

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

**House Committee on Labor  
Tuesday, February 17, 2026  
9:00 a.m.**  
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 309

**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 Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, 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.

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

February 15, 2026

TO: The Honorable Representative Jackson D. Sayama, Chair  
House Committee on Labor

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

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

Hearing: Tuesday, February 17, 2026, 9:00 a.m.  
Conference Room 309, 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.

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



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

February 15, 2026

To: Representative Jackson D. Sayama, Chair  
Representative Mike Lee, Vice-Chair  
House Committee on Labor

From: Elaine Yamashita, Chair  
Early Learning Board

Re: HB1872 HD1 support

Aloha Honorable Chair Sayama, Vice-Chair Lee, and members of the House Labor 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



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

#### Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Labor  
Tuesday, February 17, 2026 at 9:00 a.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 Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, 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:** Representative Jackson D. Sayama, Chair  
Representative Mike Lee, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Labor

**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:** LAB  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 17, 2026  
**Time:** 9:00 a.m.  
**Location:** Conference room 309

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.

February 15, 2026

To: Representative Jackson D. Sayama, Chair  
Representative Mike Lee, Vice Chair  
and members of the House Committee on Labor

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 (ECE<sup>3</sup>) Project at the University of Hawai'i Mānoa College of Education. Since 2022, the ECE<sup>3</sup> 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 not only addressing immediate workforce development needs but are also 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.



February 15, 2026

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

To: Representative Jackson D. Sayama, Chair  
Representative Mike Lee, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Labor

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: Tuesday, February 17, 2026, 9:00 a.m.  
Conference Room 309, State Capitol

The Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women is committed to advancing gender equity and supporting the economic security of women in Hawaii. **Access to affordable, high-quality early learning and childcare is a foundational issue that disproportionately affects women, who are often primary caregivers and make up a significant portion of the early childhood workforce.** The Commission **supports HB1872 HD1**, as it seeks to strengthen the early learning workforce through a targeted apprenticeship grant program.

Establishing an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program at the University of Hawaii **aligns with best practices for workforce development and addresses persistent barriers to entry and advancement in early childhood education.** By providing financial support for early learning providers to participate in approved apprenticeship programs, **the bill helps reduce economic barriers for workers**, many of whom are women, seeking to enter or advance in this essential field. Research consistently shows that well-supported, well-trained early learning professionals are **key to improving both the quality and accessibility of childcare services.**

By leveraging state and federal apprenticeship programs, **the bill maximizes existing resources** and aligns with broader efforts to strengthen and stabilize the early learning workforce.

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

**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

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FOR: HB 1872 Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program  
DATE: February 17, 2026  
TIME: 9:00 A.M.  
COMMITTEE: Committee on Labor  
ROOM: Conference Room 309 & Videoconference  
FROM: Ed H. Noh, Ed. D., Executive Director  
State Public Charter School Commission

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Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, 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 is located in a hard-to-staff area and is challenged with securing qualified staff. Having this apprenticeship program, such as this, will support Kamaile 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.

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

222 NORTH SCHOOL STREET • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96817  
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RICK BLANGIARDI  
MAYOR  
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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 HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR  
Tuesday, February 17, 2026, 09:00 AM  
Conference RM 309 and Via Videoconference**

TO: Rep. Jackson D. Sayama, Chair, Rep. Mike Lee, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee on Labor

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: February 17, 2026

To: Representative Jackson Sayama, Chair  
Representative Mike Lee, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Labor

From: Commit to Keiki

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

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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](mailto:info@committokeiki.org)  
[committokeiki.org](http://committokeiki.org)

Date: February 17, 2026

To: Representative Jackson Sayama, Chair  
Representative Mike Lee, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Labor

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

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

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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.



# holomua

COLLABORATIVE

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## OUR MISSION

To support and advance public policies that make Hawai'i affordable for all working families.

## OUR VISION

Collaborative, sustainable, and evidence-based public policies that create a diverse and sustainable Hawai'i economy, an abundance of quality job opportunities, and a future where all working families living in Hawai'i can thrive.

