



STATE OF HAWAII
Executive Office on Early Learning

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

TO: Representative Chris Todd, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

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

SUBJECT: Testimony on H.B. No. 2399, H.D. 1 – RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING
Committee: FIN
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2026
Time: 2:00 p.m.
Location: Conference Room 308

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. 2399, H.D. 1 and defers to the Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission regarding implementation and funding.

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 ensuring that prekindergarten (PreK) only public charter schools have the resources needed to succeed.

The public charter school PreK program is an important part of Hawai'i's mixed-delivery early learning system, expanding the availability of free, high-quality early learning opportunities for Hawai'i's keiki. The establishment of the first PreK-only public charter schools further diversifies program options and introduces an innovative approach to increasing system capacity. This model supports continued progress toward the goal of universal access to preschool for all three- and four-year-olds in Hawai'i, established by Act 46, SLH 2020.

Most public charter school PreK classrooms operate within existing charter schools and benefit from shared overhead and administrative support that is not reflected in the PreK program budget. In contrast, standalone PreK-only schools must independently cover these costs. Increasing the per-classroom allocation for standalone PreK-only schools will help ensure a

sustainable financial model and provide the resources necessary to maintain a high-quality early learning environment.

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. 2399, H.D. 1.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



MAKALAPUA ALENCASTRE, ED. D.
CHAIRPERSON

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

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

FOR: HB 2399 HD1 RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING
DATE: March 3, 2026
TIME: 2:00 P.M.
COMMITTEE: Committee on Finance
ROOM: Conference Room 308 & Videoconference
FROM: Ed H. Noh, Ed. D., Executive Director State
Public Charter School Commission

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee:

The State Public Charter School Commission (“Commission”) appreciates the opportunity to offer testimony in **SUPPORT of HB 2399 HD1** which provides funding to the Commission to increase funding to pre-kindergarten-only public charter schools.

The Commission recently authorized two new pre-kindergarten-only public charter schools, Parkway Village Preschool in Kapolei and Waikiki Community Preschool which serve about 170 students in ten Pre-K classrooms. Both schools utilize a public-private partnership model that relies on assistance from the non-profit organizations, Parents and Children Together (PACT) and the Waikiki Community Center, that originally applied for and were granted Pre-K only charter schools.

Additional funding for these programs, in the amount of \$790,000, has been requested to provide administrative support and facilities funding to the Pre-K only schools as current Pre-K funding is provided on a per classroom basis. Each Pre-K classroom is funded at \$171,000; of that amount, \$115,000 (67%) is for personnel costs.

The Commission appreciates the Legislature’s consideration of this request and the assistance to the Pre-K only schools that this measure provides. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.



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

March 2, 2026

Representative Chris Todd, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Finance

From: Elaine Yamashita, Chair
Early Learning Board

Re: HB2399 HD1 support
March 3, 2026, 2 p.m. Hearing

Aloha Honorable Chair Todd, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, and members of the House Finance Committee:

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

ELB supports HB2399 HD1, which would increase funding for prekindergarten (PreK) only charter schools. The funding is needed for the additional costs associated with stand-alone charter schools. This measure aligns with the legislative priorities passed by the board which support the Hawai'i Early Childhood State Plan (2025-2030).

Full day charter prekindergarten schools increase the options for our state's working families, who often need the hours beyond the school day. Maintaining and Increasing the number of spaces available for young children is a priority for the board, as established by Act 46, SLH 2020.

Mahalo for your consideration and support of this bill.

Sincerely,

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

To: House Committee on Education
Re: HB 2399 HD1 – Relating to an Early Learning
Hawai'i State Capitol Room 308 & Via Videoconference March 3, 2026,
2:00 PM

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Respected Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **STRONG SUPPORT of HB 2399 HD1**. This bill appropriates funds to the State Public Charter School Commission for prekindergarten-only public charter schools.

HB 2399 HD1 is a critical investment in fulfilling the promise of Act 46, which commits Hawai'i to providing universal access to early learning for all three and four-year-olds by 2032. In 2025, the state took a historic step forward by launching the nation's first pre-kindergarten-only public charter schools, opening ten classrooms in Kapolei and Waikiki. Demand was immediate, with all classrooms enrolling to capacity.

These schools expand access to high-quality, FREE early education with no eligibility requirements beyond age. For families, this means continuity of care and the assurance that their children can access developmentally appropriate early learning regardless of income.

High-quality early education is foundational to child development. Children who participate in strong early learning programs demonstrate improved language, literacy, and social-emotional skills and are better prepared for kindergarten and long-term academic success. To maintain that quality, preschool classrooms require appropriate staffing ratios, specialized educators, and strong administrative support systems.

As stand-alone campuses, Pre-K-only charter schools do not benefit from the shared infrastructure or economies of scale available to larger PreK-12 schools. The current per-classroom funding allocation does not fully cover the true cost of operating a high-quality preschool program that meets safety, staffing, and compliance requirements. Without adequate funding, programs face structural financial gaps that threaten stability and continuity for children and families.

HB 2399 HD1 provides targeted support for the 2026-2027 school year to stabilize operations, ensure appropriate staffing levels, and allow these schools to focus on long-term sustainability rather than short-term financial risk. Strengthening this model is essential not only to preserving current seats but also to responsibly scaling access statewide as we move toward universal preschool access.

Hawai'i has made meaningful progress toward expanding early learning opportunities. HB 2399 HD1 ensures that this progress is sustainable, high-quality, and aligned with the state's long-term educational commitments.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Please **PASS HB 2399 HD1**.

Date: March 3, 2026

To: Representative Chris Todd, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Finance

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: House Bill 2399 HD1, Relating to Early Learning

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 supports House Bill 2399 HD1 which would appropriate funds to the state public charter school commission to increase funding to pre-k only public charter schools.

This measure represents an important investment of critical funding that would move our state closer to its stated goal of providing universal access to early learning for all three and four-year-old children. Should it be enacted, HB2399 HD1 would provide specific, targeted support to pre-k-only charter schools for the 2026-2027 school year, ensuring smooth operations and appropriate staffing levels, further allowing these institutions to focus on their long-term stability.

In short, this injection of funding would help to preserve and expand the number of early learning seats for local keiki.

For this reason, ECAS supports HB2399 HD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

March 2, 2026

To: House Committee on Finance
Representative Chris Todd - Chari, Representative Jenna Takenouchi – Vice Chair, and
Committee Members

From: Alana Kobayashi Pakkala
Kobayashi Group

Re: Testimony in Strong Support of HB 2399 HD1 – Relating to Early Learning

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

I write in strong support of HB 2399 HD1, which appropriates funds to the State Public Charter School Commission to increase the per-classroom funding rate for prekindergarten-only public charter schools.

