already utilizes this model in many other sectors—often in higher-paying industries. Extending this opportunity to the early childhood field acknowledges the value and complexity of the work early educators do every day.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my testimony in support for HB1872 HD1,

Kind regards,

Nicole Schlaack

HB-1872-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 4:56:43 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leah K	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I strongly support HB 1872 HD1. Investing in early childhood apprenticeship programs strengthens Hawai'i's workforce, supports working families, and helps ensure our keiki have access to high-quality early learning.

Mahalo!

HB-1872-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 5:06:36 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kiyomi Umezawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senator Kim

My name is Kiyomi Umezawa, and I am emailing you to request that you hear HB1872HD1 in the Senate Education Committee.

The bill recently crossed over from the House and would establish an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program.

This would have a significant impact on the local early learning landscape for our Keiki, families and educators.

I strongly support this measure because I myself needed to quit my job as a preschool lead teacher due to the salary.

I am raising two children by myself and I could not make enough to do so.

Despite my dedication and passion for the field, I left the classroom.

This bill holds the possibility to change the undesirable trend of our field, and that is quite important for our keiki, which means for our future.

In closing, I would like to express my mahalo for all your hard work.

I really appreciate it.

Mahalo.

Kiyomi Umezawa

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair

Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Wednesday, March 18, 2026 at 1:00 pm

Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1872, HD1 - RELATING TO AN EARLY LEARNING APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM.

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, Senator Hashimoto for my district, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Christine Andrews and I am a long-term resident of Wailuku, Maui. I write to you today in **strong support of HB 1872, HD1**, relating to an early learning apprenticeship grant program. HB 1872, HD1 establishes an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program to be administered by the University of Hawaii to provide financial support for early learning program service providers in the State to participate in state- or federally-approved early learning apprenticeship programs.

HB 1872, HD1 would:

- Help pay for training and education to become or stay an early childhood teacher
- Create career pathways so teachers can grow and stay in the field
- Helps programs hire and keep more qualified teachers
- Increase the number of child care and preschool spots for local families
- Improve quality of early learning for keiki
- Strengthen the local workforce

Based on the foregoing benefits, I request that you **vote in support of HB 1872, HD1**.

Mahalo for all you do in support of Hawai'i students and families,

Christine L. Andrews, J.D.

Wailuku, Maui

HB-1872-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 7:49:05 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnette Maielua, Ph.D.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee,

As a family educator for 35 years with the DOE, I am in support of HB1872 HD1. Quality educators are needed in the Early Learning field. This opportunity **will support the efforts of those apprentice educators** who

- 1) recognize the importance of early learning opportunities for our keiki, and
- 2) have the desire to learn specific skillsets that will enable them to do so.

Please support this bill with appropriations necessary for the program's success.

Mahalo,

Johnette Maielua, Ph.D.

Parent/Family Education

HB-1872-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 10:48:15 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carol Linde	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I strongly support HB1872 HD1. Investing in early childhood apprenticeship programs strengthens Hawai'i's workforce, supports working families, and helps ensure our keiki have access to high-quality early learning.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Carol Linde

HB-1872-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 6:37:58 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noelle Lindenmann	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I write today in strong support of HB1872 HD1. Investing in early childhood apprenticeship programs strengthens Hawai'i's workforce, supports working families, and helps ensure our keiki have access to high-quality early learning.

Mahalo for this opportunity to provide testimony,

Noelle Lindenmann, Kailua-Kona

HB-1872-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 7:12:05 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessie L Gonsalves	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I strongly support HB1872 HD1. Investing in early childhood apprenticeship programs strengthens Hawai'i's workforce, supports working families, and helps ensure our keiki have access to high-quality early learning.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Jessie L. Gonsalves

HB-1872-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 7:09:22 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mariely Estoque	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I strongly support HB1872 HD1. Investing in early childhood apprenticeship programs strengthens Hawai'i's workforce, supports working families, and helps ensure our keiki have access to high-quality early learning.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Mariely

HB-1872-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 8:16:39 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Manca Sustarsic	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for bill **HB1872 HD1**. Investing in **Early Childhood Apprenticeship Programs** strengthens Hawai‘i’s workforce, supports working families, and helps ensure our keiki have access to high-quality early learning opportunities.

