



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Lower and Higher Education
Friday, January 31, 2020 at 2:00 p.m.

by

Donald O. Straney, Vice President for Academic Planning and Policy
University of Hawai'i System

HB 2623 – RELATING TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS

Chair Woodson, Vice Chairs Hashem and Quinlan, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding HB 2623 – Relating to Early Childhood Education Scholarships.

The University of Hawai'i (University) supports the intent of this bill. Providing scholarship funds for students pursuing degrees in early childhood education would serve a State need for more teachers prepared to teach students at the beginning of their educational journey. This bill could help advance the progress on developing more credentialed and qualified teachers as well as potentially increasing the proliferation of early childhood education schools. The University offers early childhood education programs at several of its campuses.

The University would welcome the opportunity to assist students pursuing early childhood education degrees. There would be some mechanical problems issues with administering such a program, though. For example, providing aid as a scholarship that ends up having to be repaid when students do not complete the program or do not spend three years teaching in a classroom of the Executive Office on Early Learning public prekindergarten program will create administrative and logistical issues. These conditions effectively turn the scholarship into a loan program. While the University is willing to find ways to undertake and overcome such challenges for the benefit of having this program, these are processes that must be adequately resourced. Managing such a program would place an administrative burden on the University to collect monies to reimburse the scholarship for students who do not finish their program or teach in public preschool programs.

Identifying the appropriate agency to administer this loan collection program and providing for adequately funding those efforts may be necessary in the bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.