I submit this testimony not only as a board member of Parkway Village Preschool, but also as someone who deeply respects the power of public education in Hawai'i. My mother, Susan Kobayashi, dedicated her entire career as a Department of Education public school teacher, instilling in our family a strong belief in education's ability to change the trajectory of a child's life. My father, Bert Kobayashi, is a powerful example of what public education in Hawai'i can make possible. As the first in his family to graduate from high school, he is a proud product of Kalihi Elementary, Dole Middle School, and Farrington High School (Class of 1962). Through their lives and work, I have come to understand that access to high-quality education is one of the most important investments we can make in our community — one that benefits not only individuals, but also strengthens communities and advances a more equitable society. Today, however, access to early education in Hawai'i remains deeply inequitable. On the west side of O'ahu, there is approximately one licensed preschool seat for every 48 preschool-aged children. This severe shortage of supply, combined with the high cost of private preschool, places early education out of reach for many hardworking families in our community.

Parkway Village Preschool was created to help address this gap. As a pre-K-only public charter school located within an affordable housing community in Kapolei, we provide high-quality, tuition-free early education to three- and four-year-olds. Our school is fully enrolled, and the demand from families continues to exceed available capacity. However, the current funding model is not sufficient to sustain this important work. The State Public Charter School Commission provides approximately \$171,000 per classroom annually, while actual operating costs for the 2025–2026 school year are approximately \$277,806 per classroom. This creates a funding gap of over \$100,000 per classroom, driven in part by the lack of economies of scale and the staffing requirements necessary to meet regulatory and union standards.

Without adjustments to the per-classroom funding rate, the long-term sustainability and expansion of pre-K-only charter schools will remain in doubt. These schools represent a critical and innovative public-private partnership model that can help the State expand early learning capacity, particularly in underserved communities.

Investing in early childhood education is one of the most effective ways to improve long-term educational outcomes, strengthen our workforce, and support working families. HB 2399 HD1 is an important step toward ensuring that all children in Hawai'i have access to high-quality early learning opportunities, regardless of their family's income or zip code.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB 2399 HD1 and support the continued growth and sustainability of pre-K-only charter schools in Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alana', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alana Kobayashi Pakkala
CEO + Partner



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2399 HD1 RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

TO: Chair Todd, Vice-Chair Takenouchi & Members
House Finance Committee
FR: Caroline Hayashi, President

Waikiki Community Center (WCC) **supports HB 2399 HD1.**

For decades, WCC operated a high-quality private nonprofit preschool serving primarily low- to moderate-income ALICE families — households working hard yet struggling to make ends meet. In August 2025, we converted to a Pre-K-only public charter school to expand tuition-free early learning access for these families.

Prior to conversion, over 98% of our children met developmental benchmarks, and 100% entered kindergarten ready. These outcomes reflect intentional staffing, strong instructional leadership, and comprehensive support for children of all abilities.

As a stand-alone Pre-K campus, our school does not benefit from the shared administrative and operational infrastructure of larger DOE schools. Maintaining appropriate staffing ratios, classroom coverage, educator planning time, and compliance requirements require sufficient operational capacity.

The current per-classroom allocation is approximately \$171,000 annually. In practice, the full cost of operating a high-quality, stand-alone Pre-K classroom — including staffing and required operational support — is closer to \$275,000 per classroom.

When we applied to convert, we anticipated a funding gap and committed to fundraising to help bridge it. WCC remains committed to that responsibility. HB2399 HD1 does not replace philanthropy; it provides targeted stabilization funding for the 2026–2027 school year that narrows the gap and supports responsible operations and staffing stability as this new public model matures.

Early learning is a proven investment in school readiness and workforce stability. Ensuring that stand-alone Pre-K classrooms are adequately staffed protects both educational outcomes and sound fiscal management.

Waikiki Community Center remains committed to this model and to the families we serve. We respectfully urge your support of HB2399.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact me at (808) 923-1802 or chayashi@waikikicommunitycenter.org if you have any questions.



**Parents And
Children Together**

**BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIPS
THAT MATTER MOST**

ParentsAndChildrenTogether.org

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2399 HD1 RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

TO: Chair Todd, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, & Members,
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Trisha Kajimura, Vice-President of Strategy and External Affairs

DATE: March 3, 2026 at 2:00 PM

Parents and Children Together (PACT) supports HB 2399 HD1 Relating to Early Learning, which appropriates funds to the State Public Charter School Commission for prekindergarten-only public charter schools.

Founded 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.

In 2023, PACT applied to start the state's first Pre-K-only public charter school, Parkway Village Preschool (PVP), which opened in May of 2025 and is now fully enrolled to its capacity of 80 three- and four-year-old students in four classrooms. PVP is built into the affordable rental housing community of Parkway Village in Kapolei. The development of PVP was the first of its kind partnership between Kobayashi Group, Kamehameha Schools and PACT to open the first Pre-K-only charter school through the authorization of the Charter Commission. PACT's current role with the school is to provide administrative services and early education expertise.

The Charter Commission's funding of Pre-K-only charter schools is at a rate of \$171,000 per classroom per year. At the time of PACT's application, PACT estimated a budget of \$205,272 per classroom per year and expected to fundraise to make up the difference and provide high-quality early education for PVP's students.

However, the actual cost of operating these classrooms is \$277,806 per classroom per year, making the current financial model unsustainable. The main reason for the higher-than-expected costs is that the school doesn't have the benefit of the infrastructure of a larger school. Original staffing of 9 classroom staff and 2 administrative staff is insufficient to handle the administrative requirements of the school along with the coverage needed in the classroom.

In partnership with the board, PACT has been seeking grant funding to cover the school's expenses, but the gap is simply too big and we respectfully request that the appropriation in this bill match the Charter Commission's internal request for \$790,000. This would raise per classroom funding to \$250,000 per year.

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



HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 8:46:00 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
simeon miranda	Embassy Suites Waikiki/ Waikiki Community Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Thank you for accepting my testimony, I am a business and community leader, and very concerned local who believes in providing education to the needy. As past chairperson of Waikiki Community Center, we have seen primary education as a vital importance to child development and need to be affordable.

I strongly support HB2399, which appropriates funds for pre-kindergarten-only public charter schools.

In 2025, Hawai'i launched two pre-K only charter schools serving ten classrooms. These schools expand access to high-quality, tuition-free early education and help the state move toward universal preschool access. All classrooms opened fully enrolled, demonstrating strong demand from families.

However, as stand-alone schools, pre-K only charters do not benefit from the shared infrastructure of larger campuses. Current funding levels do not fully cover the true cost of operating a safe, high-quality preschool — particularly staffing, which is essential for safety, quality, and continuity of care.

This bill provides critical stabilization funding so these schools can focus on sustainability and serving families rather than managing financial shortfalls. Investing in early learning strengthens our workforce, supports working families, and benefits our keiki long-term.

Please support HB2399.

