



**S E A C**  
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February 23, 2022

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Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
Committee on Ways and Means  
Student Achievement Committee  
Hawaii State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: SB 2701, SD 1 - Relating to Early Education

Dear Chair Dela Cruz 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 the intent of SB 2701, SD 1 which makes an appropriation to the Hawaii Early Childhood Educator Special Fund for SY 2022-23. This fund was established last year as a source of stipends to early educators to enable them to receive coursework in early education through the University of Hawaii.

Numerous research studies have shown the long term benefits of quality early childhood education programs for students with and without disabilities, 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, high quality preschool teachers are better prepared to accommodate children with IEPs in inclusive classrooms. By creating a larger pool of these teachers through the stipend program, we are potentially increasing the availability of inclusive placements.

Mahalo for this opportunity to submit testimony. If you have any questions, we are happy to answer them.

Respectfully,

Martha Guinan  
Chair