

Hawai‘i Children’s Policy Agenda

2023 Wrap-up



HCAN
Speaks!



Introduction

There were big wins and big disappointments in the 2023 legislative session. Tireless efforts of Children's Policy Agenda members, community leaders, and advocates highlighted the importance of whole family well-being. Legislators took necessary actions by:

- expanding access to quality child care through support of providers to gain accreditation,
- creating a collaborative partnership to transform the child welfare system,
- improving custody evaluations to protect children and survivors of domestic violence,
- making historic investments in early childhood care and education, and
- giving the largest increase to tax credits for working families in recent memory.

Legislators fell short by not implementing paid family leave, despite witnessing dire caregiving needs before, during, and after the pandemic.

View the Children's Policy Agenda online: <https://speaks.hawaii-can.org/agenda2023>

About

This eighth annual Hawai'i Children's Policy Agenda, published by Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, reflects the input of 56 Community Champion members. These organizations, coalitions, and individuals are committed to improving the lives of our keiki by promoting public policy changes that benefit children's health, safety, education, and economic security.

The Agenda contained 12 priorities for the 2023 Hawai'i State Legislative Session, which were the top priority issues of our Community Champion members. Ultimately, 3 of those priorities passed in bills or resolutions this year. HCAN Speaks! respects the diversity, expertise, perspectives, and priorities within this community of advocates and is honored to advance the work of our peers in children's advocacy. HCAN Speaks! supports all of the items in the Agenda. Each initiative lists a lead organization that serves as the primary point of contact for advocacy.

Big wins for keiki

These bills reflect priorities from the 2023 Hawai'i Children's Policy Agenda.

Provide financial support for more child care providers to gain accreditation.

SB239 Child Care Provider Accreditation Supports Program – Provides financial support for child care providers to achieve accreditation as required for participation in Preschool Open Doors.

Work to transform the child welfare system.

SB295 Malama 'Ohana – Creates a working group through the Hawai'i Office of Resilience and Wellness to bring state and community partners together to transform the child welfare system.

Improve custody evaluations to protect children and survivors of domestic violence.

HB581 Mandatory Domestic Violence Training for Custody Evaluators and Fact Finders – Requires domestic violence (DV) training for child custody evaluators and fact finders in family court.

Community spotlight

These bills were not part of the Hawai'i Children's Policy Agenda but represent additional wins for our keiki and families.

Increase tax credits for working families.

HB954 Governor Green's Affordability Plan – Allots over \$100 million per year for the next five years to working families by boosting three important tax credits: the Earned Income Tax Credit, the Food/Excise Tax Credit, and the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit.

Expand access to early childhood care and education.

HB961 Lt. Governor Luke's Ready Keiki initiative – Expands the Preschool Open Doors (the state's community-based pre-K subsidy program) and public prekindergarten program to include 3-year-olds. Currently, both programs only serve 4-year-olds.

Fund early learning opportunities and programs.

The state budget also increases funding for early learning over the two-year budget period:

- Preschool Open Doors' subsidy budget will grow from \$11.2 million to \$50 million.
- Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) Public Prekindergarten will receive funds to open an additional 55 classrooms, taking the stock of classrooms from 37 to 92.
- Includes \$660,000 for the Early Childhood Educators Stipend Program to support educators (current and prospective) to earn degrees in early childhood education.

Missed opportunities

Despite community support, many priorities ultimately did not pass. We look forward to continuing our efforts to pass these types of bills next year.

Economic Security and Equity for Children

HB502 / SB311 Infant & Toddler Contracted Slots Pilot Program – Would have piloted a program to support pre-kindergarten expansion where providers are paid monthly to care for a child eligible for subsidized care and preserve those slots.

HB855 End Taxes on Diapers – Would have ended taxes on diapers to combat economic hardship and help reduce the high levels of stress caregivers experience when they are forced to choose between providing enough diapers and providing other necessities for their families.

HB547 / HB391 / SB312 Infant & Toddler Child Care Worker Subsidy Pilot Program – Would have piloted a program to increase wages for child care workers who are caring for and educating children 6 weeks to 35 months old.

HB236 / HCR44 / SB360 Paid Family Leave – Would have provided a wage replacement (a percentage of one's income) to eligible workers when they take time off of work to care for a seriously ill family member or themselves or to bond with a new child, or a task force to work on implementing such a program.

Pre-K to 12 Education

HB549 / SB1222 Expanding Public Preschools at Our Elementary Schools (including public charter schools) – Would have increased access to preschool for general public by expanding free public preschool at public elementary schools (including public charter schools) that are located in every neighborhood.

HB1116 / SB958 School Psychologist Credential – Would have implemented credentialing requirements, as outlined by the National Association of School Psychologists, for School Psychologists to be employed by the Hawai'i Department of Education (HDOE).

Missed opportunities, cont.

Health and Wellness for Children

HB551 / SB496 Banning the Sale of Flavored Tobacco – Would have ended the sale of flavored tobacco products in Hawai'i, including menthol-flavored cigarettes and vapes in order to address our current youth vaping epidemic.

Child Safety and Welfare

HB548 / SB308 Erin's Law – Would have mandated HDOE to provide sexual abuse education to all students (K-12), educators and parents/guardians in order to better recognize sexual abuse of keiki and respond appropriately.

SB1042 4th Amendment Rights / Miranda Notification of Parent Rights – Would have clarified compliance with 4th Amendment rights by Child Welfare Services (CWS) when investigating a report of abuse or removing a child to out-of-home placement.

Take action today

Become a Community Champion member - www.hawaii-can.org/communitychampions

You'll get exclusive advocacy tools, including custom action alerts, bill tracking, briefings on legislative hearings, sample testimony, media assistance, policy research, breaking news concerning children's issues, explanations of legislative/regulatory activity, and more.

Sign up for free legislative action alerts - speaks.hawaii-can.org/updates

Donate to this grassroots movement - speaks.hawaii-can.org/donate

We can only advance the important initiatives in this Agenda with your support. Your gift today will help to address the root causes of poverty and inequity and develop these crucial public policies for our keiki.

Anyone interested in children's issues at the Legislature can sign up for action alerts on important bills. Your voice is needed — and we make it easy to get involved with our simple advocacy tools

Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! (HCAN Speaks!) - speaks.hawaii-can.org

HCAN Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501(c)4 nonprofit working to ensure all keiki are healthy, safe, and ready to learn.

We give Hawai'i residents the tools they need to change systems and policies, hold leaders accountable, and make informed voting decisions. We are honored to be the convener and coordinator of the pro-keiki organizations, coalitions, and individuals who participated in this Agenda.

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