

ACT 151

H.B. NO. 1300

A Bill for an Act Relating to Early Childhood Education.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:

PART I
PURPOSE

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the purpose and mission of education is to “advance the endowment of human nature itself, so that each succeeding generation finds itself further along the road towards peace, social justice, and environmental sustainability in a society guided by creativity, compassion, and curiosity” (Act 51, Session Laws of Hawaii 2004).

The legislature further finds that children are born ready to learn and that early childhood learning opportunities are essential and fundamental to developing self-esteem, personal values, social behaviors, attitudes that contribute to collaborative living, and skills that promote lifelong learning.

Nearly eighty-five per cent of brain development occurs in the first five years of life. Research has proven that a child’s early years are the most crucial in their cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development. Furthermore, it has been affirmed that early education measurably impacts kindergarten through grade 12 student achievement, as well as a child’s ability to integrate into society as a productive, contributing member.

The legislature further finds that every \$1 invested on quality early childhood education saves \$7 in welfare and penal system costs through improved student achievement, increased college attendance rates, and a corresponding reduction in crime and the need for welfare. Early education encourages and provides the support that child care centers, family child care services, and families and friends need to improve the quality of life of children by ensuring that children have enhanced access to a good beginning in life, laying the firm foundation that will enable youth to reach the potential with which they were born.

The legislature recognizes the importance of providing children with early learning opportunities of the highest quality, such as parenting programs, parent-child education programs, licensed and license-exempt child care, and center-based programs. Early childhood education programs, both public and private, should meet professionally-accepted standards and be staffed by well-trained, appropriately-compensated educators.

The purpose of this Act is to:

- (1) Improve early childhood education by establishing and appropriating funds for a temporary early childhood education task force to develop a framework to increase access to early childhood education, improve the quality of early childhood learning programs, support the professional development of early childhood educators and service providers, educate families about the value of early childhood education, and identify funding mechanisms to appropriately compensate early childhood educators; and
- (2) Increase the inventory of available facilities for early childhood education programs.

PART II
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TASK FORCE

SECTION 2. (a) There is established in the University of Hawaii a temporary early childhood education task force. The Hawaii Educational Policy Center shall be responsible for administering the work of the temporary task force, providing a facilitator, and submitting a report to the legislature. The goals of the temporary task force shall be to:

- (1) Propose an overall plan to increase access to early childhood education opportunities for families, which may include incentives, resource development, the need for and availability of infrastructure, and possible funding sources through:
 - (A) The identification of criteria, procedures, and methods for issuing subsidies to parents and legal guardians of children to facilitate their attendance at preschools and early learning programs; and
 - (B) The development of processes designed to:
 - (i) Promote public-private partnerships;
 - (ii) Create new and expand existing early childhood learning programs; and
 - (iii) Provide needs assessment and planning, including a coordinated data system;
 - (2) Develop plans and identify resources needed to improve the quality and services of early childhood learning programs by:
 - (A) Determining performance indicators of quality programs;
 - (B) Identifying and recommending quality assessment instruments and accreditation alternatives to facilitate planning for program improvement;
 - (C) Proposing incentives and rewards programs designed to increase overall school program quality;
 - (D) Using the Hawaii Preschool Content Standards as guidelines for program improvement; and
 - (E) Identifying and promoting multi-sector coordination;
 - (3) Design proposals to support the professional development of early childhood education staff, which may include:
 - (A) Identifying appropriate and desired education levels of staff;
 - (B) Recommending a compensation plan related to educational levels and experience that recognizes the value of early childhood education;
 - (C) Promoting mentor relationships in quality programs for educators and aspiring educators who seek to enter or improve the field as an early childhood education teacher;
 - (D) Identifying incentives and rewards to encourage ongoing professional development; and
 - (E) Expanding access to and the creation of innovative strategies for professional development opportunities;
 - (4) Create an implementation plan to motivate and promote the value of and participation in early childhood learning opportunities for parents and the general public, including the business community; and
 - (5) Recommend to the legislature a conceptual framework, along with proposals for policies and legislation necessary to facilitate and monitor the implementation of such a framework.
- (b) An element critical to the successful implementation of any plan proposed by the task force is the assessment and evaluation of the various program components. In the fulfillment of its objectives, the early childhood education task

force shall identify or develop appropriate assessment methods and mechanisms and performance indicators that will allow monitoring and improvement of the initiative.

(c) The task force shall establish a timeline by which these goals and tasks shall be accomplished.

(d) The members of the early childhood education task force shall consist of twenty members as follows:

- (1) The speaker of the house of representatives or the speaker's designee;
- (2) The president of the senate or the president's designee;
- (3) The superintendent of education or the superintendent's designee;
- (4) The director of human services or the director's designee;
- (5) The director of health or the director's designee;
- (6) The executive director of the good beginnings alliance or the executive director's designee;
- (7) The dean of the college of education at the University of Hawaii or the dean's designee;
- (8) A representative from each of the early childhood education communities in the counties of Kauai, Maui, and Hawaii, to be appointed by the respective mayors;
- (9) The chief executive officer of Kamehameha Schools or the chief executive officer's designee;
- (10) The president of the Hawaii Head Start Association or the president's designee;
- (11) The executive director of the Hawaii Association for the Education of Young Children or the executive director's designee;
- (12) The executive director of the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools or the executive director's designee;
- (13) One member from the resource and referral community to be selected by People Attentive To Children;
- (14) One member to be selected by the Hawaii Business Roundtable;
- (15) The liaison of the Childcare Business Coalition or the liaison's designee;
- (16) The president of Chaminade University or the president's designee;
- (17) The coordinator of early childhood programs of the University of Hawaii community colleges or the coordinator's designee; and
- (18) A communications professional as recommended by a majority vote of the temporary task force.

(e) The early childhood education task force may form workgroups and subcommittees to:

- (1) Obtain input from stakeholders, early education professionals, and any other individuals as may be determined necessary by the task force; and
- (2) Perform any other functions as may be deemed necessary by the task force for the fulfillment of their functions.

(f) Members of the early childhood education task force shall serve without compensation but shall be reimbursed for expenses, including travel expenses, necessary for the performance of their duties.

(g) The early childhood education task force shall be exempt from chapter 92, Hawaii Revised Statutes; provided that the task force shall make a good faith effort to make its proceedings and work products accessible and available to the general public in a manner consistent with the intent of chapter 92, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

(h) The early childhood education task force shall be exempt from the requirements of chapter 103D.

(i) The early childhood education task force shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2006.

SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$50,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2005-2006 to support the operations of the early childhood education task force.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the University of Hawaii for the purposes of this part and not be subject to chapter 103D.

PART III EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

SECTION 4. Chapter 302A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

“§302A- Early childhood education facilities; identifying sites. (a) The department of education shall identify unused public school facilities for use by early childhood education programs. Suitable empty classrooms, as determined by the department, shall be inventoried for potential use in early childhood education programs. Priority shall be given to facilities on sites with sufficient space for three or more classrooms to be renovated or constructed.

(b) The department shall assist in the identification of possible construction sites for private providers to build early childhood education facilities.’’

SECTION 5. The department of education shall transmit to the legislature, department of human services, and the early childhood education task force, no later than October 1, 2005, the inventory of suitable empty classrooms for potential use in early childhood education programs.

PART IV MISCELLANEOUS

SECTION 6. New statutory material is underscored.¹

SECTION 7. This Act shall take effect upon its approval; provided that section 2 shall be repealed on June 30, 2006; provided further that section 3 shall take effect on July 1, 2005.

(Approved June 23, 2005.)

Note

1. Edited pursuant to HRS §23G-16.5.