Mahalo for your consideration

Simeon Miranda - General Manager of Embassy Suites by Hilton Waikiki Beach Walk



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2399 HD1 RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

March 3, 2026 2:00 PM

To: House Committee on Finance: Chair Chris Todd, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, & Members

From: Parkway Village Preschool Governing Board: Kim Gould, Margaret Takahashi, Dawn Kurisu, Sunny Kim, Alana Kobayashi Pakkala

The Parkway Village Preschool (PVP) Governing Board strongly supports HB 2399 HD1, which appropriates funds to the State Public Charter School Commission for prekindergarten-only public charter schools to increase the per-classroom funding rate.

PVP was the first Pre-K only charter school and opened in May of 2025. It is in its first school year of operation, serving at full capacity with four classrooms and 80 students. We are thrilled to offer public high-quality, FREE early education for three- and four-year-olds in the affordable housing community of Parkway Village in Kapolei. The reception of this school by the community has been filled with excitement and the engagement of parents, grandparents, and neighbors.

PVP was the first of only two Pre-K only charter schools to open in the state and represents a new model of public-private partnership for the development of new early learning centers. Being the first of its kind, there were many unknowns related to operating costs. State Public Charter School Commission funding for this type of school is \$171,000 per classroom per year. Actual operating costs are \$277, 806 per classroom for the 2025-2026 school year, putting the long-term sustainability of this funding model in doubt.

The main reason that actual costs are higher than projected is that a Pre-K only charter school does not have the benefit of the infrastructure and economies of scale that a larger school does. More staffing than initially planned is needed to ensure that union requirements are met and classrooms are covered.

Parkway Village Preschool plans to continue fundraising to supplement its allocation and respectfully requests that you help close this funding gap and ensure that the Pre-K only charter school model can grow and succeed in our state.

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/27/2026 5:12:45 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Reann Austin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Subject: I Support HB2399

Dear Chair and Members,

I support HB2399. This bill helps ensure enough staffing in our Pre-K classrooms and protects tuition-free preschool for families like mine.

Tuition-free preschool has helped our family because as a stay home mom with 3 kids and a husband who works 2 full time job, it eases our financial burden in regard to preschool . Our oldest can learn for free which is a big help for us.

Mahalo,
Reann Austin

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/27/2026 5:12:49 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jinjoo Han	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair and Members,

I support HB2399. This bill helps ensure enough staffing in our Pre-K classrooms and protects tuition-free preschool for families like mine.

Tuition-free preschool has helped our family because as a middle-class working family who does not qualify for child care subsidies, free public preschool is the only realistic option that allows us to prepare our child for kindergarten while also preparing ourselves financially to continue living and working in Hawaii. Without it, the cost of private preschool would place a significant burden on our household and make it much harder for us to stay in our community long-term.

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/27/2026 5:15:36 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amy Jin-Sugino	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair and Members,

I support HB2399. This bill helps ensure enough staffing in our Pre-K classrooms and protects tuition-free preschool for families like mine.

Tuition-free preschool has helped our family because it has taken a huge financial weight off our shoulders while giving our child a strong start in school. Not having to worry about monthly tuition allows us to use that money for other important needs like groceries, rent, and savings.

It has also helped our child grow socially and academically. They've learned how to share, follow routines, communicate better, and build friendships. We've seen so much improvement in their confidence and readiness for kindergarten.

Most importantly, it has given us peace of mind knowing our child is in a safe, supportive environment where they are learning and thriving every day.

Mahalo,
Amy Jin-Sugino

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/27/2026 5:30:35 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jesse George	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Subject: I Support HB2399

Dear Chair and Members,

I support HB2399. This bill helps ensure enough staffing in our Pre-K classrooms and protects tuition-free preschool for families like mine.

Tuition-free preschool has helped our family because my daughter attends Waikiki Community Center Pre-K, and the opportunity to have free tuition has made a huge difference in our lives. As a single father living in Hawaii, the cost of everyday life can feel overwhelming at times. Removing the financial burden of preschool has allowed me to focus on providing stability and support for my daughter without constantly worrying about how to afford early education.

I also strongly support this bill because of the incredible teachers and staff at Waikiki Community Center Pre-K. They have played an important role in my daughter's development, helping her grow socially, emotionally, and in her everyday life skills. The care and education she receives are shaping a strong foundation for her future.

Programs like this do not just support children — they support families and strengthen our communities. Continuing tuition-free preschool gives parents like me the ability to work, provide, and ensure our children receive the early education they deserve.

Mahalo,

Jesse George

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/27/2026 5:55:52 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Dear Members of the House Committee on Finance:

As a member of the Board of Waikīkī Community Charter Preschool and the mother of three young children, I write in strong support of HB2399.

As a board member, I see what it takes to operate a safe, high-quality stand-alone preschool. Early childhood education requires low adult-to-child ratios, credentialed teachers, and consistent staffing to ensure safe classrooms and strong learning environments. Current funding does not fully reflect the cost of providing that level of care and instruction.

Pre-K-only charter schools expand access to tuition-free preschool without income eligibility barriers beyond age. Demand is clear. Classrooms opened at full enrollment because working families need stable, reliable early learning environments.

Expanding access at this stage is important because the preschool years are a critical developmental period. As a parent, I understand that the early years are foundational. We know that high-quality preschool supports language, self-regulation, and social development at a stage when children’s growth is rapid and deeply formative.

HB2399 provides stabilization funding so schools can maintain safe classrooms, retain qualified teachers, and provide consistent, high-quality early learning for families.

I respectfully urge your support of HB2399.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Nicole Y Altman

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/27/2026 6:47:39 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tessa Korybski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair and Members,

I support HB2399. This bill helps ensure enough staffing in our Pre-K classrooms and protects tuition-free preschool for families who can't afford the high cost of private school.

I was fortunate enough to benefit from quality preschool, which really helped me prepare for kindergarten and beyond. I think all families should have the opportunity to have quality early education.

Thank you,

Tessa Korybski

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/27/2026 7:38:39 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alea Talamantes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: House Committee on Finance

From: Alea Talamantes

Re: **Testimony in Support of HB 2399-Relating to Early Learning**

Hearing Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2026, 2:00 PM

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

My name is Alea Talamantes, and I submit this testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of HB 2399 HD1, which appropriates funds to the State Public Charter School Commission for prekindergarten-only public charter schools.

Pre-k-only charter schools expand access to high-quality, FREE early education with no eligibility requirements beyond age. This model offers families relief from high childcare costs while ensuring children receive developmentally appropriate early learning experiences. Demand is clear: all ten classrooms were fully enrolled at opening, but these schools need extra support during these early stages.

My daughter, Alea Malie, was one of the fortunate few accepted into Hawai'i's first public charter preschool, Parkway Village Preschool. Since enrolling, she has flourished academically, socially, and emotionally. The growth we have witnessed in her confidence, communication skills, and love for learning has been incredible. I cannot fully express my gratitude for the school's dedicated faculty and the peace of mind that comes from knowing my daughter is in a safe, nurturing, and enriching environment each day.

