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Abundant Life
Natural Foods
Hilo

Kim Coco Iwamoto
Enlightened Energy
Honolulu

Chamber of
Sustainable
Commerce
P.O. Box 22394
Honolulu, HI
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Sen. Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Sen. Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Comm. on Health & Human Services

Wednesday, January 30, 2024
1:00 pm
Conference Room 225 or via Zoom

RE: SB2603 Early 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 of Hawaii that strive for a triple bottom line: people, planet and prosperity; we know we can strengthen our economy without hurting workers, consumers, communities or the environment. This is why we support SB2603, which requires the Department of Human Services to establish and implement a child care provider subsidy and bonus program to provide subsidies to retain the existing child care workforce in licensed infant and toddler child care centers and group child care centers and bonuses to registered family child care homes and appropriates funds.

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.