
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO SCHOOL READINESS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that more of our children
2 are entering kindergarten without the physical, cognitive,
3 linguistic, social, and emotional skills necessary to prepare
4 them for success in school life. For example, according to the
5 Hawaii State School Readiness Assessment, only forty per cent of
6 kindergarten classes had the majority of their students entering
7 the 2012-2013 school year with school behaviors and skills, and
8 even fewer demonstrated the necessary approaches to learning.

9 It is no coincidence that the Hawaii State School Readiness
10 Assessment also reports that fifty-seven per cent of students
11 who entered kindergarten had attended preschool. This
12 percentage is lower than in years past. According to
13 kindergarten teachers in the department of education, many of
14 the children who do not have experiences in pre-kindergarten
15 programs could be eighteen to twenty-four months behind
16 developmentally than their peers who do. The link between
17 school readiness and success in school is indisputable. Act 13,
18 Session Laws of Hawaii 2002, defined school readiness to mean



1 that "young children are ready to have successful learning
2 experiences in school when there is a positive interaction among
3 the child's developmental characteristics, school practices, and
4 family and community support."

5 The State must commit to efforts to promote school
6 readiness, especially in light of its expectation that
7 kindergarten students master the grade-level common core state
8 standards to develop the academic competencies and habits of
9 mind necessary for college and career success.

10 Act 178, Session Laws of Hawaii 2012, repealed the junior
11 kindergarten program and beginning with the 2014-2015 school
12 year, required that a child must be five years old by July 31 of
13 the school year to attend a public school kindergarten. The
14 legislature's intent was to align the changes with the
15 implementation of a program that would more effectively provide
16 a developmentally appropriate experience to prepare children
17 physically, cognitively, linguistically, socially, and
18 emotionally prior to beginning the public education provided by
19 the department of education.

20 Currently, the department of human services administers a
21 child care assistance program, called preschool open doors,



1 whose purpose is to contribute to school readiness for children
2 in the year prior to entering kindergarten.

3 The purpose of this Act, therefore, is to establish the
4 preschool open doors program as the statewide school readiness
5 program. The preschool open doors program will be administered
6 by the department of human services.

7 SECTION 2. Chapter 346, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
8 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
9 and to read as follows:

10 "§346- Preschool open doors program. (a) There is
11 established within the department a school readiness program to
12 be known as the preschool open doors program within the
13 department's child care assistance program. The program shall:

- 14 (1) Provide access to school readiness services that
15 address children's physical, cognitive, linguistic,
16 social, and emotional development;
17 (2) Require each provider to conduct school readiness
18 assessments;
19 (3) Give priority to children from low- and moderate-
20 income families; and
21 (4) Prepare children for school through either of the
22 State's two official languages.



1 (b) Subject to the availability of funds, the program
2 shall serve four-year-old children, with priority extended to:

3 (1) Children who are not eligible to attend public school
4 kindergarten in the calendar year in which they turn
5 five years of age because their birth date occurs
6 after the kindergarten eligibility date pursuant to
7 section 302A-411; and

8 (2) Underserved or at-risk children.

9 (c) Enrollment in the program shall be voluntary. A
10 parent or guardian of a child enrolled in the program shall
11 share in the costs of the program through a copayment according
12 to a sliding fee scale that is based on need pursuant to rules
13 adopted by the department.

14 (d) The department may adopt interim rules to carry out
15 the purposes of this section without regard to chapter 91 or
16 201M; provided that:

17 (1) The department shall hold at least one public hearing
18 prior to the adoption of interim rules;

19 (2) The interim rules shall comply with all applicable
20 state and federal laws; and

21 (3) The interim rules shall be effective for no more than
22 one year after their adoption."



1 SECTION 3. The department of human services shall report
2 to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the
3 convening of the 2014 and 2015 regular sessions on the
4 following:

- 5 (1) The number of applicants to the preschool open doors
6 program established pursuant to this Act;
- 7 (2) The number of applicants that were placed on a
8 waitlist for the preschool open doors program;
- 9 (3) The geographic distribution of services to
10 participants in the preschool open doors program;
- 11 (4) The number of participating providers; and
- 12 (5) A summary of any capacity and funding issues the
13 department has experienced in carrying out the
14 purposes of this Act.

15 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
16 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$720,000 or so much
17 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2013-2014 and the
18 sum of \$440,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for
19 fiscal year 2014-2015 to establish three temporary positions and
20 to contract services for the purposes of implementing the
21 preschool open doors program as the statewide school readiness
22 program.



1 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
2 of human services for the purposes of this Act.

3 SECTION 5. There is appropriated out of the general
4 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$6,000,000 or so much
5 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2014-2015 for
6 subsidies for the preschool open doors program.

7 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
8 human services for the purposes of this Act.

9 SECTION 6. New statutory material is underscored.

10 SECTION 7. This Act shall take effect upon its approval;
11 provided that sections 4 and 5 shall take effect on July 1,
12 2013.



Report Title:

School Readiness; Preschool Open Doors Program; Appropriation

Description:

Establishes the preschool open doors program within the department of human services. Requires reporting to the legislature. Makes an appropriation. (CD1)

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