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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING.

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

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the demand for  
2 quality early care and education far exceeds the amount of  
3 available and qualified early childhood educators. Given the  
4 critical need to expand access to and the availability of  
5 high-quality early care and education programs for the benefit  
6 of the State's children and their families, which will  
7 ultimately benefit the entire society, particularly now as the  
8 State focuses on taking steps toward economic recovery from the  
9 unprecedented strain of COVID-19, the legislature recognizes  
10 that there must also be enough qualified educators to staff the  
11 programs. Furthermore, the legislature recognizes that these  
12 educators must have the research-based knowledge and  
13 competencies to work with young children and their families.  
14 Researchers have repeatedly demonstrated that children,  
15 particularly those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, will  
16 benefit from early childhood education; however, it is  
17 emphasized that the education must be of high quality.



1           The legislature also finds that preschool teachers are  
2 amongst the lowest paid occupations, on average making less than  
3 many non-skills positions such as parking lot attendants.  
4 Moreover, it is difficult to attract individuals to this highly  
5 specialized field with such low pay and the misperception that  
6 preschool teachers are babysitters. There are many  
7 professionals currently working in the early childhood field who  
8 aspire to work in higher paying positions and could benefit from  
9 obtaining the necessary credentials. A stipend program will  
10 assist with workforce development and support those individuals  
11 seeking to become high-quality early childhood educators,  
12 thereby moving the State toward reaching its goal of increasing  
13 access to high-quality early learning programs.

14           Acknowledging the importance of obtaining credentials or  
15 coursework in early childhood education, the stipend program  
16 aligns with national policy initiatives, which recognize that  
17 workforce development is key to creating the kind of early  
18 childhood systems that make a significant and impactful  
19 difference for families and children by financing and bolstering  
20 programs that help offset the cost of tuition and encourage  
21 higher educational attainment. Furthermore, the federal



1 government recognized the necessity to develop the workforce of  
2 early childhood professionals and allowed for preschool  
3 development grant funds to be utilized for stipend and  
4 scholarship programs. There currently exists private sector  
5 funding for the establishment of the stipend program. Without  
6 qualified teaching staff, providers across the system will be  
7 unable to expand the inventory of early care and education  
8 opportunities. Where providers do develop programs, they run  
9 the risk of implementing programs that may be detrimental to  
10 children, many of whom are living in poverty and who have  
11 experienced trauma, and possibly excluding children through  
12 suspension and expulsion practices.

13 The purpose of this Act is to make stipends available  
14 through an early childhood educator stipend program, to be  
15 administered by the executive office on early learning, to  
16 encourage individuals, especially those already working in the  
17 early childhood field, to pursue a certificate, degree, or  
18 license in early childhood education and fill the critical need  
19 for qualified educators across the early learning system in  
20 programs delivered in either of Hawaii's two official languages.  
21 Recognizing early care and education as a specialized field,



1 this program shall be based on the strong foundations laid by  
2 the existing Grow Our Own teacher stipend program currently only  
3 available for kindergarten through grade twelve teachers and is  
4 structured similarly to the stipend program funded through the  
5 federal preschool development grant that ended in 2019..

6 SECTION 2. Chapter 302L, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
7 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated  
8 and to read as follows:

9 **"§302L- Hawaii early childhood educator stipend program.**

10 (a) There is established the Hawaii early childhood educator  
11 stipend program to be administered by the office to address the  
12 shortage of early childhood educators who have coursework in  
13 early childhood education.

14 (b) An individual shall be eligible for stipend  
15 consideration if the individual:

16 (1) Is enrolled at a University of Hawaii campus or in a  
17 University of Hawaii program and qualifies for Hawaii  
18 resident tuition; and

19 (2) Is enrolled in a certificate, degree, or license  
20 program in early childhood education, including those  
21 in the Hawaiian language medium, which includes



1 courses required for the respective program of study,  
2 within the University of Hawaii system.

3 (c) Immediately following completion of a certificate,  
4 degree, or license program pursuant to subsection (b), stipend  
5 recipients shall provide early care and education services  
6 directly to children from birth through five years of age for at  
7 least two consecutive years in one of the early learning  
8 settings described in section 302L-2, including Hawaiian  
9 language medium and Hawaiian immersion settings and early  
10 learning settings at charter schools.

11 (d) If the recipient fails to complete a certificate,  
12 degree, or license program pursuant to subsection (b), or to  
13 satisfy the work requirements of subsection (c), stipend funds  
14 shall be repaid as follows:

15 (1) For each year less than the designated number of years  
16 that a stipend recipient does not meet the work  
17 requirements of subsection (c), the recipient shall  
18 repay a proportionate percentage of the total stipend  
19 funds received; and

20 (2) The repayment shall be subject to the terms and  
21 conditions set by the office for stipend repayment,



1 including circumstances under which recipients may be  
2 eligible for deferment or forgiveness due to hardship  
3 or inability to secure employment, as well as  
4 potential for fees for the collection of delinquent  
5 repayment.

6 Stipend funds repaid by a stipend recipient pursuant to this  
7 subsection shall be deposited into early learning special fund  
8 established pursuant to section 302L-5.

9 (e) In accordance with chapter 103D, the office may enter  
10 into written contracts with collection agencies to collect  
11 delinquent repayment of stipends owed to the office pursuant to  
12 subsection (d). A collection agency that enters into a written  
13 contract with the office to collect delinquent stipend  
14 repayments pursuant to this section may collect a fee from the  
15 debtor in accordance with the terms of, and up to the amounts  
16 authorized in, the written contract.

17 (f) The office may adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91 to  
18 implement and administer the stipend program, including the  
19 terms of repayment pursuant to subsection (d)."

20 SECTION 3. Section 302L-5, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
21 amended by amending subsection (a) to read as follows:



1           "(a) There is established within the state treasury the  
2 early learning special fund, to be administered by the executive  
3 office on early learning, into which shall be deposited all  
4 moneys received by the office in the form of:

5           (1) Repayments made from the Hawaii early childhood  
6           educator stipend program pursuant to section  
7           302L- (d);

8           (2) Fees;

9           ~~(2)~~ (3) Grants;

10          ~~(3)~~ (4) Donations;

11          ~~(4)~~ (5) Appropriations made by the legislature to the  
12          fund; and

13          ~~(5)~~ (6) Revenues regardless of their source,

14 and earnings on moneys in the fund. Moneys in the fund shall be  
15 used for the early learning system. Expenditures from the fund  
16 may be made by the office without appropriation or allotment."

17          SECTION 4. Section 443B-9, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
18 amended by amending subsection (b) to read as follows:

19          "(b) This section shall not prohibit a collection agency  
20 from collecting, or attempting to collect, from a debtor, a  
21 commission authorized under a contract with the University of



1 Hawaii, [~~or~~] a contract with the department of taxation pursuant  
2 to sections 231-13 and 231-26[~~-~~], or a contract with the  
3 executive office on early learning pursuant to section  
4 302L-1.5."

5 SECTION 5. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed  
6 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

7 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2050.





**Report Title:**

Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program; Executive Office on Early Learning; Early Learning Special Fund

**Description:**

Establishes an early childhood educator stipend program to be administered by the executive office on early learning to address the shortage of qualified early childhood educators in Hawaii. Requires stipend fund repayments for the early childhood educator stipend program to be deposited into the early learning special fund. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD2)

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