

**HB-2019**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 9:53:01 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Veronica Gibson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Keiki O Ka ‘Āina Family Learning Centers  
Support for Early Childhood Education Programs**

**February 12, 2026**

**The Honorable Sen Quinlan**

Hawai‘i State Senate / House of Representatives

State Capitol

Honolulu, Hawai‘i 96813

**Aloha senator Quinlan**

I am writing on behalf of **Keiki O Ka ‘Āina Family Learning Centers (KOKA)** to express our strong support for legislation and funding that strengthens **Early Childhood Education (ECE)** programs across Hawai‘i. As a long-standing community-based organization dedicated to empowering Hawai‘i’s children and families, we see firsthand how early learning opportunities shape lifelong success.

Keiki O Ka ‘Āina serves families statewide through culturally grounded programs that include early learning, caregiver education, home visiting, ‘ohana support services, and Native Hawaiian culture-based curriculum. Our mission is to **build strong communities through education that begins at birth**, honoring the traditions, values, and strengths of our islands.

We respectfully urge your support for initiatives that:

- **Expand access** to high-quality early childhood education and care
- **Increase funding** to support infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and their ‘ohana
- **Strengthen the early childhood workforce**, including professional development, sustainable wages, and retention resources
- **Support culture-based and ‘āina-based learning**, which research shows improves engagement and long-term outcomes for Native Hawaiian children
- **Improve facilities and resources** so programs can operate in safe, developmentally appropriate environments

Investing in early childhood is one of the most impactful ways Hawai'i can strengthen its future. Children who receive strong early learning support are more likely to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally, and families gain the stability needed to thrive. These investments ripple outward, benefiting communities, the economy, and the well-being of future generations.

As the 2026 legislative session begins, we hope you will prioritize Hawai'i's youngest keiki and the programs that support them. Keiki O Ka 'Āina stands ready to collaborate, provide testimony, or share stories from families whose lives have been transformed through early childhood programs.

Mahalo for your service to the people of Hawai'i and for your continued commitment to our keiki and 'ohana.

With aloha,

Veronica Gibson

**Hau'ula parent participation program**  
**Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers**  
**8085426594 [Vgibson@hawaii.edu](mailto:Vgibson@hawaii.edu)**

# OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

DEREK S.K. KAWAKAMI, MAYOR

REIKO MATSUYAMA, MANAGING DIRECTOR

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## Testimony of Natalia Perry

Early Childhood Coordinator, County of Kaua'i

Before the

### House Committee on Education

February 11, 2026; 2:00 PM

Conference Room 309 & Videoconference

In consideration of

### House Bill 2019 Relating to Early Childhood Learning

Honorable Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee:

The County of Kaua'i **strongly supports** HB 2019 which would provide appropriate funding to the Executive Office on Early Learning to administer funding for family-child interaction learning programs. We prioritize Early Childhood Education and understand how crucial this period of development is in a child's life and the impact this measure will have to sustain family-child interaction learning (FCIL) programs around the state.

FCIL programs are a critical part of our island's overall early learning landscape and have a proven track record of providing local children and their families with highly engaging learning environments that are literacy-rich, support a child's social and emotional development, strengthen parent/caregiver skills, and improve school readiness. These programs are efficient, impactful, and in high demand.

Utilizing a multi-generational, culturally responsive approach, FCIL programs have consistently performed well for all students--especially in working-class communities in which parents often rely on their extended family to assist in childcare. This is noteworthy in our statewide community as a sizeable portion of parents do not—or cannot—utilize center-based childcare options.

These programs have historically relied upon federal funding provided through the Native Hawaiian Education Program to operate, establishing dozens of sites around the state. However, the current federal administration has signaled its willingness to cut this funding completely, putting more than 95% of FCIL programs in Hawai'i at risk of closure.

The County of Kaua'i feels strongly that FCIL programs are an important component of the early learning landscape here in Hawai'i, and we would love to see them continue their crucial contribution to the life and wellbeing of our children and community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **strong support** of House Bill 2019.



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

February 11, 2026

Representative Woodson, Chair  
Representative La Chica, Vice-Chair  
House Committee on Education

From: Elaine Yamashita, Chair  
Early Learning Board

Re: HB 2019 support

Aloha Honorable Chair Woodson, Vice-Chair La Chica, and members of the House Education Committee:

The Early Learning Board (ELB) formulates statewide policy relating to early learning, as well as directing the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL). Our monthly board meeting is at the same time as this committee hearing, so I apologize for not testifying via Zoom.

ELB supports HB 2019, which would allocate funds for EOEL to administer family-child interaction learning (FCIL) programs. As the bill notes, the cuts in federal funding have affected these programs severely.

In addition to the reasons cited in the bill introduction, an ELB board member pointed out that FCIL programs often serve as a way for people to enter the early childhood education profession. Those exposed to early childhood learning through a FCIL, whether as a parent or staff, may find that this is an extremely worthwhile way to invest their time and energy. We are constantly looking for ways to recruit and retain competent people for this crucially important profession.

Mahalo for your consideration and support of this bill.

Sincerely,

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



**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 Justin H. Woodson, Chair  
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Education

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

**SUBJECT:** Testimony on H.B. No. 2019 – RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING  
Committee: EDN  
Date: Thursday, February 12, 2026  
Time: 2:00 p.m.  
Location: Conference Room 309

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

The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) offers the following comments in support of H.B. No. 2019 which appropriates funds for contracts with third-party providers of Family Child Interaction Learning programs (FCILs).

This measure aligns with the Early Learning Board's current framework of policy priorities, which is grounded in the Hawai'i Early Childhood State Plan. Specifically, the bill advances State Plan Building Block 5: Access to Early Care and Learning Opportunities by increasing state funding for Family Child Interaction Learning Programs which promote early development through culturally responsive, 'ohana-centered support.

