S.B. 873: RELATING TO EDUCATION

Testimony Presented Before the Senate Committee on Education and Military Affairs and Committee on Education

February 9, 2005

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Dean
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa
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Chair Sakamoto & Hee, Vice Chair Hooser & Inouye, and
Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai‘i wishes to express its support
for the intent of S.B. 873, Relating to Education. This
bill addresses the need to insure that those who will
teach in the newly established junior kindergarten program
are qualified in early childhood education. There is a
large body of research that shows that training in early
childhood education is related to student outcomes in
early childhood programs. If we want the new junior
kindergarten programs to have the intended effect of
preparing children to be successful in school, it is
imperative that their teachers have the specialized
knowledge and skills that are needed to work effectively
with this age group.

Most current policy recommendations call for teachers in
early childhood programs to have at least a bachelor’s
degree and specialized training the early education. In
order to maximize the potential of the Jr. Kindergarten
programs to positively influence children’s development
and learning, we recommend that the following provisions
be added to the bill.

- Teachers in the junior kindergarten should have a
  minimum of a bachelor’s degree from an accredited
  teacher preparation program with specialized
coursework in early childhood education.

This requirement could be met with:

  o A bachelor’s degree in elementary education with
     an endorsement in early childhood education.
Since the early 1970s UH Mānoa has had a program to provide teachers with specialized training in working with 3-8 year olds as a supplement to the elementary education program. These teachers would be well qualified for this new role. Other colleges have similar programs.

It should be noted here that there is, at this time, no individual licensure for preschool teachers (only preschool facilities are licensed). Currently there are conversations underway with the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board to develop this licensure. It is timely to focus on this new teacher license since plans are underway to develop a Bachelor’s program in early childhood education (that is not part of an elementary education program) at UH West Oahu.

- Teacher assistants in the junior kindergartens should have at least an AA degree in early childhood education from an accredited program.

The recommended amendments to the bill will insure that the junior kindergartens produce the best possible outcomes for young children.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.