



## Governor's Legislative Package for Early Childhood Education

The Governor's legislative package includes three bills that support our long-term efforts to establish an effective, comprehensive early learning system for Hawaii's children. All of these bills are critical to our immediate and long-term plans.

- **Establishment of the School Readiness Program (HB862 / SB1093).** This bill will enable us to start so there will be services to the gap group resulting from the 2014 change in kindergarten entry age, beginning school year 2014-2015. The program will be delivered through DOE and DHS-licensed child care providers that meet minimal quality standards. Establishes the foundation for the long-term program (i.e., the early childhood education program).
- **Constitutional Amendment (HB853 / SB1084).** Currently, the Hawaii State Constitution does not allow for benefits to be provided to private schools for educational purposes. However, we want to deliver services through the private sector where capacity and expertise lie, and incorporate higher-quality, education-focused standards to produce the outcomes needed to make a difference. To do this, the attorney generals have advised the Executive Office on Early Learning that we need a Constitutional amendment to allow public funds to be given to private early childhood education programs.
  - If approved by the Legislature, the Constitutional amendment would appear on the 2014 election ballot to be ratified by voters.
  - Only when voters ratify the Constitutional amendment, will we be able to implement the high-quality early childhood education program (see HB864 / SB1095).
- **Establishment of the Early Childhood Education Program (HB864 / SB1095).** Establishes the early childhood education program, which can only be implemented after the Constitutional Amendment is approved. This is the program that will be delivered through DOE and private early childhood education programs that meet higher levels of quality and emphasize educational outcomes for children, which is needed to establish a solid foundation for success in school and beyond. (This is the high-quality early learning program that is described in the Blueprint from the Executive Office on Early Learning.)

### ***Why the School Readiness Program is Urgently Needed***

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Definitive research supports the knowledge that high-quality preschool helps children with the skills and attitudes they need to be successful in school and in life.

In three-quarters of DOE kindergarten classes in 2012-2013, the majority of students didn't start school with the skills necessary for success in school. About 43% of DOE kindergarteners had not attended preschool. Without this foundation, children's development can be 18-24 months behind, which makes achievement during kindergarten difficult.

If we don't have a program in place for 2014, 5,100 children will be left unserved due to the change in kindergarten entry age (a child must be five years old before August 1, 2014).

There are existing programs that, in cooperation with the School Readiness Program, can help to serve the children that fall in this gap group. The School Readiness Program estimates it will serve 3,500 of these children. Other programs, such as Head Start and Kamehameha Schools are equipped to serve 1,600 children in the target age group.

### ***Design of The School Readiness Program***

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The School Readiness Program is designed to help children develop the skills and attitudes they need to be ready for kindergarten and successful in school.

The School Readiness Program is for families who wish to enroll their children. The Program will give priority to:

- Late-born five-year-olds (those who are not five-years old before August 1, 2014).
- Low- and moderate-income families. Families and the State will share in the responsibility through a sliding fee scale.

The School Readiness Program will build on the capacity and expertise of the private sector. Services will be delivered via public-private partnerships through contracts to increase the number of spaces available for children. Providers that participate in the School Readiness Program will have the security of consistent revenue.

The School Readiness Program will be convenient for families. It is a school-day/school-year program that mirrors the DOE calendar.

The School Readiness Program is an investment in our future. Every \$1 invested today generates \$4.20 in future savings and increased earnings for Hawaii.

### ***What we need & why***

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To achieve the goals of the School Readiness Program, the plan requires:

- Funding;
- Facilities and spaces for more children;
- Qualified staff; and
- Participating programs that commit to qualifying criteria established by the School Readiness Program.

The funding request from the Executive Office on Early Learning addresses each of these crucial needs.