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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, November 20, 2009

MEDIA ADVISORY

**WHAT: PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED CONTRIBUTION
INCREASE FOR LOCAL FAMILIES RECEIVING CHILD CARE
AND PRESCHOOL SUBSIDIES**

WHEN: Monday, November 23, 2009, 2:30 p.m.
**WHERE: Department of Human Services, Haseko Center
820 Mililani St. #606, Conference Room 2**

DETAILS: Island families who currently receive subsidies toward childcare and preschool for their keiki would have to pay more for these educational programs, according to a new proposal by the State Department of Human Services.

A public hearing is scheduled on Monday, Nov. 23 to further discuss the proposal that would require several thousand families to increase their co-pay amount. Early education experts say these increases will have a devastating impact on young learners, their families and the local economy. Some families have voiced concerns that they will be forced to withdraw their keiki from these valuable programs and have expressed fears that they may need to alter work schedules in order to care for their children.

Under the proposed changes, a family of four with a monthly income between \$1356 and \$1807 (70-100 percent of Federal Poverty Level) will begin paying a parent co-pay of \$120 a month (based on a \$600/month preschool tuition) instead of participating in a free program. Likewise, a family of four with a monthly income of between \$2892 and \$3162 (160-175 percent of Federal Poverty Level) will see their parent co-pay jump from the current \$120 to \$420 – a spike of 350 percent.

Many education advocates and parents plan to testify at the hearing to explain the proposal's negative effects, which could impact the state's 450 early childhood centers and programs.

With 175,000 kids in public schools already affected by furlough Friday, these proposed changes continue to hurt Hawai'i's youngest learners in the long term make them less prepared for school and impeding their academic success.

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