



The Honorable Mazie Hirono  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1229 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

June 12, 2008

Dear Representative Hirono:

Thank you very much for your strong leadership in introducing H.R. 3289, the *Providing Resources Early for Kids (PRE-K) Act*, to help states enhance the quality of their pre-k programs. As the Executive Director of Hawaii's Good Beginnings Alliance, we in Hawai'i have been working for a number of years to create a quality early learning system for our young children, and your bill will definitely help all states raise the bar in serving our young children and their families.

Brain research now tells us that children begin their learning even before they are born and that nearly 85% of a child's intellect, personality and social skills are developed by the time a child is 5-years-old. It is also evident that by age six, there are large and preventable gaps between the development and academic abilities of high and low-income children. Studies have shown that high quality early childhood education programs make a difference in the educational, social, emotional, and physical outcomes, especially for high-risk, low-income children. Quality early learning is a "must-pay" investment that will pay huge dividends for years to come.

Almost 40% of Hawai'i's young children live in families who cannot afford to send their children to early education programs. The early childhood programs that do receive federal and state subsidies, such as Head Start, are filled to capacity and have waiting lists. We also recognize an increase in the number of "gap group" families, who earn too much to qualify for federal or state need-based subsidies or programs such as Head Start, and yet do not earn enough to pay for preschool tuition. Their choices of placements for their children are limited, often not stable, and of unknown quality. Even for those children lucky enough to attend preschool, the quality of their programs is not even.

Recently, our State Legislature passed a bill that will create a state-funded quality early learning system for Hawai'i. This bill will lay the groundwork for our state to join the 40 other states who have a state-funded early learning program while recognizing family choice on the most appropriate educational setting for their children. However to achieve our goal of providing all young children with access to quality early learning opportunities, increased federal investment will be critical.

H.R. 3289 is a major step and commitment in the right direction. It provides states like Hawai'i with the flexibility to invest in professional workforce development, quality

early learning environments, and developmentally-appropriate state-funded preschool program facilities. Moreover, our children, our communities, and our country, will benefit greatly from this far-reaching and holistic approach to expanded federal support for quality early education.

Thank you again for your strong support for quality early childhood education. We are very hopeful that through your visionary leadership, the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress will pass H.R. 3289, *Providing Resources Early for Kids (PRE-K) Act*, into law.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (808) 531-5502 or [lchun@goodbeginnings.org](mailto:lchun@goodbeginnings.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elisabeth Chun".

Elisabeth Chun  
Executive Director