HB 2399 is a targeted investment that strengthens Hawai'i's early learning system, supports working families, and advances the State's commitment to universal preschool access.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your consideration. Please **SUPPORT HB 2399 HD1**.

Respectfully submitted,
Alea Talamantes

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/27/2026 7:47:38 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johanna Tokunaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I strongly support HB2399.

Pre-K-only charter schools are stand-alone campuses that must maintain sufficient classroom staffing and operational capacity without the infrastructure of larger DOE schools. This model expands tuition-free early learning access for working families who are struggling to make ends meet.

Current funding does not fully reflect the operational realities of stand-alone campuses. HB2399 provides targeted stabilization funding for the 2026–2027 school year and supports responsible operations and long-term sustainability.

I respectfully urge your support of this measure.

Mahalo,

johanna tokunaga

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/27/2026 10:42:46 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zayla Takaoka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Zayla Takaoka, and I submit this testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of HB 2399 HD1, which appropriates funds to the State Public Charter School Commission for prekindergarten-only public charter schools.

Pre-k-only charter schools expand access to high-quality, **FREE** early education with no eligibility requirements beyond age. This model offers families relief from high childcare costs while ensuring children receive developmentally appropriate early learning experiences. Demand is clear: all ten classrooms were fully enrolled at opening, but these schools need extra support during these early stages.

Parkway Village charter Preschool has been a blessing for my son and our family. Prior to attending parkway village preschool my son had speech delays but not critical enough to be accepted through our local elementary school special needs pre-k. Without Pre-k tuition finances to help support our son's education we were blessed he was accepted to the tuition-free Charter Parkway Village Preschool. After attending with the help of his amazing teachers his speech has flourished, learned his ABCs, 123s and how to be a friend. We are forever grateful for all the time, dedication and care the staff at Parkway village preschool has given my son, and with the help of increasing state funding they can hire additional staff to reach out to more children in need and better support our next generation.

HB 2399 is a targeted investment that strengthens Hawai'i's early learning system, supports working families, and advances the State's commitment to universal preschool access.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your consideration. Please **SUPPORT HB 2399 HD1**.

Respectfully submitted,
Zayla Takaoka

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/28/2026 6:07:53 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Asakura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Re: STRONG SUPPORT for HB2399 – Relating to Early Learning

Aloha Chair and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I strongly support HB2399.

Pre-K-only charter schools are stand-alone campuses that must maintain sufficient classroom staffing and operational capacity without the infrastructure of larger DOE schools. This model expands tuition-free early learning access for working families who are struggling to make ends meet.

Current funding does not fully reflect the operational realities of stand-alone campuses. HB2399 provides targeted stabilization funding for the 2026–2027 school year and supports responsible operations and long-term sustainability.

I respectfully urge your support of this measure.

Mahalo,

David Asakura

Aloha Chair and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I strongly support HB2399.

Pre-K-only charter schools are stand-alone campuses that must maintain sufficient classroom staffing and operational capacity without the infrastructure of larger DOE schools. This model expands tuition-free early learning access for working families who are struggling to make ends meet.

Current funding does not fully reflect the operational realities of stand-alone campuses. HB2399 provides targeted stabilization funding for the 2026–2027 school year and supports responsible operations and long-term sustainability.

I respectfully urge your support of this measure.

Mahalo,
Lorie Nagata

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/28/2026 9:20:52 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I strongly support HB2399.

Pre-K-only charter schools are stand-alone campuses that must maintain sufficient classroom staffing and operational capacity without the infrastructure of larger DOE schools. This model expands tuition-free early learning access for working families who are struggling to make ends meet.

Current funding does not fully reflect the operational realities of stand-alone campuses. HB2399 provides targeted stabilization funding for the 2026–2027 school year and supports responsible operations and long-term sustainability.

I respectfully urge your support of this measure.

Mahalo,

Traci Bush

Waikīkī Beach Services, LLC

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/28/2026 11:30:17 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pamela Seelig	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Re: STRONG SUPPORT for HB2399 – Relating to Early Learning

Aloha Chair and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I strongly support HB2399.

Pre-K-only charter schools are stand-alone campuses that must maintain sufficient classroom staffing and operational capacity without the infrastructure of larger DOE schools. This model expands tuition-free early learning access for working families who are struggling to make ends meet.

Current funding does not fully reflect the operational realities of stand-alone campuses. HB2399 provides targeted stabilization funding for the 2026–2027 school year and supports responsible operations and long-term sustainability.

I respectfully urge your support of this measure.

Mahalo,

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/28/2026 12:41:37 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Darcie Hayashi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Re: STRONG SUPPORT for HB2399 – Relating to Early Learning

Aloha Chair and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I strongly support HB2399.

Pre-K-only charter schools are stand-alone campuses that must maintain sufficient classroom staffing and operational capacity without the infrastructure of larger DOE schools. This model expands tuition-free early learning access for working families who are struggling to make ends meet.

Current funding does not fully reflect the operational realities of stand-alone campuses. HB2399 provides targeted stabilization funding for the 2026–2027 school year and supports responsible operations and long-term sustainability.

I respectfully urge your support of this measure.

Mahalo,

Darcie Hayashi

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/28/2026 12:44:51 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Virginia Hayashi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Re: STRONG SUPPORT for HB2399 – Relating to Early Learning

Aloha Chair and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I strongly support HB2399.

Pre-K-only charter schools are stand-alone campuses that must maintain sufficient classroom staffing and operational capacity without the infrastructure of larger DOE schools. This model expands tuition-free early learning access for working families who are struggling to make ends meet.

Current funding does not fully reflect the operational realities of stand-alone campuses. HB2399 provides targeted stabilization funding for the 2026–2027 school year and supports responsible operations and long-term sustainability.

I respectfully urge your support of this measure.

Mahalo,

Virginia Hayashi

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/28/2026 1:29:11 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Desiree Mosiman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I strongly support HB2399.

Pre-K-only charter schools are stand-alone campuses that must maintain sufficient classroom staffing and operational capacity without the infrastructure of larger DOE schools. This model expands tuition-free early learning access for working families who are struggling to make ends meet.

Current funding does not fully reflect the operational realities of stand-alone campuses. HB2399 provides targeted stabilization funding for the 2026–2027 school year and supports responsible operations and long-term sustainability.

I respectfully urge your support of this measure.

Mahalo,

Desiree

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/28/2026 3:06:02 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Ball	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this legislation.

David Ball

Waiialae-Kahala

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/28/2026 4:04:51 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lisa Lee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I strongly support HB2399.

Pre-K-only charter schools are stand-alone campuses that must maintain sufficient classroom staffing and operational capacity without the infrastructure of larger DOE schools. This model expands tuition-free early learning access for working families who are struggling to make ends meet.

Current funding does not fully reflect the operational realities of stand-alone campuses. HB2399 provides targeted stabilization funding for the 2026–2027 school year and supports responsible operations and long-term sustainability.

