

ONE VOICE FOR CHILDREN Position Statement



We know that. . .

- The early years of life are critical for optimal brain development.
- Adverse early child hood experiences have devastating effects on adult health, social relationships, and ability to hold jobs.
- Creating the right conditions for early childhood development is likely to be more effective and less costly than solving problems at a later age.
- Quality home visiting services for high risk families can prevent child abuse and neglect.
- Intervening early with children who show developmental delays can help these children develop age-appropriate skills, eliminating the need for special education services later on.
- Children who receive high-quality early care and education have stronger verbal and cognitive skills.
- Every \$1 invested in quality early learning services saves \$4.20 in federal, state, and local costs.
- Providing services for young children is a fiscally conservative way to improve Hawai'i's economy now and in the future.

Although we know all this. . .

- Young children and their families are being hit hard by budget reductions occurring in Hawai'i.
- Prevention system for child abuse and neglect has been decimated.
- Hawai'i has abandoned its fiscal commitment to prevent disabilities in young children.
- Subsidies that provide early care and education opportunities for our most vulnerable children have been reduced.
- Preschool classrooms have been closed.
- Furloughs of public school teachers reduce learning opportunities for children in public schools.



Therefore, we want. . .

- A Department of Early Childhood with cabinet level status and responsibility and authority over programs for young children.
- Support for the Early Learning Council to serve as the public/private entity to oversee development of comprehensive early childhood system.
- A dedicated funding stream for early childhood services, programs, and professional development.
- A statewide home visitation program to address abuse and neglect of children.
- Universal developmental screening for children prior to kindergarten entry.
- Adequate child care funding to ensure quality early care and education opportunities for young children.
- Assurance that children with special needs and developmental delays receive the services they need.

What we propose to do. . .

- Establish a strong political-action constituency for early childhood.
- Schedule forums in all counties where local, state, and national candidates must take a stand on issues relating to young children.
- Develop an internet database of the thousands of people who value early childhood learning.
- Hold elected officials accountable for making good on their promises.

The time has come for those who care about young children to take a stand, to hold political leaders accountable, and to ensure that all our children are safe, healthy, and ready to succeed.