Hawai‘i faces critical shortages of early learning professionals. **Recruitment and retention** of these professionals is difficult because of low wages. Apprenticeships offer higher pay and on-the-job training while improving the quality of early learning programs.

A state grant program would remove financial barriers for early learning center employers to participate in this valuable program, raising wages for existing staff, and ensuring that Hawai‘i’s keiki, families, and businesses benefit from a **stronger and sustainable workforce**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Manca Sustarsic

HB-1872-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 8:31:31 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Liza Ryan Gill	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In strong support of this bill. We need to increase the pipeline of qualified teachers and early education staff.

HB-1872-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 8:34:31 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christian Marquez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I strongly support HB1872 HD1. Investing in early childhood apprenticeship programs strengthens Hawai'i's workforce, supports working families, and helps ensure our keiki have access to high-quality early learning.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Christian Marquez

HB-1872-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 8:50:23 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mecca Monson-Gere	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

The field is already struggling with low pay and shortages. Support of educators allows them to invest in themselves, their studies, and ultimately make the community a healthier one. Please support the Early Childhood Community.

Mahalo,
Mecca

Elaine Yamashita
105 Kamehameiki Rd.
Kula, HI 96790-8451
808-281-1216
elainey208@gmail.com

March 17, 2026

To: Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michele Kidani, Vice-Chair
Senate Committee on Education

From: Elaine Yamashita

Re: HB1872 HD1 support

Aloha Honorable Chair Kim, Vice-Chair Kidani, and members of the Senate Education Committee:

While I serve as chair of the Early Learning Board, this is my personal testimony. I've been an advocate for early childhood care and education since the 1980s. I am professor emerita of University of Hawai'i Maui College, where I was the program coordinator for Early Childhood Education from 2000-2019.

I support HB1872, which would expand the current early childhood apprenticeship program. This is a way to grow our important early childhood care and education workforce in a way that supports the specialized knowledge and relationship building that effective early educators utilize to optimize children's growth and development.

Equitable compensation to retain early educators is crucial to retain current and recruit new people into this profession, and apprenticeships support this.

Mahalo for your consideration and support of this bill.

Sincerely,

Elaine Yamashita
elainey208@gmail.com

HB-1872-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 9:17:28 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cassia Simms-Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a person who has worked in the field of Early Childhood, I strongly support this bill and believe it is essential to the sustainability of providing high quality care and support for our youngest citizens and their ohana.

HB-1872-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 9:38:37 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Raya Tan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and committee members,

I am testifying in support of HB 1872 HD1, which would incentivize early learning employers in Hawai‘i to participate in Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Programs (ELRAPs).

To ensure families have access to high-quality early childhood care and education from birth to kindergarten, we must fairly compensate our early care and education workforce and provide them with opportunities for professional advancement. Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Programs are a proven recruitment and retention strategy, offering apprentices higher compensation and valuable on-the-job learning experiences as they work toward earning a higher education degree. ELRAPs have also been successful at increasing the quality of early learning programs as they develop a well-prepared, well-supported, and well-compensated ECE workforce.

I was a preschool teacher for three years, and though I loved my job, I often struggled to make ends meet. I had to take on multiple jobs to supplement my income and earn a livable wage; oftentimes, the toll of working numerous jobs left me exhausted and unable to provide the quality care my kids deserved. At the time, I was living under my parents’ roof, and so I did not have to pay for rent. But if I had to account for housing expenses, there would have been no possibility for me to fulfill my vocation as an early childhood educator. An early learning apprenticeship program would have been perfect for me—allowing me to earn higher wages while gaining valuable education credits and on-the-job learning without needing to leave the classroom.

However, many early learning providers are unable to participate in ELRAPs because they cannot afford to pay the higher wages of apprentices and ensure wage parity for existing staff. The ELRAP grant would remove this financial barrier by providing funding for eligible providers to participate in state- or federally-approved ELRAPs. The grant would also allow providers to pay their existing staff higher wages, ensuring that wages are comparable to federal wage requirements or prevailing industry standards.

