



EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING
HONOLULU

GG WEISENFELD
DIRECTOR

Testimony in **Support** of
S.B. 2768 S.D. 2, Relating to Kindergarten
By GG Weisenfeld, Director

House Committee on Education
March 14, 2014
2:00 p.m., Room 309

Chair, Vice-Chair, 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 Senate Bill 2768, Senate Draft 2.

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 the Executive Office on Early Learning, to develop a statewide individualized kindergarten readiness process and establish an individualized kindergarten readiness assessment tool.

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 uniform statewide individualized kindergarten readiness assessment process. 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 process is an important part of achieving this alignment.

EOEL suggests the following amendments to the bill:

- Clarify that a “statewide individualized kindergarten readiness assessment process” is to be developed by the Department of Education, in collaboration with EOEL:
 - Page 7, lines 17-18
 - Page 8, lines 11-12 and lines 21-22

We also suggest that section 302A-411, which establishes the kindergarten program in DOE, may be unnecessary if the age for compulsory education is being changed in section 302A-1132.

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.