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Chamber of
Sustainable
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Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Committee on Health and Human Services

Monday, March 18, 2024
1:00 PM, Room 225

RE: **HB2535 HD1** Relating to Child Care - **Support**

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino & Committee Members,

The Chamber of Sustainable Commerce represents over 100 small businesses across the State that strive for a triple bottom line: people, planet and prosperity; we know Hawaii can strengthen its economy without hurting workers, consumers, communities or the environment.

This is why we support HB2535 HD1, which establishes a child care classroom contracts pilot program to require the Department of Human Services to contract directly with child care center providers in licensed infant and toddler child care centers and group child care centers that meet certain criteria.

Too many working families struggle to secure affordable, quality childcare; they are unable to return to the workforce and contribute to a vibrant economy. For some, the costs of childcare surpasses their own take home pay, especially when rush hour commuter traffic results in the need for 10 additional hours a week of childcare beyond the parents' own paid work times.

When employers look around and say, "Where did our workforce go; why can't we find anyone to work?" One response is that they are staying home to take care of their children, their grandchildren or their younger siblings. If a business cannot find sufficient numbers of workers to generate sufficient revenue to cover all the overhead costs of the business, then the business will have to close. The state will lose revenue from the general excise taxes and income taxes associated with those shuttered businesses.

Until the Legislature sufficiently funds the Department of Education so that it can expand its Early Childhood Education programs across the state, for children of all ages, then the legislature must provide alternative solutions to try to fix the childcare shortage and ensure the state's revenue streams are uninterrupted.