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## BOARD MEMBERS

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**Committee:** House Committee on Labor  
**Bill Number:** HB 1872 HD1, Relating to An Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program  
**Hearing Date and Time:** February 17, 2026, at 9:00am (Room 309)  
**Re:** Testimony of Holomua Collaborative in support

Aloha Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, 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 Corporation<sup>1</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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](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



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

**TO:** Chair Sayama, Vice-Chair Lee, & Members,  
House Committee on Labor  
**FROM:** Trisha Kajimura, PACT Vice-President of Strategy and External Affairs  
**DATE:** February 17, 2026, 9:00 AM

**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](mailto:tkajimura@pacthawaii.org) if you have any questions.



Hearing Date: Tuesday, February 17, 2026, 9:00 AM , Rm. 309

To: Committee on Labor  
Rep. Jackson D. Sayama, Chair  
Rep. Mike Lee, Vice Chair

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

Dear Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, 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.*



TO: Representative Jackson Sayama, Chair  
Representative Mike Lee, Vice Chair  
Committee on Labor

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: Tuesday, February 17, 2026; 9:00 a.m.  
Conference room 309 & Videoconference

Aloha Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee 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.



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

**Testimony in Support of HB1872, HD1  
Relating to the Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program**

**To:** House Committee on Labor  
Rep. Jackson D. Sayama, Chair

**From:** YMCA of Honolulu

**Position: Strong Support**

Aloha Chair Sayama 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,

Lisa Ontai  
Interim President & CEO

**Testimony to the House Committee on Labor  
Representative Jackson D. Sayama, Chair  
Representative Mike Lee, Vice Chair**

**Tuesday, February 17, 2026, at 9:00 AM  
Conference Room 309 & Videoconference**

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

Aloha e Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, 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 House Draft 1 (HB1872 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.

HB1872 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the Economic Action Policy Pillar. Investing in early learning programs supports key priorities within this pillar, including workforce readiness, employee retention, and job creation. Quality early learning experiences strengthen long-term outcomes for children while enabling working families to secure and sustain employment — reinforcing Hawaii's broader economic stability.

This measure takes a focused approach to addressing workforce shortages in the early learning sector. By prioritizing providers serving infants and toddlers and allowing grant funds to cover personnel, training, mentorship, administrative costs, and wage supplements needed to meet statutory or prevailing wage standards, it directly reduces financial barriers to apprenticeship participation. HB1872 HD1 also includes clear accountability through annual reporting on grant recipients, apprentices hired, total funds awarded, and wage documentation. When adequately funded, the program will strengthen recruitment and retention of early learning professionals, stabilize childcare access for working families, and support sustained workforce participation across Hawaii's key industries.

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.

We respectfully ask to pass House Bill 1872 House Draft 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



*Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.*

To: House Committee on Labor  
Re: HB 1872 HD1 – Relating to an Early Childhood Apprenticeship Grant Program  
Hawai'i State Capitol Room 309 & Via Videoconference February 17, 2026, 9:00 AM

Dear Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, 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 **SUPPORT HB 1872 HD1**.

February 17, 2026

House Committee on Labor  
Representative Jackson D. Sayama, Chair  
Representative Mike Lee, Vice Chair



Tuesday, February 17, 2026, 9:00 a.m.  
Conference Room #309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

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

Dear Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of **HB 1872**, which establishes an **Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program** to be administered by the University of Hawai'i. This program will provide much-needed financial support for early learning service providers across the state, allowing them to participate in state- or federally-approved early learning apprenticeship programs.

Families across Hawai'i are struggling to find **affordable, high-quality early learning programs** that support their children's development while allowing parents to maintain economic stability. At the same time, Hawai'i faces an urgent need to strengthen and grow the early learning workforce, which continues to experience significant recruitment and retention challenges due to low wages, limited career pathways, and rising operational costs.

**HB 1872** offers a direct and meaningful solution to these challenges by establishing an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program that supports both providers and the workforce.

**1. Supporting and Stabilizing the Early Learning Workforce**

HB 1872 provides targeted financial support to early learning program service providers participating in state- or federally-approved apprenticeship programs. By helping providers meet federally required wage standards and offset training, mentorship, and administrative costs, the program supports **over 500 existing early learning professionals**. This investment strengthens recruitment, improves retention, and elevates the quality of care in a sector that **has long struggled with high turnover and workforce instability**.

## 2. Expanding Access to Early Learning Opportunities

By reducing financial barriers for providers to participate in apprenticeship programs, HB 1872 helps grow the early learning workforce and expand capacity statewide. **Increased workforce participation has the potential to create new childcare slots**, including:

- **Up to 75 additional slots for infants and toddlers under the age of three**
- **Up to 200 additional slots for three- and four-year-olds**

This expansion is critical for families currently on waitlists or unable to secure care that meets their needs.

