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June 13, 2008

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Harry Saunders
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The Honorable Mazie Hirono
House of Representatives
1229 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Hirono:

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Thank you for your leadership in introducing H.R. 3289, the Providing Resources Early for Kids (PRE-K) Act, to support states' efforts to assure quality pre-kindergarten programs for our young children. The Hawai'i Business Roundtable (the "Roundtable"), an association of the chief executives of the largest businesses in Hawaii, has been supporting quality education efforts for many years, as we believe an educated citizenry is critical to a healthy and vibrant community, society and economy.

The Roundtable understands that quality early learning experiences are critical to a child's success in school, and ultimately in college or work. As part of its work in education, the Roundtable has supported the Hawaii P-20 Initiative. Its "P-3 Initiative" centers on the goal of having all third grade children reading at grade level by 2014. Clearly, children must enter kindergarten with the necessary pre-literacy skills in order for this goal to be reached. And for children to have those pre-literacy skills, a quality early learning experience is essential.

Emphasizing early education makes good economic sense. The 2005 Economic Impact study sponsored by Good Beginnings Alliance demonstrated the critical role early education and care plays in our state's economy. The industry not only employs over 9,400 people and generates \$240 million yearly in people's income, it also allows over \$5 million income annually to be generated because parents can work due to their child's placement in early education and care. And most importantly, the children in quality programs enter school ready to learn and succeed.

Recently, the Hawaii State Legislature authorized the creation of an Early Learning Council, a critical first step in the developing a universal quality early learning system for Hawai'i. We supported this bill, which lays the groundwork for a state-funded early learning program. We see both the family and early learning programs as part of the picture in closing the achievement gap in education.

Hawaii business working toward a better future for the people of Hawaii.

HAWAII BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE

June 13, 2008

Page 2

We also supported the recommendations of the Hawai'i Early Learning Task Force, which recommended not only the Early Learning Council, but the important steps that need to follow in order to have quality early education for all children. An essential element of these next steps involves federal investment and support for quality early education and access to quality early education programs.

H.R. 3289 is a major step and a forward looking commitment for our families with young children. 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 visionary and holistic approach to expanded federal support for quality early education.

A strong system that provides access to quality early education for all children is part of a strong foundation that will anchor a bright future for our families and our country.

Thank you for your leadership and support for quality early education. Our young students will benefit from your good work, and we are hopeful that Congress will show their support for children and families by passing H.R. 3289.

Very truly yours,



Kathryn S. Matayoshi
Executive Director