



S E A C
Special Education Advisory Council
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**Special Education
Advisory Council**

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Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Committee on Finance
State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: HB 1360 HD 1 - RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

Dear Chair Luke and Members of the Committee,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC), Hawaii's State Advisory Panel under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), **supports** HB 1360, HD 1 which creates an early childhood educator stipend program to address the shortage of qualified early childhood educators in Hawaii and requires a uniform assessment for public and charter school kindergarten students.

Numerous research studies have shown the long term benefits of quality early childhood education programs, including higher high school graduation rates, lower grade retention and drop out rates, and greater social and emotional maturity. There is also ample evidence that access to quality preschool programming can lessen referrals for special education services by providing prevention and early intervention strategies to meet students' diverse needs.

Additionally, increasing the number of early childhood educators who attend an accredited early childhood teacher preparation program will also benefit preschool students who have been identified as having a disability that requires an individualized education program. These high quality preschool teachers are better prepared to accommodate children with IEPs in inclusive classrooms. By creating a larger pool of these teachers, we are also potentially increasing the availability of inclusive placements for students with disabilities.

Mahalo for the opportunity to lend our support to this valuable legislation.

Respectfully,

Martha Guinan
Chair

Ivalee Sinclair
Legislative Committee