Furthermore, this bill would give priority to licensed and/or registered child care providers serving infants and toddlers (I/T) due to the greater challenges families face in accessing high-quality, affordable I/T care. I/T care and education has the highest unmet need among all early learning services in Hawai‘i. Starting with our I/T child care providers will help families access

quality care from the time babies need it most. Additionally, many community-based programs are at risk of shutting down due to a lack of public investment, causing critical staff shortages. This has huge consequences for families seeking I/T care since the majority of programs that serve I/T are in the community-based sector. Since this bill would support community-based programs' participation in ELRAPs, it has the potential to strengthen our mixed delivery system and maintain or create more I/T slots.

Innovative recruitment and retention strategies such as apprenticeship programs are especially important because early learning programs depend on staff to maintain their operations. If more and more early childhood education professionals leave the field because of low wages, we will have no one to care for our keiki, and early learning programs may be forced to shut down. This will have devastating outcomes for children, who deserve safe, stable, and nurturing environments, particularly in the formative years of their lives.

In short, ELRAPs are a proven recruitment and retention strategy for the early care and education workforce. This grant would enable more providers to participate, benefiting Hawai'i's children, families, and early education professionals. Additionally, it would support businesses by helping employees with young children—particularly mothers—stay in the workforce, addressing the common challenge of inaccessible and unaffordable child care.

Please support this measure.

Mahalo,
Raya Tan

HB-1872-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 10:06:41 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Toni Fujimoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I strongly support HB1872 HD1. Investing in early childhood apprenticeship programs strengthens Hawai‘i’s workforce, supports working families, and helps ensure our keiki have access to high-quality early learning experiences during the most critical years of development.

Early childhood educators play an essential role in supporting children’s social, emotional, cognitive, and language development. Yet across Hawai‘i, early learning programs continue to face significant workforce shortages. Apprenticeship programs are a powerful and practical solution because they directly build the early childhood workforce. By allowing individuals to earn while they learn, apprenticeships make it possible for more people to enter the profession, gain hands-on experience in early learning settings, and receive mentorship from experienced educators.

Investing in apprenticeship programs is an investment in people, in families, and in the future of our state. These programs will build the workforce Hawai‘i urgently needs and help ensure that our youngest children are supported by well-prepared, dedicated educators.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify and for your continued commitment to Hawai‘i’s children, families, and early childhood workforce.

**Mahalo,
Mrs. Toni Fujimoto**

HB-1872-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 10:50:40 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ashley de Coligny	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB1871 HD1. Investing in early childhood apprenticeship programs strengthens Hawaii's workforce, supports working families, and helps ensure our keiki have access to high-quality learning. As a working mother in Hawaii, I know how absolutely critical our early childhood teachers and caregivers are. They benefit ALL of us and deserve more resources. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

TO: Senator Donna Morcado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Robert G. Peters, EdD
Past Chair, Early Learning Board

SUBJECT: HB No. 1872, HD1– Relating to An Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

DATE: Wednesday March 18, 2026
TIME: 1:00 pm
PLACE: Via Videoconference
Conference Room 229

POSITION: Support

Aloha Chairs and Members of the Senate Committee on Education:

My name is Robert G. Peters, Past Chair of the Early Learning Board (ELB) and retired Head of Hanahau`oli School.

Mahalo for the opportunity to supply testimony in support of HB No. 1872, HD1 which is designed to incentivize early learning providers to participate in apprenticeship programs (Early Learning Registered Apprenticeship Programs, or ERLAPS). It seeks to help address critical recruitment and retention challenges in the early learning field and target one of the most critical needs for Infant & Toddler workforce development.

Recent efforts in Hawaii and nationally support the effectiveness of ERLAP programs, offering higher compensation, on-the-job training and improved quality experiences for children and families. The results also indicate this is an effective strategy to both attract and retain qualified staff. This bill would help to address the barrier that many current providers encounter who wish to participate but are unable to afford to pay higher wages required by apprenticeships while guaranteeing wage parity for current staff members.

