

Overview: 2024 Hawai'i Children's Policy Agenda

The ninth annual Hawai'i Children's Policy Agenda, published by Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, contains 12 top priorities of Community Champion members. The Agenda reflects the input of over 50 member organizations and individuals committed to improving the lives of keiki by promoting public policy changes that benefit children's economic security, education, health, and safety. View the full agenda online: speaks.hawaii-can.org/agenda2024.

Economic Security and Equity for Children

- **Paid Family Leave (HB1658, HB1768, HB2757, SB2046, SB2474)** provides working 'ohana with paid time off from work to care for and bond with a new keiki or to address caregiving needs for loved ones.
- **Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit fix (HB1776)** would increase the maximum percent of care expenses that can be claimed, allowing more taxpayers to benefit from the increase that lawmakers passed last session.
- **Child Care Worker Wage Supplement (HB1964, SB2603)** would establish a permanent wage supplement program to improve the recruitment and retention of early childhood care and education professionals and provide sustained state funding after federal relief funding ends.
- **Child Tax Credit (HB1662, SB2660)** would create a state-level tax credit for families with children that will help to supplement the cost of raising a family in Hawai'i, regardless of whether they are paying for child care.
- **Removing Tuition Cap for Child Care Subsidies (Pursuing through administrative rules change)** would set clear direction from the State Legislature that the Department of Human Services may provide payments above tuition rates for child care subsidies.

Pre-K to 12 Education

- **Universal Free School Meals (HB1775, SB2327)** would extend free meals to every Hawai'i public school student, regardless of their eligibility for the federal free meal program.
- **Credentialing Requirements for School Psychologists (HB1648, SB958)** would guarantee that Hawai'i's children, youth, families, and schools have access to effective and high-quality school psychological services that adhere to national standards of practice.

Health and Wellness for Children

- **Mental Health Awareness in Schools (SB2001)** would establish that schools in Hawai'i have a class that educates students about the importance and seriousness of mental health issues.
- **End the Sale of All Flavored Tobacco Products (HB1778, SB2691)** would decrease the number of children who begin initiation of the use of tobacco products.
- **Dental Hygienists Applying Dental Sealants in School-based Settings (HB1777, SB2476)** would allow dental hygienists to apply dental sealants in school-based oral health programs under general supervision to maximize efficiency and access to services.

Child Safety and Welfare

- **Litigation Abuse Protection for Survivors of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Dating Violence and Stalking (HB1965, SB2604)** would give the courts the options to recognize and respond to controlling abusive litigation to protect survivors, particularly those with children.
- **Keiki Drowning Prevention (HB2623, SB2098, SB2841)** would support addressing drowning, which is leading cause of death for keiki 1-15 in Hawai'i. Legislation should include a Hawai'i Water Safety Day to raise awareness as well as funding for aquatic safety lessons in Department of Education schools by a qualified nonprofit.