**To**: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair

Senator Gilbert S. C.Keith-Agaran Vice Chair

Members of the Senate Committee On Ways and Means

**From:** Robert G. Peters, Chair

Early Learning Board

**Subject**: **Measure**: SB 2482, Relating to Wellness

**Hearing Date**: Thursday, February 24, 2022

**Time**: 10:00 A.M.

**Location**: Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

**Description**: Establishes a temporary Office of Wellness and Resilience within the Office of the Governor. Authorizes the Office to address issues and implement solutions to improve wellness and resilience, including issues and solutions identified by the Trauma-Informed Care Task Force. Appropriates moneys. Sunsets on an unspecified date.

**Early Learning Board Position: Support the Intent**

Aloha. I am Robert G. Peters, Chair of the Early Learning Board (ELB). Thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony about SB 2482 on behalf of the ELB.

Through Act 202, Session Laws of Hawaii 2017, ELB transitioned from an advisory to a governing board for the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) and is charged with formulating statewide policy relating to early learning. The ELB is composed of 17 representatives from across the early childhood field, in both the public and private sectors.

Research has concluded that there is a direct relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and negative life outcomes for children ranging from chronic disease, drug abuse, depression, involvement with the juvenile justice system, family violence, and early death. Additionally, children with higher ACE scores are more likely to be disengaged from school. Poor mental health affects entire families; if it is addressed, it will reduce overall family stress and increase wellbeing. An Office of Wellness and Resilience would help coordinate social services and allow for more resources to flow into Hawaii for needed resources and especially support our children who have experienced adversity.

In 2018, the ELB and the EOEL (Executive Office on Ealy Learning) completed a multi-stakeholder planning process resulting in the production of the Hawaii Early Childhood State Plan, 2019 – 2024, which was signed by the Governor and affected State Department Heads. The Plan posits that children’s health and their families’ wellbeing are foundational for optimal child development and learning. The creation of an Office of Wellness and Resilience would enhance the opportunity to build that foundation for Hawaii’s children. Our recent experience of the impact of the Pandemic on young children and families reinforced the need for offering trauma-informed care services in our communities, something an Office of Wellness and Resilience could provide.

Mahalo for the opportunity to offer supportive testimony of SB 2482.