Ultimately, the primary beneficiaries of the provisions of HB No. 1872 will be Hawai`i's keiki and their families, particularly those seeking infant and toddler settings for their very young children. Apprenticeship programs of this type will help to support affordable child care services while also assisting providers in keeping their programs open and available. The additional training and education directly in the early care setting will also equip staff to deliver quality services for enrolled children.

And not to be overlooked is that such apprenticeship programs, by expanding and enhancing staff growth and development for infants and toddlers, can contribute to general workforce employment needs by offering affordable child care. In a state like ours, with such a low unemployment rate, the need for workers is pronounced.

I respectfully ask your support for HB No. 1872, HD1 in support of the bill's proposed early learning apprenticeship grant program in recognition of the critical role early childhood care and education play in a sustainable future for the state of Hawai`i.

Mahalo,
Robert G. Peters, EdD
Past Chair, ELB

HB-1872-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 11:14:08 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Traci Garma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair Members of the Senate Committee on Education

From: Traci M. Garma

Re: House Bill 1872 HD1, Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

I stongly support House Bill 1872 HD1 which would establish an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program to be administered by the University of Hawai‘i.

It's vital to build up our workforce and having this Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant will take vital steps to support this process.

The ECE field is hurting and we need to filter money to develop teachers across all sectors.

I support this bill:

Thank you

Traci M. Garma

HB-1872-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 11:23:28 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Younghee Overly	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for this opportunity to support HB1872 which would establish an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program. This would help us with childcare workforce shortage we have.

Younghee Overly, AAUW Hawaii member

HB-1872-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 11:58:55 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chloe Pua'ena Vierra-Villanueva	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I support HB1872 because early childhood educators are essential to Hawai'i's families and economy. Investing in apprenticeship programs will help grow and strengthen the workforce so more families can access quality child care. Supporting these educators supports our keiki, working families, and our communities statewide. Please pass this measure. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of HB1872.

Me ke ha'aha'a,

C. Pua'ena Vierra-Villanueva

'Ohana Leadership Council

HB-1872-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 1:18:33 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM



Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnetta Jordan-Piper	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair, Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Johnnetta Jordan-Piper, and I submit this testimony in strong support of HB1872-HD1. I am a Hawai'i resident, a disabled veteran, and an early childhood education professional with over 30 years of experience across family childcare, special education, and systems-level coordination. I currently serve as a Student Services Coordinator and Special Education Preschool Teacher and work closely with programs statewide through accreditation and quality improvement efforts.

HB1872-HD1 represents a critical investment in Hawai'i's early childhood workforce. The measure appropriately recognizes that while registered apprenticeship programs provide a high-quality, industry-driven pathway into the profession, many early learning providers are unable to participate due to the financial burden associated with meeting required wage standards. As identified in the bill, these compensation requirements, though necessary, create a barrier that discourages provider participation.

The establishment of an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program, to be administered by the University of Hawai'i, offers a strategic and responsive solution. By providing financial support for wages, training, mentorship, and administrative costs, the bill directly addresses systemic challenges impacting recruitment and retention. The prioritization of programs serving infants and toddlers is particularly important, as access for children under age three remains one of the most significant gaps in our early learning system.

Equally important is the bill's inclusion of a broad definition of early learning programs, encompassing center-based, family childcare, and home-based instruction. This inclusive approach acknowledges the essential role of small and home-based providers within Hawai'i's mixed-delivery system, particularly in communities where center-based care is limited.

I respectfully encourage the Committee to also consider the inclusion of targeted technical assistance supports for family childcare providers. While grant funding will reduce financial barriers, many home-based providers may still require structured guidance to successfully enter and sustain participation in apprenticeship programs. Technical assistance in areas such as program administration, compliance with apprenticeship requirements, wage structuring, and

mentorship development would strengthen implementation and ensure equitable access to the benefits of this initiative across provider types.

In my professional capacity, I routinely observe the effects of workforce shortages, including reduced program capacity, delayed access to services, and increased strain on educators. Without targeted investments such as those proposed in HB1872-HD1, these challenges will persist and continue to impact children, families, and the broader economy.

For these reasons I strongly support HB1872-HD1 in hopes that implementation remains equitable, accessible, and supported through both financial and technical infrastructure for all providers across the State.

