



April 25, 2023

**RE: Conference Committee
HB 961 HD 1 SD2
Relating to Early Learning**

Representatives:

John Mizuno, Co-Chair
Justin Woodson, Co-Chair
Lisa Kitagawa, Co-Chair
Terez Amato
Lisa Marten
Lauren Matsumoto

Senators:

Michelle Kidani, Co-Chair
Glenn Wakai, Co-Chair
Dru Mamo Kanuha

Dear Members of the Conference Committee,


I am writing to express The Hawaii Business Roundtable's strong support for HB961, HB1, SD2, which would appropriate funds for the Preschool Open Doors Program and the Executive Office on Early Learning to expand access to preschool and implement program changes required by previous acts. This bill has the potential to make a significant positive impact on the lives of Hawaii's children and families. The HBR defers to the Executive Office of Early Learning and the Department of Human Services as it pertains to the details of the programs.

The Preschool Open Doors Program has been a vital resource for families across Hawaii by providing financial assistance to help children attend preschool. This program has helped many families who would not otherwise be able to afford the high cost of quality early childhood education. By expanding access to the program and including 3-year-old children, this bill would help even more families and ensure that more children have access to the critical early learning opportunities they need to succeed.

Investing in early childhood education has been shown to have a multitude of benefits, including improved academic and social-emotional outcomes, increased earning potential later in life, and reduced involvement in the criminal justice system. By expanding access to the Preschool Open Doors Program, Hawaii has an opportunity to invest in its keiki and set them on a path towards a brighter future.

I urge you to move HB961, HB1, SD2 through the Conference Committee and invest in Hawaii's children and families.

Sincerely,


Gary K. Kai, Executive Director
Hawaii Business Roundtable