I respectfully urge your support of this measure.

Mahalo nui for your consideration,
Lisa E. Lee

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/28/2026 7:50:39 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
tia pearson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This would help provide free, high-quality preschool for 3–5 year olds in charter schools. Their staff meet the same rigorous DOE requirements and can also offer before- and after-school care — a huge benefit for working ‘ohana.

But they are underfunded and urgently need the state’s support.

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 8:42:48 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rena Agngarayngay	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2399. This bill helps ensure enough staffing in our Pre-K classrooms and protects tuition-free preschool for families like mine.

Tuition-free preschool has helped our family tremendously in our economy!

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 9:29:50 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I support HB2399 to strengthen Pre-K Only Charter Schools. These programs provide free, high-quality early education for Hawai'i's keiki and critical support for working families. They deserve stable funding to continue serving our communities.

My daughter is in preschool and it is such a wonderful program. Please support this bill so more keiki can experience the education.

Mahalo for putting keiki first!

Jessie Gonsalves

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 11:08:45 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Laurie Nakamoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I strongly support HB2399.

Pre-K-only charter schools are stand-alone campuses that must maintain sufficient classroom staffing and operational capacity without the infrastructure of larger DOE schools. This model expands tuition-free early learning access for working families who are struggling to make ends meet.

Current funding does not fully reflect the operational realities of stand-alone campuses. HB2399 provides targeted stabilization funding for the 2026–2027 school year and supports responsible operations and long-term sustainability.

I respectfully urge your support of this measure.

Mahalo,

Laurie Nakamoto

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 12:34:03 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jesika H.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I support HB2399 to strengthen Pre-K Only Charter Schools. These programs provide free, high-quality early education for Hawai'i's keiki and critical support for working families. They deserve stable funding to continue serving our communities.

Mahalo for putting keiki first!

Jesika Hernandez

Re: Strong Support for HB2399 regarding Early Learning

Aloha Chair and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I strongly support HB2399.

Finances:

Pre-K stand-alone charter campuses must maintain sufficient and quality staffing and operational capacity without the infrastructure of larger DOE schools. This model expands tuition-free early learning access for working families who are struggling to make ends meet. In a recent Honolulu Star-Advertiser article the cost of child care, especially preschool costs, was highlighted as a severe drain on the budgets of many families. All parents want their children to have the benefits of experiences that will enable them to succeed in their educational journey. In 2025, ten Pre-K-only public charter classrooms expanded tuition-free early learning access. All the classrooms were full emphasizing the need for these classrooms.

Current funding does not fully reflect the operational realities of stand-alone campuses. HB2399 provides targeted stabilization funding for the 2026-2027 school year and supports responsible operations and long-term sustainability.

Early Learning:

As a retired elementary school teacher I have seen how pre-K experiences make so much of a difference in the learning abilities of children. Having pre-K experiences -

Academically:

Ability to listen to stories, talk about them, recognize how words are made up of letters and those words weave a story.

Socially -

Learning to interact with peers; making friends; helping each other; working and playing together

Physically-

Participating in movement activities and outdoor play

These are just a few benefits and experiences that help to expand children's learning and prepare them for the next steps.

Giving our keiki the opportunity to attend a tuition-free pre-K only charter school would mean supporting HB2399 so these schools can be adequately funded and continue to provide quality education and care. All families and their children deserve to have the opportunity to have these experiences regardless of their incomes.

Please support HB2399.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
Evelyn Gallagher

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Rep. Chris Todd, Chair
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

HEARING:
Monday, March 2, 2026 at 2:00 pm
Conference Room 308 and Via Videoconference

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2399 - RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING.

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, Rep. Miyake for my district, Rep. Yamashita of Maui, 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 2399**, Relating to Early Learning, which appropriates funds to the State Public Charter School Commission for prekindergarten-only public charter schools.

I support HB 2399 to strengthen Pre-K Only Charters. These programs provide free, high-quality early education for Hawai'i's keiki and critical support for working families. They deserve stable funding to continue serving our communities.

I respectfully request that you **vote in support of HB 2399**.

Mahalo,

Christine Andrews, JD
Wailuku, Maui

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 6:14:57 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Justine M Miyashiro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Justine Miyashiro, and I submit this testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of HB 2399 HD1, which appropriates funds to the State Public Charter School Commission for prekindergarten-only public charter schools.

Pre-k-only charter schools expand access to high-quality, FREE early education with no eligibility requirements beyond age. This model offers families relief from high childcare costs while ensuring children receive developmentally appropriate early learning experiences. Demand is clear: all ten classrooms were fully enrolled at opening, but these schools need extra support during these early stages.

HB 2399 is a targeted investment that strengthens Hawai'i's early learning system, supports working families, and advances the State's commitment to universal preschool access.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your consideration.
Please **SUPPORT HB 2399 HD1**.

Respectfully submitted,
Justine Miyashiro
Ewa Makai Middle School, Leeward District

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 8:16:57 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

To: House Committee on Finance

From: Danielle Alefosio, Parkway Village Preschool Parent

Re: Testimony in Support of HB 2399-Relating to Early Learning

Hearing Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2026, 2:00 PM

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

My name is Danielle Alefosio, and I submit this testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of HB 2399 HD1, which appropriates funds to the State Public Charter School Commission for prekindergarten-only public charter schools.

Pre-k-only charter schools expand access to high-quality, **FREE** early education with no eligibility requirements beyond age. This model offers families relief from high childcare costs while ensuring children receive developmentally appropriate early learning experiences. Demand is clear: all ten classrooms were fully enrolled at opening, but these schools need extra support during these early stages.

Our daughter, Nāmaka‘alohi, consistently receives an exceptional standard of education at Parkway Village Preschool, despite her speech delay. Our family is currently unable to secure enrollment in an alternative preschool that offers a comparable level of educational support to meet her developmental needs. It is imperative that public charter preschools receive increased funding to adequately staff their programs and continue providing outstanding care and education to our children. Our daughter consistently demonstrates enthusiasm for attending school, a sentiment I regrettably cannot attribute to her four older siblings.

HB 2399 is a targeted investment that strengthens Hawai‘i’s early learning system, supports working families, and advances the State’s commitment to universal preschool access.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your consideration.
Please SUPPORT HB 2399 HD1.

Respectfully submitted,

Danielle Alefosio

Parkway Village Preschool Parent

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 9:10:24 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Re: STRONG SUPPORT for HB2399 – Relating to Early Learning

Aloha Chair and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I strongly support HB2399.

Pre-K-only charter schools are stand-alone campuses that must maintain sufficient classroom staffing and operational capacity without the infrastructure of larger DOE schools. This model expands tuition-free early learning access for working families who are struggling to make ends meet.

Current funding does not fully reflect the operational realities of stand-alone campuses. HB2399 provides targeted stabilization funding for the 2026–2027 school year and supports responsible operations and long-term sustainability.

