



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM

TESTIMONY

S.B. 873, S.D. 2: RELATING TO EDUCATION

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Education

March 16, 2005

By

Randy Hitz
Dean

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

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Chair Takumi, Vice Chair Berg, and Members of the
Committee:

The University of Hawai'i wishes to express its support for the intent of S.B. 873, S.D. 2 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.

- o 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.

