



EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING  
HONOLULU

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Testimony in **Support** of  
H.B. 14 H.D. 1, Relating to Early Childhood Education  
By GG Weisenfeld, Director

House Committee on Finance  
February 21, 2014  
1:00 p.m., Room 308

Chair Luke, Vice-Chair Nishimoto, Vice-Chair Johanson, and Members of the Committee:

Good afternoon. I am GG Weisenfeld, Director of the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL). EOEL is in support of House Bill 14, House Draft 1.

The purpose of this bill is to make kindergarten mandatory for a child who will be at least five years of age on or before July 31 of the school year. The bill further requires the Department of Education, in collaboration with EOEL, to develop a statewide individualized kindergarten readiness system and establish an individualized kindergarten readiness assessment system.

EOEL supports the provision to make kindergarten mandatory.

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 also supports the requirement of this bill that EOEL cooperate with the Department of Education to develop a kindergarten readiness assessment system. As EOEL develops a prekindergarten program for four-year-olds, it is important that the School Readiness and Early Childhood Education programs align with the DOE kindergarten program. A kindergarten readiness assessment system is an important part of achieving this alignment.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.