## 3. Creating Clear and Sustainable Career Pathways

HB 1872 strengthens career pathways in early learning by supporting apprenticeship-based training models that combine on-the-job experience with classroom instruction. **These pathways provide accessible, structured opportunities for individuals to enter and advance in the profession**, particularly for residents seeking stable careers with long-term growth potential.

## 4. Strengthening Economic Stability for Families and the Broader Economy

Reliable access to early learning programs is **essential for parents to remain in the workforce and for businesses to maintain a stable labor pool**. By supporting providers and expanding access to high-quality childcare, HB 1872 promotes economic stability for working families, supports employers across industries, and contributes to Hawai'i's long-term economic vitality.

### Investing in the Future of Hawai'i's Workforce and West O'ahu's Growth

Prioritizing early learning is especially important to West O'ahu as our population grows in *the fastest growing region in the state*. With a population of almost 200,000 (including the Wai'anae Coast, `Ewa, and Waipahu). In Kapolei and `Ewa alone households are expected to exceed 56,000 by the year 2035 and over the next 30 years the population in Kapolei and `Ewa will increase by 40 percent and housing by 52 percent. **More Early Learning facilities are needed to meet the needs of families in West O'ahu, and with these new facilities, our early learning workforce will need to expand and grow.**

Kapolei Chamber of Commerce has established itself as a *Career Hub* that generates, supports, connects, documents and reports the programmatic efforts to assist schools in delivering world-class programs that improve student achievement, increase post-secondary attendance, and generate a vibrant workforce. The Kapolei Chamber does this in partnership with the University of Hawai'i at West O'ahu, the Hawai'i State Dept. of Education and our private and charter schools in West O'ahu. In 2018, the Chamber pioneered student career exploration in the State by holding the 1<sup>st</sup> multi-school student career expo. We now bring almost 2,000 9<sup>th</sup> grade students from West O'ahu high schools onto the campus at UH West O'ahu to interact and explore careers by interacting with over 60 businesses and organizations as they select their career academies.

Career exploration is only the launching point and work-based learning is the continuum needed to strengthen our pipeline from K-12 to post-secondary and into our workforce. The Kapolei Chamber is also dedicated to working with our education partners in West O'ahu to **address curricular and outreach gaps in the workforce pipeline by advocating and supporting internship and mentoring opportunities for our students with West O'ahu employers** among industry sectors including education, healthcare, innovative technology and the professional trades. Investing in our future workforce is a priority for the Kapolei Chamber to keep pace with the growth in our region. Providing a work-based learning experience has proven to strengthen our talent pipeline.

By **investing in workforce development through the apprenticeship grant program**, we are **not only addressing the immediate childcare crisis but also laying the foundation for long-term improvements** in early care and education—ensuring young children have the support they need to succeed in school and life.

We respectfully urge your support for **HB 1872** and its passage to strengthen our early learning workforce, expand childcare opportunities, and support economic growth in our communities.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.

Best,

Kiran Polk  
Executive Director & CEO

**HB-1872-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 10:38:50 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
CRISTINE NATIVIDAD	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

**HB-1872-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 2:14:40 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
ANDREW ISODA	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I strongly support HB1872. 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,

*Andrew Isoda  
Lahaina, Mau'i*

COMMITTEE ON LABOR  
Rep. Jackson D. Sayama, Chair  
Rep. Mike Lee, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Tuesday, February 17, 2026 at 9:00 AM  
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE  
Conference Room 309  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street

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

Aloha Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, 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: 2/15/2026 3:45:14 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Carol Linde	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I strongly support HB1872. 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,

Carol Linde

Elaine Yamashita  
105 Kamehameiki Rd.  
Kula, HI 96790-8451  
808-281-1216  
[elainey208@gmail.com](mailto:elainey208@gmail.com)

Feb. 15, 2026

To: Representative Jackson D. Sayama, Chair  
Representative Mike Lee, Vice-Chair  
House Committee on Labor

From: Elaine Yamashita

Re: HB1872 HD1

Aloha Honorable Chair Sayama, Vice-Chair Lee, and members of the House Labor 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, and apprenticeships support this.

