

JAN 20 2017

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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO EDUCATION.

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

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that more of Hawaii's  
2 children are entering kindergarten without the physical,  
3 cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional skills necessary to  
4 prepare them for success in school life. The preschool open  
5 doors program, authorized in 1991, was established to contribute  
6 to the school readiness of children, particularly those who have  
7 special needs, for whom English is a second language, or who are  
8 homeless, by providing a developmentally appropriate experience  
9 to prepare children for a public education prior to entering  
10 kindergarten.

11           The link between school readiness and success in school is  
12 indisputable. Act 13, Session Laws of Hawaii 2002, defined  
13 school readiness to mean that "young children are ready to have  
14 successful learning experiences in school when there is a  
15 positive interaction among the child's developmental  
16 characteristics, school practices, and family and community  
17 support." According to kindergarten teachers within the



1 department of education, many of the children who do not attend  
2 pre-kindergarten programs could be eighteen to twenty-four  
3 months behind developmentally than their peers who do attend  
4 preschool.

5       When first established, the preschool open doors program  
6 provided financial assistance to parents of three- and four-  
7 year-old children living at or below seventy-five per cent of  
8 the state median income. Act 169, Session Laws of Hawaii 2013,  
9 reestablished the preschool open doors program as the statewide  
10 school readiness program, but only for children in the year  
11 prior to entering kindergarten, namely four-year-olds.

12       The State must commit to efforts to promote school  
13 readiness, especially for children with special needs, for whom  
14 English is a second language, or who are homeless. By not  
15 providing preschool services to these children when they are  
16 three years old, their school readiness will likely decrease  
17 while they wait to become eligible for these services at four  
18 years of age.

19       Therefore, the purpose of this Act is to reestablish  
20 eligibility to the preschool open doors program for three- and  
21 four-year-old children prior to entering kindergarten. The



1 preschool open doors program will be administered by the  
2 department of human services.

3 SECTION 2. Section 346-181, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
4 amended by amending subsection (b) to read as follows:

5 "(b) Subject to the availability of funds, the program  
6 shall serve three- and four-year-old children, with priority  
7 extended to:

- 8 (1) Children who are not eligible to attend public school  
9 kindergarten in the calendar year in which they turn  
10 five years of age because their birth date occurs  
11 after the kindergarten eligibility date pursuant to  
12 section 302A-411; and  
13 (2) Underserved or at-risk children."

14 SECTION 3. No later than twenty days prior to the  
15 convening of the 2018 regular session, the department of human  
16 services shall report to the legislature on the following:

- 17 (1) The number of applicants to the preschool open doors  
18 program established pursuant to this Act;  
19 (2) The number of applicants that were placed on a  
20 waitlist for that preschool open doors program;



- 1 (3) The geographic distribution of services to
- 2 participants in the preschool open doors program;
- 3 (4) The number of participating providers; and
- 4 (5) A summary of any capacity and funding issues the
- 5 department has experienced in carrying out the
- 6 purposes of this Act.

7 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general  
 8 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$12,000,000 or so  
 9 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2017-2018 and  
 10 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal  
 11 year 2018-2019 for subsidies for the preschool open door  
 12 program.

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

15 SECTION 5. New statutory material is underscored.

16 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect upon its approval;  
 17 provided that section 4 shall take effect on July 1, 2017.

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INTRODUCED BY:

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S.B. NO. 181

Breene Hunt



# S.B. NO. 181

**Report Title:**

School Readiness; Preschool Open Doors Program; Appropriations

**Description:**

Reestablishes eligibility for the preschool open doors program to 3- and 4-year-old children and for children in the year prior to entering kindergarten.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

