HB 3237 HD2 – Relating to Early Childhood Education

Chairs Chun Oakland and Sakamoto, and Members of the Committees:

The University of Hawai‘i supports HB 3237 HD2. It is imperative that Hawai‘i provide greater access to high quality early learning experiences for all young children in order to ensure that they succeed in school and reach their full potential as learners.

The College of Education will be pleased to participate on the early learning work group proposed in the bill.

Since we participated on the temporary early childhood education task force in 2005, we must state that our preference remains with SB 3101 SD 2 that reflects the task force recommendations and builds on nearly a decade of work through Act 77 which created the Good Beginnings Alliance.

If the legislature is not able to move forward with the recommendations of the task force, HB 3237 HD 2 is an acceptable and important step forward.

With that in mind, we offer the following suggestions:

In the last paragraph of section 1, remove the phrase, “and to build upon the existing framework for junior kindergarten”. There are many possible ways to ensure universal access to preschool programs for four year olds and the Junior Kindergarten is just one.

At the end of the same paragraph, we suggest adding the sentence, “The inter-departmental working group may also recommend plans for addressing the learning needs of children 0-3 years of age.”

Finally, we are pleased to see that a reasonable amount of funding is being recommended to support the work of the early learning working group. We urge that this amount of money not be reduced.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.