Mahalo for your consideration and support of this bill.

Sincerely,

Elaine Yamashita  
[elainey208@gmail.com](mailto:elainey208@gmail.com)

**HB-1872-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 11:08:29 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and committee members,

I am testifying in strong support of HB 1872. Investing in Early Childhood apprenticeship programs strengthens our workforce in Hawai'i, supports working families, and ensures that our keiki have access to high quality Early Childhood Education and Care.

This bill will also support child care providers serving infants and toddlers (I/T). Families face great challenges 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. Supporting I/T child care providers and programs sustainably will help families access quality care from the time young children and families need it most.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify. Please support this measure.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

Pua'ena Vierra-Villaneuva

**HB-1872-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 5:36:05 AM

Testimony for LAB on 2/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Younghee Overly	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for hearing HB1872 HD1.

Younghee Overly, a member of AAUW Hawaii

Testimony of  
Joy Barua

Before:  
The House Committee on Labor  
The Honorable Representative Jackson D. Sayama, Chair  
The Honorable Representative Mike Lee, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 17, 2026  
9:00 a.m.  
Conference Room 309 & Via Videoconference

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

Aloha e Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and Members of the Committees:

My name is Joy Barua, and I am writing in **SUPPORT of House Bill 1872 HD1 (HB1872 HD1)**, which establishes an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program through the University of Hawaii to support early learning providers participating in approved apprenticeship programs.

As a workforce-driven economy, Hawaii's long-term competitiveness depends on strong workforce infrastructure that supports employee participation and retention. Strengthening the early learning pipeline aligns with the Economic Action Policy Pillar under the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii, recognizing childcare as essential economic infrastructure. However, persistent shortages in infants and toddler care continue to create barriers for working families and employers alike. Unstable childcare contributes to absenteeism, reduced productivity, and higher turnover across key sectors such as healthcare, tourism, construction, and defense, undermining business competitiveness and economic growth.

HB1872 HD1 takes a focused and practical approach by investing in the early learning workforce where shortages are most acute. By expanding capacity and supporting workforce pathways into early childhood education, the measure addresses root causes of labor force instability while strengthening the broader workforce ecosystem.

A well-supported early learning system strengthens education-to-workforce transitions, improves employee retention, reduces recruitment costs for businesses, and enhances long-term economic resilience. Strategic investment in childcare infrastructure ensures Hawaii's workforce can fully participate in the economy while supporting shared prosperity across the state.

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

Mahalo,



Joy Barua  
(808) 295-0190

**HB-1872-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 8:18:16 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kealani Makaiwi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Kealani Makaiwi. I am a Native Hawaiian, a Christian mother of four keiki, and an early childhood educator teaching Hawaiian preschool and parent participation preschools. I write in strong support of HB1712.

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. As someone working directly with young children and families, I see the urgent need for sustainable pathways that allow caring, dedicated individuals to enter and remain in the early childhood education field.

Many aspiring educators love working with keiki but face financial and educational barriers that prevent them from becoming fully qualified. Apprenticeship programs provide a practical, culturally responsive solution—allowing educators to earn while they learn, gain hands-on experience under skilled mentors, and build the credentials needed to serve our communities long-term. These programs are especially important in Native Hawaiian and community-based settings, where relationships, culture, and continuity matter deeply.

As a parent, I know that stable, well-prepared early childhood educators directly impact a child’s sense of safety, belonging, and readiness for school. When we invest in the early childhood workforce, we are also investing in families, economic stability, and the long-term well-being of Hawai‘i.

HB1712 is a forward-thinking investment that recognizes early childhood educators as essential workers and values the critical role they play in shaping our future generations. I respectfully urge you to support and pass HB1712.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify and for your commitment to Hawai'i's keiki and families.

Me ke aloha nui,

Kealani Makaiwi

Mother & Early Childhood Educator

**HB-1872-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 5:42:13 AM

Testimony for LAB on 2/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Leilani Kailiawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members,

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

My son, who is 9 years old, has multiple disabilities, which include dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, ADHD, pediatric feeding disorder, avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder, failure to thrive, sleep apnea, and a mild hearing disorder and mainly receives his nutrition through a feeding tube. He could have benefited from high-quality learning. at a young age. He is currently 3 grade levels behind in reading, writing, and math.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

With gratitude,

Leilani Kailiawa