I respectfully urge your support of this measure.

Mahalo,
KH

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 9:49:43 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alexis Suzuki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This helps tremendously having free childcare to help our kids grow and learn and get them ready for kindergarten. With out this bill I wouldn't be able to afford sending my son to school

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 11:56:33 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ruth Uy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

I write in strong support of HB 2399 HD1, which appropriates funds to the State Public Charter School Commission to increase the per-classroom funding rate for prekindergarten-only public charter schools.

I submit this testimony as a working mother of two children who understands firsthand how critical — and how challenging — access to early education can be for Hawai‘i families.

Pre-K is foundational. It is where children build early literacy, social skills, and the confidence that carries into kindergarten and beyond. These early years matter just as much as K–6, yet access to quality preschool often depends on affordability and availability.

For five years, I worked on the west side of O‘ahu, where I saw many colleagues struggle to secure reliable childcare and preschool options. These were hardworking families with both parents working full time, yet preschool costs were so high that some took out personal loans simply to afford tuition and remain in the workforce.

No family should have to go into debt to give their child a strong start.

Pre-K-only public charter schools help expand access to tuition-free, high-quality early learning in communities where supply is limited and private options are cost-prohibitive. However, without adequate per-classroom funding, their long-term sustainability remains uncertain.

If we are serious about supporting working families and strengthening our workforce, we must invest in children earlier. HB 2399 HD1 is a meaningful step toward ensuring that all keiki in Hawai‘i have access to quality early education, regardless of income or zip code.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB 2399 HD1.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 5:58:41 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leilani Kailiawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chairs and Committee Members

I am strong support of this bill.to strengthen Pre-K Only Charters. These programs provide free, high-quality early education for Hawaii keiki and critical support for working families.

Please pass this bill HB 2399

Mahalo nui loa for allowing me to share my support,

Leilani Kailiawa

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 6:09:27 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tehani Peterson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Tehani Peterson, and I respectfully submit this testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of HB 2399 HD1, which appropriates funds to the State Public Charter School Commission for prekindergarten-only public charter schools.

As a parent, I have seen firsthand how important access to high-quality early education is for our keiki. Pre-K-only public charter schools expand access to **FREE**, high-quality early learning opportunities with no eligibility requirements beyond age. For working families like mine, this model provides much-needed relief from the rising costs of childcare while ensuring our children receive developmentally appropriate, structured early education that prepares them for long-term success.

The demand for these programs clearly demonstrates the need. With classrooms fully enrolled at opening, it is evident that families across Hawai‘i are actively seeking accessible and reliable early education options. However, during these early years of implementation, additional support is critical to ensure these schools can continue operating successfully and serving our communities.

Investing in early childhood education is an investment in Hawai‘i’s future. HB 2399 HD1 strengthens our early learning system, supports working families, and moves our state closer to its commitment to universal preschool access.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your consideration. I respectfully urge you to **SUPPORT** HB 2399 HD1.

Respectfully submitted,
Tehani Peterson

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 8:09:29 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I strongly support HB2399.

Pre-K-only charter schools are stand-alone campuses that must maintain sufficient classroom staffing and operational capacity without the infrastructure of larger DOE schools. This model expands tuition-free early learning access for working families who are struggling to make ends meet.

Current funding does not fully reflect the operational realities of stand-alone campuses. HB2399 provides targeted stabilization funding for the 2026–2027 school year and supports responsible operations and long-term sustainability.

I respectfully urge your support of this measure.

Mahalo,Ryan Chun

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 8:56:23 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
J. Kehau Lucas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support of HB2399, which strengthens funding for Hawai‘i’s Pre-K-Only Charter Schools. These programs play a crucial role in expanding free, high-quality early learning for Hawai‘i’s keiki and in supporting working families who depend on reliable, full-day care options.

Hawai‘i has only recently begun establishing Pre-K-Only charter schools, and evidence shows they are already filling critical gaps in early learning access. The state’s first two standalone pre-K charter schools—Parkway Village Preschool and Waikīkī Community Preschool—opened last year and now serve approximately 170 students across 10 classrooms. Both schools have quickly reached full capacity, demonstrating strong community demand for free, high-quality preschool options. [\[spectrumlo...alnews.com\]](#) [\[chartercom...hawaii.gov\]](#)

However, these schools face significantly higher operational costs because they do not share infrastructure with larger K–12 campuses. Current state funding provides \$171,000 per classroom, including only \$115,000 for personnel, an amount that public charter preschools testify falls short of actual operating needs. HB2399 addresses this shortfall by providing up to \$790,000 in additional funding for the 2026–2027 school year, ensuring that Pre-K-Only charter schools can remain viable and continue serving families. [\[spectrumlo...alnews.com\]](#)

These schools are also vital to meeting the state’s commitments under Act 46 (2020), which aims for universal access to preschool by 2032. Pre-K-Only charter schools offer the same rigorous quality standards as other public pre-K programs, but with the added benefit of operating full-day schedules—an essential support for working families. They also help address Hawai‘i’s long-standing shortage of early childhood educators by providing stable funding streams that improve wages and make early learning careers more sustainable. [\[spectrumlo...alnews.com\]](#) [\[civilbeat.org\]](#)

By supporting HB2399, you are supporting a model that expands access, strengthens the early learning workforce, and ensures our keiki receive the high-quality early education they deserve.

Mahalo for continuing to put keiki first!

Aloha ‘āina,

J. Kēhau Lucas

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 9:17:29 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Clint Collins	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB2399. Pre-k not only benefits children, but also the adults and guardians responsible for them. Please continue supporting these programs, and consider more offerings throughout the state.

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 9:39:54 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shaun Stone	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Rep. Chris Todd, Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee(s),

My name is Shaun Stone, and I am a parent testifying in strong support of HB2399. I urge the Committee to fund prekindergarten-only public charter schools in fiscal year 2026-2027.

Hawaii's prekindergarten-only public charter schools expand access to high-quality early learning, especially for families who need full-day programs. These schools offer tuition-free, developmentally appropriate education that helps children build strong social, emotional, and academic foundations for kindergarten and beyond.

Many of these schools face funding deficits, threatening their ability to serve our keiki. HB2399 will help sustain these programs and align with Hawaii's commitment to universal early education and school readiness for all children.

As a parent on Oahu, I see firsthand how full-day pre-K makes a difference. It eases childcare burdens, helps families maintain employment, and provides equity, especially for low-income families. Early education leads to stronger outcomes and a better workforce for our islands.

HB2399 is a cost-effective way to close achievement gaps, support working families, and build a stronger future for Hawaii's children. My child has benefited tremendously from prekindergarten, gaining confidence and academic readiness. I respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB2399 and ensure that these vital schools receive the funding they need.

Thank you for your time regarding this important measure.

