



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
Monday, February 26, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.

By

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And

Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 1964 HD1 – RELATING TO EARLY CHILD CARE

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i, College of Education supports the intent of HB 1964 HD1 to improve pay for the professionals who are dedicated to early childhood classrooms. Families must have access to early childhood care and education from birth to kindergarten. This measure is the first step toward ensuring that early childhood care and education professionals earn a livable wage.

The demand for quality child care and early education far exceeds the number of qualified child care and early education professionals currently available in the State. According to a RAND Corporation study conducted in partnership with the College of Education/UH Manoa, child care workers in the state earn between \$13 and \$17 per hour. This low pay is consistently cited as a barrier to becoming a childcare worker. This pay low consistently is cited as a barrier to becoming a childcare worker. Interestingly, the number of early childhood care and education professionals in Hawai'i has been decreasing significantly over the last 5-years despite the high demand in this sector. Lastly, Child care and preschools are essential infrastructure. Hawai'i's early childhood care and education professionals provide a public good that mandates public investment.

Thank you for opportunity to provide comments on HB 1964 HD1.