

ECAS Session Recap

Aloha all,

This year, the ECAS Policy Team built a diverse agenda for the 2025 Legislative Session that featured measures meant to address various issues relating to early childhood development. This agenda guided our advocacy efforts throughout Session. Here is an update on the items that were included in this year's [ECAS Policy Agenda](#).

We would like to thank the individuals and organizations who championed measures, met with, briefed, and educated legislators, marshalled public support, and just plain hustled to advance the measures included in this year's policy agenda.

We are all committed to creating a better future for our youngest keiki and families, and witnessing everybody's efforts in the legislative arena is hugely reaffirming.

Mahalo to you all.



What Passed?

House Bill 237 *passed*

This measure appropriates \$860,000 to the State Department of Health (DOH) Family Health Services Division to establish and oversee peer-to-peer support programs. This funding is for two FTE positions and for purchase or service contracts with peer-to-peer based groups and addiction and child welfare peer support programs. The measure also includes the integration of infant and early childhood mental health.

House Bill 692 *passed*

HB692 expands eligibility to the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program to children as young as the age of two. It also repeals the requirement that POD providers be accredited.

House Bill 1194 *passed*

HB1194 defines the practice of midwifery, makes permanent the laws surrounding the practice, and mandates both licensure and accreditation.

HR133 *was adopted*

This resolution was introduced with the support of the State Office of Wellness & Resilience (OWR) to develop a report to address the developmental needs of children born during the pandemic.

HR139 *was adopted*

This resolution came to be at the behest of State Representative Jeanné Kapela and urges the State Department of Education, DOH, and other stakeholders to develop a plan to pursue funding for and participate in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's public surveillance of autism prevalence.

What Made it to the End?

House Bill 549

This measure would have established an Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program that would have been administered by the University of Hawai'i. The program would have provided financial support for early learning service providers to participate in state- or federally approved early learning apprenticeship programs.

The bill made it all the way to conference committee where legislators ultimately deferred the measure, citing uncertainty surrounding the federal government and funding.

Other Wins for Our Youngest Keiki

EOEL Funding

Included in the Executive Office on Early Learning's budget request was an ask for \$5.027M and 58 positions in FY26 along with \$8.236M and 108 positions in FY27. These will support 50 new classrooms across the state over the course of the biennium.

Senate Bill 1300

Our policy agenda included several bills relating to universal free school meals. While those measures did not advance, stakeholders coalesced around SB1300 which expands eligibility for free school meals over the next two years. In the coming school year, all students currently in the reduced-price category will be eligible for free school meals. In the 2026-2027 school year, all children from households with income below 300 percent of the Federal Poverty Level will be eligible as well.

Status of all measures from the 2025 ECAS Policy Agenda

On-track Health and Development	Early Intervention Workforce Pay Parity	HB880 Crossed over from the House but did not receive a hearing in the Senate. SB823 Did not receive a hearing in the Senate.	
	Universal Free School Meals	HB757 Passed out of the House Committee on Education and was referred to House Finance where it did not receive a hearing. SB43 Did not receive a hearing in the Senate.	
	Dyslexia Screener	SB421 Passed out of the Senate Committee on Education and was referred to Senate Ways & Means where it did not receive a hearing.	
	Statewide Expansion of Imagination Library	HB107 Did not receive a hearing in the House. SB1012 Did not receive a hearing in the Senate.	
Safe, Secure, and Nurturing Families	Sustaining and Expanding Peer-support Programs	HB237 / SB824 Transmitted to Governor Green for his signature.	Win for Keiki
	Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML)	HB695 Did not receive a hearing in the House. HB755 Passed out of the House Committees on Labor and Consumer Protection & Commerce and was referred to House Finance where it did not receive a hearing. SB1054 Did not receive a hearing in the Senate.	
	Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC) Fix	HB753 Passed out of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness and Economic Development & Technology and referred to House Finance where it did not receive a hearing.	
	Hawai'i Child Tax Credit	HB694 Did not receive a hearing in the House. SB1053	
	Family Resilience Center	HB1080 Did not receive a hearing in the House. SB1399 Passed out of the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services and was referred to Senate Ways & Means where it did not receive a hearing.	
	Revision of Child Maltreatment Definition	HB239 Crossed over from the House to the Senate where it passed out of the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services. It was referred to the Senate Committee on Judiciary where it was deferred. SB1104 Did not receive a hearing in the Senate.	
	End Diaper Need	HB1335 Did not receive a hearing in the House. SB1534 Did not receive a hearing in the Senate.	
Accessible and Quality Early Care and Learning	Preschool Open Doors Expansion	HB692 Transmitted to Governor Green for his signature. SB712 Deferred by the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services.	Win for Keiki
	Contracted Early Learning Services	HB241 Passed out of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness and Education and was referred to House Finance where it did not receive a hearing. SB1609 Passed out of the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services and was referred to Senate Ways & Means where it did not receive a hearing.	
	Expansion of Family-Child Interaction Learning (FCIL) Programs	HB249 Passed out of the House Committee on Education and was referred to House Finance where it did not receive a hearing.	
	Early Learning Apprenticeship Grant Program	HB549 Deferred during conference committee. SB426 Passed out of a joint hearing of the Senate Committee on Higher Education and Education and was referred to Senate Ways & Means where it did not receive a hearing.	Win for Keiki
	Child Care Worker Subsidy and Bonus Program	HB238 Passed out of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness and was referred to House Finance where it did not receive a hearing.	
Healthy and Welcomed Births	Midwifery	HB1194 Became law without Governor Green's signature.	Win for Keiki