UNIVERSITY OF HAWAIʻI SYSTEM
Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Education
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by
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SB 2878, SD2 – RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

Chair Takumi, Vice Chair Berg, and members of the House Committee on Education:

I am Linda K. Johnsrud, Vice President for Academic Planning and Policy, University of Hawaiʻi System. On behalf of the University System, I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 2878, Senate Draft 2, which establishes an early learning system for Hawaiʻi, creates an Early Learning Council to govern the system, and establishes the Keiki First Steps Pilot Program.

The University of Hawaiʻi is a strong advocate of measures to increase the success of Hawaiʻi's students as they move through the educational pipeline from birth through adulthood. We are an active partner in the Hawaiʻi P-20 Initiative, and firmly believe that higher education's role is critical if we are to improve the educational level of all of Hawaiʻi's citizens. The Kellogg Foundation Grant of $10 million is an example of our efforts at statewide collaboration and commitment toward early childhood education at the community level.

As a partner in Hawaiʻi's P-20 Initiative with Superintendent Pat Hamamoto and Good Beginnings President Liz Chun, we grapple with the questions as to what strategies are needed to ensure every child enters school ready to succeed, schools are ready for children, and early childhood professionals have access to education that will increase their capacity to teach and nurture the young learner.

We believe there must be a concerted effort to provide quality early education for Hawaiʻi's keiki, to ensure the elementary schools are ready for the young learner, and to commit to higher education's support for expanding the statewide capacity to educate the early childhood professional.

We know that ultimately how successfully children progress through the educational pipeline will affect their entrance into higher education and lifelong learning.

Although the University of Hawai‘i is not specifically mentioned in SB 2878, SD2, may I offer that, as the only system of public higher education in the state, your university will work hand in hand with the early learning system to provide the preservice education and professional development for a well-qualified early childhood workforce that is referenced in the language of the bill.

Four of our community colleges, Honolulu, Hawai‘i, Kaua‘i, and Maui Community College offer courses in early childhood education leading to an Associate of Science Degree. These programs are articulated with the Bachelor of Arts degree in the Social Sciences with a concentration in Early Childhood Education from the University of Hawai‘i at West O‘ahu. The College of Education at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa offers a Bachelor of Education with a focus in Early Childhood Education. A Master’s Degree of Education in Early Childhood Education was approved by the Board of Regents in March 2002.

These programs provide pathways to degrees and improved educational qualifications for those in the early education profession, including associate teachers, lead teachers, and center directors. In the very short term, the University of Hawai‘i has the capacity to increase the numbers of students that we serve in our programs. In the longer term, we will need resources to build capacity in order to meet anticipated workforce needs. The system academic planning and policy office would work with each of our campuses to plan as a system to address the needs we anticipate. For example, we would need to increase the number and type of courses, programs, and delivery methods to improve access for targeted regions and populations; to add support staff to tutor and remediate returning adults who must update their basic skills while seeking credentials; to work with early childhood centers to recruit students, promote job placements, and ensure that we are being responsive to the early childhood professional community.

The intent of SB 2878, SD2 is to move the state toward a comprehensive early childhood system, a direction that the University of Hawai‘i fully supports. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.