Sincerely,

Shaun Stone

Oahu, HI

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 9:54:50 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joell Edwards	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Joell Edwards. I am a resident of Wainiha on the North Shore of Kaua‘i, a small business owner, and a community advocate. I write in strong support of HB2399 to strengthen Pre-K Only Charter Schools.

On Kaua‘i, we are living the reality of limited early learning access. In many of our rural communities, Pre-K seats are scarce, waitlists are long, and families are left piecing together care or delaying entry into the workforce. We need more Pre-K options here on Kaua‘i — not fewer — and we need them to be stable and sustainable.

Pre-K Only Charter Schools provide free, high-quality early education for Hawai‘i’s keiki and critical support for working families. Early learning is not a luxury; it is foundational. When we invest in strong early education, we strengthen literacy outcomes, long-term academic success, and the overall well-being of our communities.

HB2399 helps ensure these schools receive the stable funding they need to continue serving families across the state, including those of us on neighbor islands where access gaps are especially acute.

Mahalo for putting our keiki first and for supporting HB2399.

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

My name is Chelsea Momosea, and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB 2399 HD1, which would appropriate state general funds to the State Public Charter School Commission for prekindergarten-only public charter schools for the 2026-2027 fiscal year. This funding is critically important to expanding access to early learning in Hawaii and stabilizing a brand-new public-charter preschool model that is already serving families across our islands.

Prekindergarten-only public charter schools meet the same rigorous requirements as other public pre-K programs while offering full-day schedules that better support working families. However, these classrooms are currently operating at a financial deficit — in large part because current per-classroom funding levels are significantly below actual operating costs. This shortfall threatens the sustainability of these valuable early learning options.

As a working family of five, we have personally experienced the challenge of accessing quality early learning. We have narrowly missed qualifying for safety net programs, sometimes by just a few dollars, yet paying for private preschool was simply beyond our means. Without a formal early learning environment, our older children entered kindergarten without the support that could have made their transition smoother.

Working middle-class families often fall into a gap, earning too much to qualify for assistance but not enough to afford private preschool. We have experienced that gap ourselves. Since our youngest child began the tuition-free pre-K public charter classroom in August 2025, we have seen tremendous growth in her confidence, love of learning, and kindergarten readiness, opportunities that would not have been possible for our family otherwise. HB2399 HD1 helps ensure these classrooms remain open, sustainable, and accessible so more keiki can receive a strong start during their most formative years.

I strongly support HB2399 HD1 and advancing this important legislation.

Mahalo nui loa for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Chelsea Momosea

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 10:13:52 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Edwards	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2399. This bill helps ensure enough staffing in our Pre-K classrooms and protects tuition-free preschool for families like mine.

Tuition-free preschool has helped our family because of the high cost of living in Hawaii and has ensured he is ready to advance to kindergarten. We understand the value of education, and we have seen firsthand the difference in children who have had the opportunity to receive pre-k education and socialization vs those that have not. The foundation is fundamental to their lives and the success of Hawaii as a whole.

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 10:23:53 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ann Kutaka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Re: STRONG SUPPORT for HB2399 – Relating to Early Learning

Aloha Chair and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I strongly support HB2399.

Pre-K-only charter schools are stand-alone campuses that must maintain sufficient classroom staffing and operational capacity without the infrastructure of larger DOE schools. This model expands tuition-free early learning access for working families who are struggling to make ends meet.

Current funding does not fully reflect the operational realities of stand-alone campuses. HB2399 provides targeted stabilization funding for the 2026–2027 school year and supports responsible operations and long-term sustainability.

I respectfully urge your support of this measure.

Mahalo,

Ann Kutaka

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 10:48:00 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Lim	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee on Finance:

I write in strong support of HB2399 and urge you to support this measure. Pre-K-only charter schools expand tuition-free early learning access for working families that are often struggling to make ends meet.

However, Pre-K-only charter schools are stand-alone campuses that must maintain sufficient classroom staffing and operational capacity but do not have the infrastructure of larger DOE schools. Current funding does not reflect the operational realities of these stand-alone campuses.

HB2399 provides targeted stabilization funding for the 2026–2027 school year and supports responsible and long-term operations of these campuses.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Jennifer A. Lim

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 11:00:53 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kenneth C S Pai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I strongly support HB2399.

Pre-K only charter schools are stand alone campuses that must maintain sufficient classroom staffing and operational capacity without the infrastructure of larger DOE schools. This model expands tuition free early learning access for working families who are struggling to make ends meet.

Current funding does not fully reflect the operational realities of stand alone campuses. HB2399 provides targeted stabilization funding for the 2026-2027 school year and supports responsible operations and long term sustainability.

I respectfully urge your support of this measure. Mahalo, Ken

Kenneth C. S. Pai

3914 Waokanaka Street

Honolulu, HI 96817

Email: kenpai@hawaii.rr.com

Phone: (808) 375-7577

Aloha Chair Representative Todd, Vice Chair Representative Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance,

My name is Justin Momosea, and I am a father of three. I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of HB2399 HD1.

For years, my wife and I have worked hard to provide for our children and build stability for our family. Yet we often found ourselves in a difficult position, earning just above the income limits for safety-net programs, but not enough to afford private preschool tuition. It is a challenging place to be as a parent, wanting to give your child every possible advantage while knowing some opportunities remain financially out of reach.

When the State opened tuition-free pre-K-only public charter classrooms, it gave our youngest child an opportunity our older children did not have. Since starting, we have watched her grow in confidence, independence, and excitement for learning. Seeing that growth reassures me that she will walk into kindergarten ready, socially, emotionally, and academically.

In a recent article, [Great news for Parents! Hawai'i's pre-k applications open](#), the Executive Office on Early Learning announced that registration for free public pre-kindergarten opens on March 2, 2026, and all families can apply for this free and statewide program. As great of a resource as this is, when I visited the website, in addition to the obvious age requirement, they also list eligibility and priority categories, as follows:

1. Children who are eligible for special education (SPED) services under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and whose Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is determined as general education;
2. Children who are English as second language learners;
3. Children who are in foster care;
4. Children whose family income is no more than 300% of the federal poverty level OR who receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and/or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (See Federal Poverty Guide Chart Below)
5. Children who are experiencing at-risk situations which may impact their learning and development;
6. Children who are experiencing homelessness or unstable housing;

I do agree that prioritizing keiki who may fall into the above categories is essential as their needs are higher compared to other keiki who do not fall into these categories based on historical statistics however, this is where and how the gap widens; where families, who make even just a few cents above the thresholds, tend to fall.

HB2399 HD1 helps protect and sustain this opportunity for ALL families, including working families like mines. Access to early learning should not depend on whether a family's income falls under a certain threshold or a family's ability to pay \$13,000 - \$17,000 per child for private preschool tuition. These classrooms give keiki a strong start during their most formative years and support families who are fortunate to work and provide.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support HB2399 HD1.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Justin Momosea

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 12:35:22 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hye young Lee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB2399. This bill is essential to ensuring adequate staffing in our Pre-K classrooms and maintaining safe, high-quality learning environments for our young children.