FCILs are an important component of Hawai'i's mixed-delivery early learning system, offering families flexibility to choose the early childhood development and learning experiences that best meet their needs. FCILs promote children's well-being by supporting parents and caregivers in their role as their children's first and most important teachers and by strengthening family capacity through guided activities and shared learning opportunities. FCILs are characterized by the following:

- Multi-generational, culturally responsive approach
- Dual focus on parent education and early learning
- Setting looks a lot like a child care classroom, but with the key difference that families are responsible for their own children while attending the program

- Activities can include group circle time, outdoor play, and a variety of learning stations
- Family members also receive instruction on child development, workforce readiness, financial literacy, and other wrap-around supports

These programs are especially valuable for families who may not be interested in or able to participate in center-based child care or preschool settings. FCILs also help address gaps in the early learning ecosystem by serving infants and toddlers, an age group for which formal early care and learning opportunities are often limited, ensuring younger children and their families have access to developmentally appropriate support.

Hawai'i's largest FCIL providers rely heavily on Federal Native Hawaiian Education Program grants, but the stability of this funding is uncertain. Increasing state support would help diversify funding sources and protect these programs from potential federal disruptions. EOEL currently allocates \$800,000 annually for FCIL contracts and supports expanding state funding to sustain and strengthen these services.

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 H.B. No. 2019.

**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](http://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 HOUSE COMMITTEES ON EDUCATION  
Thursday, February 12, 2026, 02:00 PM  
Conference RM 309 and Via Videoconference**

TO: Rep. Justin Woodson, Chair, Rep. Trish La Chica, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee on Education

RE: SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 2019

The Department of Community Services (DCS), City and County of Honolulu (City), **supports** House Bill 2019, which would sustain family-child interaction learning programs across the State.

Research consistently demonstrates that high-quality, family-centered early learning experiences contribute to improved social, educational, and health outcomes for children. By supporting programs that emphasize family-child interaction, this bill aligns with best practices in early childhood development and addresses the needs of families who may otherwise lack access to such resources.

The City previously hosted family-child interaction learning programs at two Family Assessment Centers (FACs), providing families experiencing residential instability with access to early learning opportunities alongside housing support. These programs delivered comprehensive, wraparound services designed to strengthen the entire family unit.

The City would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the State by offering FAC sites as potential locations for future family-child interaction learning programs, leveraging existing infrastructure to expand access for families in need.

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



Date: February 12, 2026

To: Representative Justin Woodson, Chair  
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Education

From: Commit to Keiki

Re: House Bill 2019, Relating to an Early Learning

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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 2019, which would provide funding to sustain family-child interaction learning (FCIL) programs around the state.**

FCIL programs are a critical piece of our state’s overall early learning landscape and have a proven track record of providing local children and their families with highly engaging learning environments that are literacy-rich, support a child’s social and emotional development, strengthen parent/caregiver skills, and improve school readiness. These programs are efficient, impactful, and in high demand.

Utilizing a multi-generational, culturally responsive approach, FCIL programs have consistently performed well for all students--especially so in working-class communities in which parents often rely on extended family to assist in childcare. This is noteworthy in our statewide community as a sizeable portion of parents do not—or cannot—utilize center-based childcare options.

These programs have historically relied upon federal funding provided through the Native Hawaiian Education Program to operate, establishing dozens of sites around the state. However, the current federal administration has signaled its willingness to cut this funding completely, putting more than 95% of FCIL programs in Hawai‘i at risk of closure.

We feel strongly that FCIL programs are an important component of the early learning landscape here in Hawai‘i, and we should do all that we can to sustain them.

For this reason, Commit to Keiki strongly supports House Bill 2019.

**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)



*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 Education  
Re: HB 2019- Relating to Early Learning  
Hawai'i State Capitol Room 309& Via Videoconference Thursday, February  
12, 2026, 2:00 PM

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **STRONG SUPPORT of HB 2019**, which appropriates funds to the Executive Office on Early Learning to administer funding for family-child interaction learning programs.

HCAN is dedicated to advocating for policies that improve the well-being of Hawai'i's children and families. HB2019 is highly relevant to our mission, as it helps to address critical gaps in childcare, particularly in rural and underserved communities. These programs are essential components of a comprehensive early childhood education system and directly impact child development and family engagement across the state.

Family-child interaction learning programs enhance early cognitive, social, and emotional growth by engaging both children and their caregivers in structured educational activities. These programs are especially valuable in Hawai'i, where many families face barriers to accessing high-quality early learning opportunities due to cost, limited availability, or geographic constraints.

Increasing funding for these initiatives will help bridge service gaps, support child care providers, and empower families to be active participants in their children's early education. This approach not only benefits individual families but also strengthens the broader community by laying a strong foundation for future academic and social success.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Please **SUPPORT HB 2019**.

Date: February 12, 2026

To: Representative Justin Woodson, Chair  
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Education

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: House Bill 2019, Relating to Early Learning

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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 2019, which would provide funding to sustain family-child interaction learning (FCIL) programs around the state.**

FCIL programs are a critical piece of our state’s overall early learning landscape and have a proven track record of providing local children and their families with highly engaging learning environments that are literacy-rich, support a child’s social and emotional development, strengthen parent/caregiver skills, and improve school readiness. These programs are efficient, impactful, and in high demand.

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These programs have historically relied upon federal funding provided through the Native Hawaiian Education Program to operate, establishing dozens of sites around the state. However, the current federal administration has signaled its willingness to cut this funding completely, putting more than 95% of FCIL programs in Hawai‘i at risk of closure.

ECAS feels strongly that FCIL programs are an important component of the early learning landscape here in Hawai‘i, and we should do all that we can to sustain them.

