



EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING
HONOLULU

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DIRECTOR

Testimony in **Support** of
H.B. 14, Relating to Early Childhood Education
By GG Weisenfeld, Director

House Committee on Education
February 5, 2014
2:00 p.m., Room 309

Chair Takumi, Vice-Chair Ohno, and Members of the Committee:

Good afternoon. I am GG Weisenfeld, Director of the Executive Office on Early Learning. EOEL is in support of House Bill 14.

The purpose of this bill is to make kindergarten mandatory for a child who will be at least five years of age by July 1 of the school year.

Across the nation, most school districts require that a child be five years old before entering kindergarten or become five in the first month of school. In 2012, 39 states and the District of Columbia had cutoff dates of September (usually the first day of school) or earlier.

As we work to implement an early learning system in Hawaii, it makes sense to have mandatory kindergarten to promote the continuity of children's experiences from prekindergarten to kindergarten. While most children enroll in kindergarten, some families do not feel compelled to send their children to school on a consistent basis because it is not mandatory. Without the skills that can be gained through a kindergarten experience, these children may have to play catch up with their peers in first grade. This may leave the child feeling discouraged and put them in a position to fall further behind.

With the adoption of the Common Core State Standards for kindergarten to grade 12, it is even more important now that kindergarten be made mandatory so Hawaii's children can meet the academic requirements of K-12.

EOEL recommends the following amendments to the bill:

- Page 2, line 22: “... least [~~six~~] five years[;] on or before July 31 of the school year and who ...”
- Add a provision to require the Department of Education, in collaboration with the Executive Office on Early Learning, to develop a statewide individualized kindergarten readiness tool and establish an individualized kindergarten readiness assessment process, as proposed in S.B. 2768 that was passed by the Senate Committee on Education. We believe an appropriation of \$870,000 would be needed to fund this adequately.

We also prefer the drafting found in H.B. 1487 relating to the provision to make kindergarten mandatory (e.g., repeal 302A-411).

EOEL respectfully asks that the committee move this bill forward with the suggested amendments. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.