



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

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by
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SB3101 SD2 – Relating to Early Childhood Education

Chair Takumi, Chair Caldwell, and Members of the Committees:

The University of Hawai'i supports of SB 3101 SD2 and the recommendations of the Early Childhood Education Task Force.

As I understand the bill, it creates an Early Learning Authority (ELA) in order to develop a system of care and education for young children. Currently, though there are a myriad of services, they are insufficient, and poorly coordinated. There is currently, in short, no system. The ELA is needed in order to ensure quality care and education for all children and to promote efficiencies in a newly created system. The ELA should not be just another state bureaucracy, but rather, it should make state government and all programs for young children work together and more effectively for children and families.

As I see it, the ELA will have four primary functions. First, is to coordinate services among all state agencies. Second, the ELA will provide workforce and professional development support. Third, it will oversee (and probably administer through a grant-in-aid process) innovative programs for children ages birth through age eight. Innovative programs could include such things as parent education programs, play and learn groups, distribution of information to new parents, and so on. Fourth, the ELA will oversee (again, probably through a grant-in-aid process) early learning programs for four year old children with the goal of access for all age-eligible children.

One of the strengths of SB 3101 SD2 is that it seeks to build an early learning system by using the best of services currently available in both the public and private sectors. By doing so, it ensures more rapid progress toward the goal of improving both quality and access for all young children. It also ensures more program innovation and choice for families.

If the legislature is not able to move forward with SB 3101 SD2 and the recommendations of the task force, HB 3237 HD 2 is an acceptable and important step forward which we also support. Our preference, however, is SB 3101 SD2.

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony. I am available if you have questions.