For this reason, ECAS strongly supports House Bill 2019.

Date: February 12, 2026  
To: Representative Justin Woodson, Chair  
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Education  
From: Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers  
Re: House Bill 2019, Relating to Early Learning



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Keiki O Ka 'Āina (KOKA) is a Native Hawaiian non-profit organization whose mission is to *Educate Children, Strengthen Families, Enrich Communities, and Perpetuate Culture*. For thirty years, KOKA has been providing ***Family Child Interaction Learning (FCIL) program*** services to support early learning success in our state. Over 50,000 keiki, and their families, have been served in these programs from 1988- to the present, when these programs were first offered by Kamehameha Schools Traveling Preschool.

For over 10 years, FCILs have been part of family choice an unfunded mandate passed by our state legislature. The program has become a critical piece of our state's overall early learning landscape. It has a proven track record of providing local children and their families with highly engaging learning environments that are literacy-rich, supporting a child's social and emotional development, strengthening parent and caregiver skills, and improving school readiness. They are efficient, impactful, and in high demand.

Most recently, these programs have become learning spaces for potential early childhood educators who love working with children and families but do not yet have the educational qualifications to work in a preschool or infant-toddler center environment. In an FCIL they can participate in professional development opportunities and practice what they learn under skilled teachers and early learning mentors. These programs become stepping stones to eventually going to school and becoming an educationally qualified early childhood educator.

Historically, these programs have relied upon federal funding provided through the Native Hawaiian Education Program to operate, establishing program sites around the state. However, the current federal administration has signaled its willingness to cut this funding completely, putting more than 95% of FCIL programs in Hawai'i at risk of closure.

KOKA feels strongly that FCIL programs are an important component of the early learning landscape here in Hawai'i, and we should do all that we can to sustain them.

**KOKA strongly supports House Bill 2019, which would provide funding to sustain family-child interaction learning (FCIL) programs around the state.**



**PARTNERS IN DEVELOPMENT**  
FOUNDATION

February 12, 2026

The Honorable Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair  
The Honorable Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Education  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: Hearing on Thursday, February 12, 2026 at 2:00 p.m.,  
Via VideoConference, Conference Room #309  
**Regarding HB No. 2019, "Relating to Early Education"**

Dear Chair Woodson and Vice Chair La Chica and Members of the House Committee on Education,

We ask that you **strongly support HB 2019** to appropriate funds to the Executive Office on Early Learning to administer funding for family-child interaction learning programs.

**Partners in Development Foundation** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that inspires and equips families and communities for success and service, using timeless Native Hawaiian values and traditions. Since 1997, PIDF has served more than 171,000 people in over 75 communities across the state ([www.pidf.org](http://www.pidf.org)). PIDF has a strong record of managing complex, multi-year federal and state grants with measurable results in early childhood education, family engagement, and youth justice. PIDF continues to step to the frontline to meet the ever-changing needs of our low-income, remote, and rural families and communities, including operating a COVID quarantine hotel to keep families safe and healthy during the pandemic, to supporting families displaced by the Maui wildfires to heal and rebuild, to continuing to support and strengthen our most vulnerable children, youth and families as they navigate increasing living costs, unemployment, and loss of federal resources.

It is vital that this critical work provided by not only Partners in Development Foundation but the many other nonprofit organizations in our state continue to be supported through sufficient resources to sustainably operate and HB 2019 will accomplish this by increasing the level of funding available to these nonprofit organizations who are stepping in the gap to meet the needs that government entities cannot fully address. **We ask that you support HB 2019 to equip nonprofit organizations to meet our rising expenses to enable us to continue serving the people of Hawai'i.**

On behalf of Partners in Development Foundation and our many nonprofit partners serving tirelessly in our state, mahalo nui loa for your consideration of this request.

Shawn M. Kana'iaupuni, PhD  
President and Chief Executive Officer



Date: February 11, 2026

To: Representative Justin Woodson, Chair  
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Education

From: Hawai'i Association for Infant Mental Health, dba AIMH HI

Re: **Strong Support of HB 2019** Family Child Interactive Learning Programs

The Association for Infant Mental Health Hawaii (AIMH HI) is a non-profit organization focused on growing a network of professionals and a system of care that supports and nurtures infant and early childhood mental health. AIMH HI works with partners across the complex early childhood system to grow understanding and acceptance of the infant and early childhood mental health field and ensure evidenced-based practices around first relationships become the norm in Hawai'i.

**AIMH HI strongly supports House Bill 2019**, which would provide funding to sustain Family-Child Interaction Learning (FCIL) programs around the state. FCIL programs are a crucial piece of our state's early learning environment and provide local children and their families with highly engaging learning environments that **support a children's social and emotional development through building relationships with children and their caregivers.**

FCIL programs build strong foundations for young children by:

- Highlighting the importance of strengthening parent/caregiver skills to build a child's relationships and learning experiences both at home and in early learning spaces,
- Providing support for the child across settings and giving them opportunities to reach their fullest potential,
- Focusing on relationships built with caregivers and children in FCIL programs, which is a critical part of children's positive social emotional skills that have direct impacts on a child's school readiness.

These programs are impactful in our families, communities, and across our state's education systems, as they prepare both the child and the family for school and life.



FCIL programs highlight the importance of a multi-generational, culturally responsive approach to make early learning opportunities accessible for all families in our communities. The multi-generational approach brings the caregiver(s) into the early learning experience with the child, making caregiver(s) a part of this experience increases their connectedness to their children and allows caregiver(s) to continue supporting children's learning in the home. Without FCIL programs many working-class and rural communities who rely on 'ohana to raise keiki would not have access to a high-quality, educational program.