Thank you for your leadership and continued commitment to keiki, families, and early childhood workforce.

Respectfully submitted,
Johnnetta Jordan-Piper
Mililani, Hawai'i

Testimony of
Joy Barua



Before:
The Senate Committee on Education
The Honorable Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
The Honorable Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

Wednesday, March 18, 2026
1:00 p.m.
Conference Room 229 & Via Videoconference

RE: HB1872 HD1 Relating to Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program

Aloha e Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Joy Barua, and I serve on the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii’s Economic Action Committee of the Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii. I am providing testimony in my personal capacity. My comments reflect my own views and are informed by discussions within the Blueprint policy committee.

I am writing in **SUPPORT of House Bill 1872 House Draft 1 (HB1872 HD1)**, which establishes an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program through the University of Hawaii to provide financial support for early learning providers participating in state- or federally-approved apprenticeship programs.

Hawaii faces ongoing workforce and economic challenges. As the February 2026 UHERO report notes, limited local job opportunities and stagnant economic growth continue to contribute to outmigration and a shrinking workforce.¹ At the same time, shortages in infant and toddler care create barriers for working families and employers, increasing absenteeism, reducing productivity, and driving higher turnover across critical sectors such as health care, tourism, construction, and defense.

Childcare is not just a family issue—it is a core component of Hawaii’s economic infrastructure. Reliable childcare supports today’s workforce, develops tomorrow’s workforce, and enables businesses across industries to operate effectively. A report from the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii Foundation and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation highlights the scale of the challenge: insufficient childcare costs the state \$1.18 billion annually in lost economic activity, including \$787 million from absenteeism and turnover, \$396 million in lost tax revenue, and widespread workforce disruptions.² More than half of families report leaving, turning down, or significantly changing jobs due to childcare challenges.

This dual impact, supporting early learning providers while enabling parents to participate fully in the workforce, reinforces childcare as essential economic infrastructure. HB1872 HD1 aligns with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii’s Economic Action policy pillar, which emphasizes workforce development, employer-led talent pipelines, and targeted investments that strengthen a resilient and competitive labor force.³

¹ University of Hawai’i Economic Research Organization (UHERO), *Beyond the Price of Paradise: Economic Challenges and Opportunities for Hawai’i*, February 2026. University of Hawai’i at Manoa. Available at: <https://uhero.hawaii.edu>

² Chamber of Commerce Hawai’i Foundation and U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, *Untapped Potential: Economic Impact of Childcare Breakdowns in Hawai’i* (2025), <https://www.cochawaii.org/childcare-in-hawaii/>.

³ Chamber of Commerce Hawaii, *2030 Blueprint for Hawaii – Economic Action Pillar*. Available at: [Economic Action Pillar](#)

HB1872 HD1 helps address these challenges by supporting qualified early learning providers as Hawaii expands early learning opportunities statewide, including in rural and underserved communities. By strengthening the early learning workforce and supporting provider participation in apprenticeship pathways, the program helps build a locally trained pipeline of early childhood educators while ensuring providers have the resources needed to recruit, train, and retain talent.

HB1872 HD1 provides targeted financial support to offset wages, training, and mentorship costs for qualified early learning providers participating in apprenticeship programs. These resources help providers meet compensation standards, strengthen workforce development in the early childhood sector, and expand access to quality childcare statewide. With built-in fiscal accountability through annual reporting on grant usage, apprentices hired, wages paid, and other measurable outcomes, the program ensures a clear return on investment for state funds.

By stabilizing and expanding the early learning workforce, increasing licensed childcare capacity, and creating a pipeline of locally trained professionals who remain in Hawaii, HB1872 HD1 supports families, strengthens early learning providers, and enhances overall economic productivity.

For these reasons, I respectfully request your support. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,



Joy Barua
(808) 295-0190

LATE

HB-1872-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 4:17:29 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erin Hagan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I strongly support HB1872 HD1. Investing in early childhood apprenticeship programs strengthens Hawai'i's workforce, supports working families, and helps ensure our keiki have access to high-quality early learning.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Erin Hagan

Waiialua