Tuition-free preschool has made a meaningful difference for our family by providing our child with early learning opportunities while easing the financial burden on our household. Continued support for proper staffing is critical to preserving the quality and accessibility of these programs.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mahalo
Hyeyoung Lee

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 1:05:40 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Moran	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I strongly support HB2399.

Pre-K-only charter schools are stand-alone campuses that must maintain sufficient classroom staffing and operational capacity without the infrastructure of larger DOE schools. This model expands tuition-free early learning access for working families who are struggling to make ends meet.

Current funding does not fully reflect the operational realities of stand-alone campuses. HB2399 provides targeted stabilization funding for the 2026–2027 school year and supports responsible operations and long-term sustainability.

I respectfully urge your support of this measure.

Mahalo, Mary Moran

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 1:09:25 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I support HB2399 to strengthen Pre-K Only Charter Schools. These programs provide free, high-quality early education for Hawai'i's keiki and critical support for working families. They deserve stable funding to continue serving our communities.

Mahalo for putting our keiki first.

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB2399, HD1

Committee on Finance

Date: 3/03/26

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Location: Room 308

Representative Chris Todd, Chair

Representative Jenna Takenouchi , Vice Chair

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Committee Members,

My name is Danny Goya. I am a trauma-informed care facilitator specializing in children ages 0–5, working across Hawai‘i with families in all four sectors of early childhood education and care.

I respectfully submit testimony in strong support of HB2399, HD1.

I am submitting testimony in strong support of HB2399, HD1, which appropriates funding to the State Public Charter School Commission to support prekindergarten-only public charter schools. This bill is an important, equity-focused investment that will expand access to high-quality early learning for Hawai‘i’s keiki, support working families, and strengthen Hawai‘i’s long-term economic future.

I have worked in early childhood education and family support for many years and was instrumental in creating and implementing the Ka Pa‘alana Homeless Family Education Program and Preschool. Through this work, I have seen firsthand how rich early learning environments and caregiver involvement help children develop language, self-regulation, and school-readiness skills that lay the foundation for lifelong success. (This experience aligns with evidence that high-quality, comprehensive early education promotes better kindergarten preparation, ongoing educational engagement, and family economic stability.)

Investments in early childhood education are among the most fiscally responsible that a state can make. Research on the economics of early learning consistently shows that high-quality early education yields a positive return on investment over time. For example:

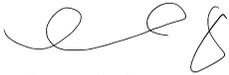
Nobel Prize-winning economist James J. Heckman’s work shows that high-quality birth-to-five early childhood programs can deliver a 13% annual return on investment through improved education, employment, health, and reduced social costs.

National research shows that every \$1 invested in early childhood education can yield \$4 to \$16 in long-term societal benefits through increased earnings, reduced crime, lower welfare and special education costs and greater tax revenue.

Other economic analyses indicate that expanding access to quality early learning enhances workforce participation among caregivers and strengthens future labor force outcomes by better preparing children academically and socially. These are not abstract figures; they are real economic returns that accrue to children, families, businesses, and taxpayers over time. In Hawai‘i, ensuring that charter preschools have stable funding to operate full-day, high-quality

early learning environments expands access, supports families' ability to work, and helps close achievement gaps before they widen in later grades.

HB2399, HD1 supports an essential pillar of Hawai'i's early learning infrastructure by strengthening prekindergarten-only public charter schools that serve diverse communities and families. Investing now saves money over the long run, supports our state's economic competitiveness, promotes equity, and builds a stronger foundation for lifelong learning. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this bill to ensure Hawai'i's youngest learners and their families have the opportunity to succeed.



Daniel Goya

Trauma-Informed Care Facilitator

Specializing in Early Childhood (0-5)

Ke Ala Ho'aka, LLC

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 1:34:27 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Edward Korybski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I strongly support HB2399.

Pre-K-only charter schools are stand-alone campuses that must maintain sufficient classroom staffing and operational capacity without the infrastructure of larger DOE schools. This model expands tuition-free early learning access for working families who are struggling to make ends meet.

Current funding does not fully reflect the operational realities of stand-alone campuses. HB2399 provides targeted stabilization funding for the 2026–2027 school year and supports responsible operations and long-term sustainability.

I respectfully urge your support of this measure.

Mahalo,

Ed Korybski

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 4:03:36 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Strong support based on first hand experience of the good work that is being done on the early education front by dedicated and hard working people and organizations that need continued support. Mahalo

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 9:43:08 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Asa Mills	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Subject: I Support HB2399

Dear Chair and Members,

I support HB2399. This bill helps ensure enough staffing in our Pre-K classrooms and protects tuition-free preschool for families like mine.

Without tuition-free preschool could not afford to send our children to preschool. The cost of private preschool combined with the high cost of living in Hawaii makes unaffordable for middle class families like ours. We do not have family available to watch our children so we cannot both work and still care for our children without preschool. We have our son in a public tuition-free preschool, and this has been a lifeline and allowed my wife to return to work.

Mahalo,

Asa Mills

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 9:09:32 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aimee Matsuura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: House Committee on Finance

From: Aimee Matsuura, HI Public School Teacher

Re: **Testimony in Support of HB 2399-Relating to Early Learning**

Hearing Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2026, 2:00 PM

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

My name is Aimee Matsuura, and I submit this testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of HB 2399 HD1, which appropriates funds to the State Public Charter School Commission for prekindergarten-only public charter schools.

Pre-k-only charter schools expand access to high-quality, FREE early education with no eligibility requirements beyond age. This model offers families relief from high childcare costs while ensuring children receive developmentally appropriate early learning experiences. Demand is clear: all ten classrooms were fully enrolled at opening, but these schools need extra support during these early stages.

HB 2399 is a targeted investment that strengthens Hawai‘i’s early learning system, supports working families, and advances the State’s commitment to universal preschool access.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your consideration.

Please **SUPPORT HB 2399 HD1**.

Respectfully submitted,

Aimee Matsuura

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 12:18:14 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patricia Di Rosa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Subject: I Support HB2399

Dear Chair and Members,

I support HB2399. This bill helps ensure enough staffing in our Pre-K classrooms and protects tuition-free preschool for families like mine.

Tuition-free preschool has helped our family because of the enriching environment offered to us who were initially unsure of the need for preschool given the rising and unsustainable tuitions offered by other schools. We have loved the teachers, community and rich environment.

Mahalo,
Patricia

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 1:23:12 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chrystalle Anger	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Wonderful opportunity and school for our keiki!

HB-2399-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 8:42:22 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
ANDREW ISODA	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I support HB2399 to strengthen Pre-K Only Charter Schools. These programs provide free, high-quality early education for Hawai'i's keiki and critical support for working families. They deserve stable funding to continue serving our communities.

Mahalo for putting keiki first!

*Andrew Isoda
Lahaina, Mau'i*