As FCIL programs have historically relied on federal funding through the Native Hawaiian Education Program to operate, it is imperative for the positive social emotional development of children to sustain funding for FCIL programs. With the current federal administration's willingness to cut funding for these programs, 95% of FCIL programs in our state are at risk of closing, impacting teachers, staff, children and caregivers. The families that would be impacted in our communities by closing FCIL programs reach wide and could have long-term consequences for the individuals, families, and communities.

We feel strongly that FCIL programs are a crucial component of the early learning landscape here in Hawai'i, and we need to do all that we can to sustain them to support the children and families in our state. For this reason, AIMH HI strongly supports House Bill 2019.

Na'u nō me ka ha'aha'a,  


Erin Henderson Lacerdo, LCSW, IECMH-E©  
Executive Director, Association for Infant Mental Health in Hawai'i

**HB-2019**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 11:29:42 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Carol Wear	PATCH	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HB 2019 is critical to sustaining Family Child Interaction Learning (FCIL) programs that strengthen parent-child relationships and support early learning in the most formative years. These programs provide families with culturally responsive guidance, school readiness support, and access to essential resources, particularly for those in underserved and rural communities. Continued investment ensures our youngest keiki and their caregivers have the tools, confidence, and connections needed to thrive. PATCH strongly supports HB 2019.

**HB-2019**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:37:25 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Momi Akana	Keiki O Ka Aina family learning centers	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Date: February 12, 2026

To: Representative Justin Woodson, Chair

Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair

Members of the House Committee on Education

From: Keiki O Ka ‘Āina Family Learning Centers

Re: House Bill 2019, Relating to Early Learning

Keiki O Ka ‘Āina (KOKA) is a Native Hawaiian non-profit organization whose mission is to Educate Children, Strengthen Families, Enrich Communities, and Perpetuate Culture. For thirty years, KOKA has been providing Family Child Interaction Learning (FCIL) program services to support early learning success in our state. Over 100,000 keiki, and their families, have been served in these programs from 1988- to the present, when these programs were first offered by Kamehameha Schools Traveling Preschool.

For over 10 years, FCILs have been part of family choice an unfunded mandate passed by our state Legislature. The program has become a critical piece of our state’s overall early learning landscape. It has a proven track record of providing local children and their families with highly engaging learning environments that are literacy-rich, supporting a child’s social and emotional development, strengthening parent and caregiver skills, and improving school readiness. They are efficient, impactful, and in high demand.

Most recently, these programs have become learning spaces for potential early childhood educators who love working with children and families but do not yet have the educational qualifications to work in a preschool or infant-toddler center environment. In an FCIL they can participate in professional development opportunities and practice what they learn under skilled teachers and early learning mentors. These programs become stepping stones to eventually going to school and becoming an educationally qualified early childhood educator.

Historically, these programs have relied upon federal funding provided through the Native Hawaiian Education Program to operate, establishing program sites around the state. However,

the current federal administration has signaled its willingness to cut this funding completely, putting more than 95% of FCIL programs in Hawai'i at risk of closure.

KOKA feels strongly that FCIL programs are an important component of the early learning landscape here in Hawai'i, and we should do all that we can to sustain them.

KOKA strongly supports House Bill 2019, which would provide funding to sustain family-child interaction learning (FCIL) programs around the state.

Momi Akana

CEO

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To: Representative Justin Woodson, Chair  
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair  
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To: Representative Justin Woodson, Chair  
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair  
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From: Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers  
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**HB-2019**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 1:36:40 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ann Sullivan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing on behalf of Keiki O Ka ‘Āina Family Learning Centers (KOKA) to express our strong support for legislation and funding that strengthens Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs across Hawai‘i. As a long-standing community-based organization dedicated to empowering Hawai‘i’s children and families, we see firsthand how early learning opportunities shape lifelong success.

Keiki O Ka ‘Āina serves families statewide through culturally grounded programs that include early learning, caregiver education, home visiting, ‘ohana support services, and Native Hawaiian culture-based curriculum. Our mission is to build strong communities through education that begins at birth, honoring the traditions, values, and strengths of our islands.

We respectfully urge your support for initiatives that:

- Expand access to high-quality early childhood education and care
- Increase funding to support infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and their ‘ohana
- Strengthen the early childhood workforce, including professional development, sustainable wages, and retention resources
- Support culture-based and ‘āina-based learning, which research shows improves engagement and long-term outcomes for Native Hawaiian children
- Improve facilities and resources so programs can operate in safe, developmentally appropriate environments

Investing in early childhood is one of the most impactful ways Hawai‘i can strengthen its future. Children who receive strong early learning support are more likely to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally, and families gain the stability needed to thrive. These investments ripple outward, benefiting communities, the economy, and the well-being of future generations.

As the 2026 legislative session begins, we hope you will prioritize Hawai‘i’s youngest keiki and the programs that support them. Keiki O Ka ‘Āina stands ready to collaborate, provide

testimony, or share stories from families whose lives have been transformed through early childhood programs.

Mahalo for your service to the people of Hawai'i and for your continued commitment to our keiki and 'ohana.

With aloha,

Ann Sullivan

Parent Participation Preschools

Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers

808-383-2431

taualoha31@gmail.com

Date: February 12, 2026  
To: Representative Justin Woodson, Chair  
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Education  
From: Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers  
Re: House Bill 2019, Relating to Early Learning



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Keiki O Ka 'Āina (KOKA) is a Native Hawaiian non-profit organization whose mission is to *Educate Children, Strengthen Families, Enrich Communities, and Perpetuate Culture*. For thirty years, KOKA has been providing ***Family Child Interaction Learning (FCIL) program*** services to support early learning success in our state. Over 50,000 keiki, and their families, have been served in these programs from 1988- to the present, when these programs were first offered by Kamehameha Schools Traveling Preschool.

