



HAWAII CATHOLIC CONFERENCE
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DATE: March 6, 2013
TO: Governor Neil Abercrombie
Lt. Governor Shan Tsutsui
Hawaii State House of Representatives
Hawaii State Senate
From: Walter Yoshimitsu, Executive Director
Re: Support Intent of SB 1084/ HB 853 Proposing An Amendment To Article X,
Section 1, Of The Hawaii State Constitution To Permit The Appropriation Of
Public Funds For Private Early Childhood Education Programs
Oppose SB 1093 / HB 862 Relating to School Readiness
Oppose SB 1095 Early Childhood Education

**Position Statement regarding the Public Funding of
Private Pre School Education in Hawaii Catholic Schools**

The Hawaii Catholic Schools and the Hawaii Catholic Conference applaud Gov. Neil Abercrombie's desire for a private-public partnership to provide non-compulsory quality pre-school education in Hawaii. However, we have serious concerns about his plan's facilitation and implementation.

Our concerns are based on the well-known principles which, in general, curtail the public funding of faith-based schools.

Understanding this, the governor suggests that faith-based schools, in order to qualify for funds, could, among other things, separate secular and religious curriculums. However, this is not possible in Hawaii's Catholic schools where religion is an integral part of the educational philosophy and environment at every level and in every subject.

Therefore, while we would welcome the opportunity to expand our reach, we cannot do it at the cost of curbing our Catholic identity and message.

However, other ways exist for the governor to achieve his goals while avoiding these restrictions on public funds. Educational vouchers and tax credits for parents would make private preschools more accessible and affordable while affirming the parents' right to educate their children in the manner that best suits them. We would welcome adding these alternatives to the governor's plan.

For these reasons, we are philosophically in support of the intent of SB1084/HB853, but not in support of SB1093/HB862 or SB1095.