

ACT 183

S.B. NO. 2068

A Bill for an Act Relating to Early Education.

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

SECTION 1. Act 219, Session Laws of Hawaii 2004, launched junior kindergarten beginning with the 2006-2007 school year, with the intent to enable all children in Hawaii to succeed in kindergarten and subsequent school experiences by addressing their varying developmental and learning needs. The legislature finds that thus far, only about one-third of the schools in the state have adopted some variation of the junior kindergarten program.

The intent of Act 14, Special Session Laws of Hawaii 2008, which established the State's early learning system known as Keiki First Steps, was to integrate the cohort of children who would otherwise attend junior kindergarten

into the system over time, because as the legislature continues to find, these children may be placed more appropriately in a preschool setting. However, the legislature finds that more rapid progress must be made in finding cost-effective methods of providing early education.

The purpose of this Act is to:

- (1) Amend the age requirement for entrance into the public kindergarten program; and
- (2) Require the department of education and early learning council to work together on a plan to assess the success of public junior kindergarten programs at individual schools.

SECTION 2. Section 302A-411, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by amending subsection (c) to read as follows:

“(c) Beginning with the 2004-2005 school year, a child who will be at least five years of age on or before December 31 of the school year may attend a public school kindergarten. Beginning with the 2006-2007 school year, a child who will be at least five years of age on or before August 1 of the school year may attend a public school kindergarten. Beginning with the 2006-2007 school year, a child who will be at least five years of age after August 1 and before January 1 of the school year may attend a public school junior kindergarten. Beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, a child who will be at least five years of age on the first day of instruction may attend a public school kindergarten.”

SECTION 3. The department of education and early learning council shall work together to develop a plan to assess the success of public junior kindergarten programs at individual schools. The plan shall:

- (1) Provide for early childhood educational opportunities for the children who would have otherwise been eligible for junior kindergarten or kindergarten; and
- (2) Recommend a funding plan with the following features:
 - (A) Supports the education of four year olds, including children who would have been eligible to attend public school prior to the age change provided for under section 302A-411(c), Hawaii Revised Statutes, pursuant to this Act;
 - (B) Be tiered and based on family income; and
 - (C) Incorporates public and private funding sources.

The department of education and early learning council shall submit the plan and any proposed legislation to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the 2011 regular session.

SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

(Approved June 29, 2010.)