For over 10 years, FCILs have been part of family choice an unfunded mandate passed by our state legislature. The program has become a critical piece of our state's overall early learning landscape. It has a proven track record of providing local children and their families with highly engaging learning environments that are literacy-rich, supporting a child's social and emotional development, strengthening parent and caregiver skills, and improving school readiness. They are efficient, impactful, and in high demand.

Most recently, these programs have become learning spaces for potential early childhood educators who love working with children and families but do not yet have the educational qualifications to work in a preschool or infant-toddler center environment. In an FCIL they can participate in professional development opportunities and practice what they learn under skilled teachers and early learning mentors. These programs become stepping stones to eventually going to school and becoming an educationally qualified early childhood educator.

Historically, these programs have relied upon federal funding provided through the Native Hawaiian Education Program to operate, establishing program sites around the state. However, the current federal administration has signaled its willingness to cut this funding completely, putting more than 95% of FCIL programs in Hawai'i at risk of closure.

KOKA feels strongly that FCIL programs are an important component of the early learning landscape here in Hawai'i, and we should do all that we can to sustain them.

**KOKA strongly supports House Bill 2019, which would provide funding to sustain family-child interaction learning (FCIL) programs around the state.**

**Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers**  
**Support for Early Childhood Education Programs**  
**February 12, 2026**

**The Honorable Lisa Marten**  
Hawai'i State House of Representatives  
State Capitol  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

**Aloha Representative Lisa Marten,**

I am writing on behalf of **Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers (KOKA)** to express our strong support for legislation and funding that strengthens **Early Childhood Education (ECE)** programs across Hawai'i. As a longstanding community-based organization dedicated to empowering Hawai'i's children and families, we see firsthand how early learning opportunities shape lifelong success.

Keiki O Ka 'Āina serves families statewide through culturally grounded programs that include early learning, caregiver education, home visiting, 'ohana support services, and Native Hawaiian culture-based curriculum. Our mission is to **build strong communities through education that begins at birth**, honoring the traditions, values, and strengths of our islands.

We respectfully urge your support for initiatives that:

- **Expand access** to high-quality early childhood education and care
- **Increase funding** to support infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and their 'ohana
- **Strengthen the early childhood workforce**, including professional development, sustainable wages, and retention resources
- **Support culture-based and 'āinabased learning**, which research shows improves engagement and long-term outcomes for Native Hawaiian children
- **Improve facilities and resources** so programs can operate in safe, developmentally appropriate environments

Investing in early childhood is one of the most impactful ways Hawai'i can strengthen its future. Children who receive strong early learning support are more likely to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally, and families gain the stability needed to thrive. These investments ripple outward, benefiting communities, the economy, and the wellbeing of future generations.

As the 2026 legislative session begins, we hope you will prioritize Hawai'i's youngest keiki and the programs that support them. Keiki O Ka'Āina stands ready to collaborate, provide testimony, or share stories from families whose lives have been transformed through early childhood programs.

Mahalo for your service to the people of Hawai'i and for your continued commitment to our keiki and 'ohana.

With aloha,

**Teresa Norton**  
**Waimanalo Parent Participation Program**  
**Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers**  
**808 699 79 24**  
**teresanortonhi@gmail.com**



**Testimony to the House Committee on Education  
Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair  
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair**

**Thursday, February 12, 2026, at 2:00PM  
Conference Room 309 & Videoconference**

**RE: HB2019 Relating to Early Learning**

Aloha e Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, 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 2019 (HB2019), which appropriates funds to the Executive Office on Early Learning to administer funding for family-child interaction learning programs.

HB2019 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Economic Action. The funding of early learning programs, such as family-child interaction learning programs, supports several key tenets of this pillar, namely workforce readiness and job creation. With looming federal funding cuts and resultant uncertainty, dozens of early learning sites that serve keiki, families, and caregivers statewide could close in the coming, potentially reducing access from more than 60 sites to fewer than 10. This cut would impact 3000 local families and result in the loss of more than 100 teacher positions.

Research shows that children who participate in high-quality early education enter kindergarten more prepared, require fewer remedial interventions, achieve higher graduation rates, and exhibit stronger long-term employment outcomes. Family-child interaction learning programs are particularly impactful because they strengthen both early cognitive development and parental engagement, creating stable learning environments that compound over time. These early gains translate into a more capable, productive workforce. Sustaining these programs is a strategic economic development decision that strengthens Hawaii's long-term human capital pipeline.

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 2019. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Date: February 12, 2026

To: Representative Justin Woodson, Chair  
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Education

From: Brittney Akai, Mission Engagement Specialist at Partners in Development Foundation

Re: House Bill 2019, Relating to Early Learning

Aloha e Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the House Committee on Education,

My name is Brittney Akai, and I am writing **in strong support of HB2019, relating to Early Learning**. This bill appropriates funds to the Executive Office on Early Learning to administer funding for family-child interaction learning programs (FCIL).

Family-Child Interaction Learning (FCIL) programs are a critical component of the support network to Hawai'i's families, providing high-quality, culturally grounded, and community-centered multi-generational education at no cost to participants. FCIL programs have been proven to prepare children for success in their educational career, but also increase family engagement at an early stage. When only 1 in 3 of Hawai'i's children are ready for Kindergarten, these accessible programs are an essential asset to the success of our future generations.

For over 20 years, Partners in Development Foundation's Tūtū and Me Traveling Preschool and Ka Pa'alana programs have grown to provide FCIL programming to 38 sites across Kaua'i, O'ahu, Maui, Moloka'i, and Hawai'i Island, and over 1,700+ keiki and almost 3,000 parents/caregivers each year. These programs are at risk of closing due to the uncertain future of the Native Hawaiian Education Program by the Department of Education. Due to federal funding cuts, the 38 sites will go down to 3-5 sites statewide.

In addition to a supportive early learning environment for children 0-5 years old, the programs provide connection to community resources like food banks, free diapers and wipes, hygiene products for members of the 'ohana, parenting classes, in some cases - housing transition support, and ultimately a judgement-free zone for parents/caregivers to build a solid foundation for a healthy, thriving, family through a shared priority of education for their child.

Family-Child Interaction Learning programs are essential to the safety net of services offered at no-cost, and needed in our communities to support healthy, thriving, and successful families. **I kindly ask for your support for HB2019.**

Mahalo for your time,  
Brittney Akai  
(Honolulu, HI)

**HB-2019**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 11:32:15 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ajia Hurt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

At six months postpartum, I was home with my first baby—still learning how to navigate motherhood and constantly worried about whether I was doing enough for him. I struggled to keep up with my growing little boy and often doubted my ability to teach him everything he needed. It wasn't until I found the parent participation program at Keiki o Ka'āina that I finally felt at ease. For the first time, I felt guided in a supportive, confident way. I knew my son was learning what he needed to—and even thriving—while being around keiki who were older and more advanced. He learned so much about himself and steadily met his developmental milestones.

The parent participation classes truly helped lift me out of the rut of postpartum depression. As a new parent without much family guidance, having that support meant the world to me. Most importantly, the program set such a strong foundation for my son. His transition to preschool was seamless—his curiosity for learning, familiarity with routines, and comfort in structured environments were all shaped by the participation classes.

These classes strengthen the bond between keiki and mākuā while setting the next generation up for success. They create the perfect bridge into early learning—offering the reassurance of a parent's presence while preparing children for the classroom and beyond.

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

February 11, 2026

Representative Woodson, Chair  
Representative La Chica, Vice-Chair  
House Committee on Education

From: Elaine Yamashita

Re: HB2019

Aloha Honorable Chair Woodson, Vice-Chair La Chica, and members of the House 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 HB 2019. Family Child Interaction Learning (FCIL) programs are an important part of our early learning system and provide valuable information and support to many families.

When I was at UHMC, I had the privilege of visiting several FCIL programs and saw and felt the positive energy. Because the age ranges of the keiki are from birth to kindergarten entry, the FCIL staff provide developmentally appropriate information for each activity across the age range. They observe the keiki and interact with the adults and keiki, and I also saw activities relevant to the community's culture and context.

It's been distressing to see how the federal cuts have impacted these programs. I appreciate the state looking at ways to mitigate the federal cuts and hope that FCIL programs are supported.

Mahalo for your attention and support of this bill.

Sincerely,

*Elaine Yamashita*  
elainey208@gmail.com

February 11, 2026

To: Representative Justin Woodson, Chair  
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair  
and members of the House Committee on Education

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

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 2019 – Relating to the Early Learning

**Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H. B. 2019.**

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. I submit this testimony as an individual. From 2011 to 2013, I was Governor Neil Abercrombie's state early childhood coordinator and the first director of the Executive Office on Early Learning. Prior to that position, I was the director of Kamehameha Schools (KS), ECE division, which included providing resources to Family-Child Interaction Learning Programs, which were initially called Traveling Preschools.

Traveling Preschools were started by KS through the leadership of Ginger Fink in 1987, and were originally located in rural areas of the islands, where there were no preschools. When Traveling Preschools was terminated in 1996, it was being offered in over thirty neighborhoods throughout the state. When KS ended their Traveling Preschools, other organizations serving families soon developed versions of the Traveling Preschools appropriate for their neighborhoods and target families, such as Keiki O Ka `Āina, Partners in Development's Tūtū and Me Traveling Preschool, INPEACE's Keiki Steps. Traveling Preschools, then became known as Family-Child Interaction Learning Programs or FCIL, which have relied on federal funding provided through the Native Hawaiian Education Program to operate, establishing dozens of sites around the state.

FCIL programs are designed to welcome families with young children, involve the child's caregiver (parent or kūpuna/grandparent or guardian), integrate traditional and contemporary Hawaiian culture, and connecting families to a wide variety of social and educational services, including improving early detection of developmental delays and expanding access to infant and early childhood mental health services.

However, the current federal administration has signaled its willingness to cut this funding completely, putting more than 95% of FCIL programs in Hawai'i at risk of closure.

Therefore, I strongly support our state appropriate funds to EOEL to administer funding for these FCIL Programs, as they are vitally important to many of our families with young children across our state.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB 2019.

**HB-2019**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 9:53:13 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kee Lo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of HB2019. Family-Child Interaction Learning (FCIL) programs deliver a proven, high demand early learning through culturally responsive models that our working class families rely on. Now 95% of FCIL programs around the state are at risk of closure due to threatened federal funding.

Please support our families and keiki by passing this bill.

Mahalo,

Kee

**HB-2019**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 9:21:51 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry Support

2019 HB RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING.

**HB-2019**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 1:14:40 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lauren Faue	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a domestic violence advocate working with survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV) and their children, I strongly support HB2019. Family-child interaction learning programs are essential for families recovering from violence and instability. These programs offer safe, structured, and nurturing environments where caregivers can rebuild healthy relationships with their children—something that is often disrupted by the trauma of abuse.

For many survivors, especially mothers who are rebuilding their lives after leaving an abusive partner, programs like these provide critical tools: parenting support, child development education, and opportunities to strengthen bonding in ways that promote emotional security and long-term healing. These services also help children who have witnessed or experienced violence by giving them consistent, positive interactions that support healthy development.

Survivors frequently face barriers such as financial instability, housing transitions, and the emotional impact of trauma. By investing in family-child interaction programs through the Executive Office on Early Learning, HB2019 expands access to resources that help stabilize families, reduce stress, and support survivors as they navigate major life changes. These programs can also serve as a gateway to other needed services—counseling, early intervention, safe childcare options, and educational supports—which are especially important for families emerging from violence.

It is crucial that the funding in HB2019 be implemented in a way that reaches families most in need, including those in rural areas, immigrant communities, and other underserved populations who often face additional barriers to accessing supportive services. Ensuring programs are culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and accessible will maximize their effectiveness for survivors and their children.

I respectfully encourage the Executive Office on Early Learning to prioritize outreach to marginalized families and to evaluate programs regularly to ensure they are meeting the needs of Hawai'i's diverse communities. Continuing to work in partnership with community organizations—especially those serving survivors of IPV—will help ensure these programs remain responsive, inclusive, and impactful.

HB2019 is an important step toward supporting healing, strengthening families, and breaking cycles of violence. Survivors and their children deserve access to safe, supportive early learning environments that help them rebuild their futures.

Date: February 11, 2026

To: Representative Justin Woodson, Chair  
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Education  
From: Gail Omoto  
Re: House Bill 2019, Relating to Early Childhood

Aloha, during my years working at Partners in Development Foundation, as a team member of the Tūtū and Me Traveling Preschool Program, I always knew that we were making a profound impact on the keiki, their families, and the communities we served. I saw this in the assessment results, the hundreds of letters of support we received from families and community members, our anonymous surveys, and whenever I had the chance to visit the programs. There was no question that Tūtū and Me was fulfilling an undeniable need in our communities and preparing keiki for school success. We knew then and still know now that the FCIL model works!

I am no longer working at PIDF, but three years ago, I became a *participant* at Tūtū and Me Traveling Preschool. I attended the program for over 2 years with my then 8-months old granddaughter until she was 3-1/2 years old.

As a participant, I had the honor of “sitting on the other side of the fence.” I experienced *first-hand* the vision that was cast for the program and the dreams that were planted over 25 years ago. I cannot tell you what this means. I experienced all the aloha and servant’s heart of each staff member, I saw the tremendous growth in my granddaughter, I had the opportunity to interact with her and participate in her learning through rich, fun and meaningful activities, and ... I made friends. I now have a community of support with other caregivers. And as friends, we talked about everything from – how to best make a Thanksgiving turkey (brine or not to brine), we shared potty training tips, and we also had the deeper heartfelt conversations such as cancer treatments.

There are many moments that stand out for me, but I’d like to share two moments when I experienced first-hand the truly deep impact that the Tūtū and Me Program is making for children and their families:

- One day, another Tūtū shared with me that she is raising her granddaughter because her daughter, the mother of her grandchild, was in prison. She told me that she is so grateful for Tūtū and Me. She said she wouldn’t know what she would’ve done without Tūtū and Me. She wouldn’t know what to do with her granddaughter. In her eyes I saw sadness about the situation she was in, but also immense gratitude for Tūtū and Me and hope for this child’s future. She shared this with me from her heart – not because I asked for a letter of support. She didn’t even know of my past connection to Tūtū and Me. And as she spoke, I remembered all that we had hoped Tūtū and Me would do and be for grandparents who were raising their grandchildren, and all the support we wanted them to experience...support to know they were not alone, they had someone who cared, a place they belonged; they had people who would walk alongside them and support them to give

their child/grandchild a great start in life. And I saw this hope come true. All I could do was pause and thank our funders and Ke Akua for allowing Tūtū and Me to be what this Tūtū needed. What would she have done without Tūtū and Me? This story has a happy ending. A few months before the end of the school year, her daughter was released from prison, and started attending Tūtū and Me, too. She began to make friends with other caregivers and interacted with her daughter...and the smile on this mother's face shone brightly. At the end of the school year her little girl left the program to go on to preschool, but her mom *still* continued to attend Tūtū and Me with another family she had befriended. One day I asked her how her daughter was doing in preschool and she replied, "Aunty she's doing so good, her teacher said she's thriving!" And I saw the pride in her eyes. And I smiled back as I thought to myself, "this is what it is all about."

- The second moment I want to share came a few months ago. I was in line at an ice cream shop in Kāneʻohe, when I noticed a familiar face behind me...it was a Dad who attended Tūtū and Me with his wife and two young daughters. We knew each other and had greeted each other at program site, but I had never had the opportunity to speak to him before. On this evening, I greeted him and said, "Hey...how are you? I'll see you in a few weeks at Tūtū and Me!" He then explained that he would not be returning to Tūtū and Me for the upcoming school year because he's going back to work. He said he had been on medical leave for a hurt shoulder for 6 months but now he is able to return to work. Then he said these words to me... he said, "You know, I'm so glad I could attend Tūtū and Me. I am closer to my daughter now. It wasn't like this before Tūtū and Me... but now we have a close bond."

I walked out of that ice cream shop wanting to cry... he could not have known how much those words meant to me to hear. Why? Because early on, three primary objectives were established for the Tūtū and Me program:

- Objective #1...children will enter school ready to learn and succeed
- Objective #2 ...caregivers will feel supported in their role
- Objective #3 ...Tūtū and Me will help to strengthen the bond between caregiver and keiki. Why? Because decades of research have shown time and time again that the relationship between a parent/or caregiver makes all the difference. A stronger bond is associated with all kinds of clear outcomes for keiki – healthy brain development, their social emotional development and self-confidence, resiliency, capacity to thrive, ability to form relationships as they go through life...the list goes on. Without a good bond with a parent or other caregiver early in life, children are less likely to grow up to become happy, independent and resilient adults.

When all is said and done, it's this bond that matters, and this is what Tūtū and Me and other FCIL programs (Keiki O Ka 'Āina and INPEACE) offer to families...a place to play and learn and grow together – keiki and caregiver – and because of this precious, dedicated (and undistracted) time together, the bond is strengthened, and keiki are benefitted for *the rest* of their life.

FCIL programs are making an undeniable difference for families and communities in Hawai'i. I know this is true not only for Tūtū and Me but for all FCIL programs in our state. A few years ago, I had the privilege of visiting Keiki O Ka 'Āina and INPEACE FCIL program sites – and I witnessed the same meaningful interactions between keiki and caregiver and bonds being strengthened, and children being nurtured.

For these reasons and many more, I strongly support House Bill 2019, which would provide funding to sustain family-child interaction learning (FCIL) programs around the state. FCIL programs are a lifeline for so many families. I humbly ask for your support. Thank you.

**HB-2019**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 8:51:47 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Travis Counsell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support publicly funded early childhood education. As a parent of a newborn, this support would truly be meaningful. My wife and I both work, and pay a HUGE percentage of our income to childcare. Please support the next generation, while easing the burden on working families.

**HB-2019**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 10:54:03 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tessy Kekahuna	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support, I think early childhood education is important for the early stages in a child's life.

**HB-2019**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 11:51:18 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kealani Makaiwi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kealani Makaiwi. I am a Native Hawaiian, a Christian mother of four keiki who attend Kaiapuni Hawaiian language schools, and an early childhood educator teaching Hawaiian preschool and parent participation preschools. I am writing in strong support of House Bill 2019.

Family-Child Interaction Learning (FCIL) programs are a vital part of Hawai‘i’s early learning ecosystem, particularly for Native Hawaiian families. For over thirty years, Keiki O Ka ‘Āina (KOKA), a trusted Native Hawaiian nonprofit organization, has provided FCIL services that educate children, strengthen families, enrich communities, and perpetuate culture. Since 1988, more than 50,000 keiki and their families across our state have benefited from these programs.

As a mother and educator, I can attest to the powerful impact of FCIL programs. These learning environments are literacy-rich, culturally grounded, and deeply relational. They support children’s social and emotional development, strengthen parents’ and caregivers’ confidence and skills, and improve school readiness. FCIL programs honor parents as a child’s first teacher and create spaces where families learn together, grow together, and heal together.

For more than a decade, FCIL programs have existed as an unfunded mandate under family choice passed by our legislature. Despite this, they have remained efficient, impactful, and in high demand. More recently, FCIL programs have also become important pathways for future early childhood educators—providing hands-on experience, mentorship, and professional development for individuals who love working with children and families but are not yet educationally qualified. These programs serve as stepping stones into the early childhood workforce, which our state urgently needs.

Historically, FCIL programs have relied on federal funding through the Native Hawaiian Education Program. However, the current federal administration has signaled potential cuts to this funding, placing more than 95% of FCIL programs in Hawai‘i at risk of closure. The loss of these programs would be devastating—not only for keiki and families, but for our broader early learning system and future educator pipeline.

From both a Native Hawaiian and Christian perspective, supporting FCIL programs is an act of kuleana and stewardship. We have a responsibility to care for our children, to strengthen families, and to ensure that culturally grounded, community-based education remains accessible.

HB2019 provides a critical opportunity for the State of Hawai'i to step forward and sustain these essential programs.

I respectfully urge you to pass HB2019 and provide the funding necessary to ensure FCIL programs can continue to serve Hawai'i's keiki and families. Mahalo for your time, consideration, and commitment to our children and our future.

Me ke aloha nui,

**Kealani Makaiwi**

Native Hawaiian Mother & Early Childhood Educator

registered voter in the Kapolei Makakilo District

**HB-2019**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 12:25:14 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
niki McCoy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello,

We have been lucky enough to utilize the Keiki O Ka Aina early learning program for 2 years now and could not be more thankful for it. It has been such an asset in our lives. My daughter started in preschool this year after being in the KOKA program. I can really see the benefits in getting her prepared for school. The lessons are thoughtfully prepared for the variety of ages, they are able to learn great social skills and how to sit and listen, and so much more.

We live in Kahuku and it is so rare for us to find programs for kids that are near by, let alone free ones. The only other resource we have is the library(which we are also very grateful for). We have not only built knowledge through early learning programs, but community. Please, I beg you, keep funding early learning programs. We are already in a literacy crisis, please help raise strong and smart Keiki!

**HB-2019**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 1:17:48 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
JESSICA MOWRY	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Testimony in Support of HB 2019**

My name is Jessica Mowry, and I am a parent from Kailua, Hawaii. I am writing in strong support of HB 2019, which strengthens Family-Child Interaction Learning programs and supports our daycare providers.

The early years of a child’s life are critical to brain development, emotional growth, and long-term academic success. Family-Child Interaction Learning programs empower parents and caregivers to become active participants in their child’s development by equipping them with evidence-based strategies to support language development, emotional regulation, and positive behavior. By investing in these programs, HB 2019 promotes stronger families and better outcomes for children before they even enter kindergarten.

Additionally, daycare providers are essential partners in early childhood education. They do far more than supervise children—they provide structured learning environments, socialization opportunities, and foundational skills that prepare children for school. However, many providers face staffing shortages, financial strain, and limited access to training and resources. HB 2019 helps address these challenges by strengthening support systems, improving access to quality training, and ensuring sustainable standards that benefit both providers and families.

When we support families and childcare professionals together, we create a unified approach to early learning. Children thrive when parents and caregivers are aligned, informed, and supported. HB 2019 recognizes that strong early childhood systems reduce future costs in remedial education, behavioral intervention, and social services while increasing long-term academic and workforce success.

Investing in early childhood is not only compassionate policy—it is sound economic policy. By supporting Family-Child Interaction Learning and daycare providers, HB 2019 strengthens our communities today and builds a more prepared, capable generation for tomorrow.

I respectfully urge you to vote in favor of HB 2019. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jessica Mowry  
Mowry\_jessica@yahoo.com

