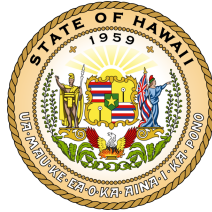


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LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR SYLVIA LUKE UNVEILS “READY KEIKI” PLAN
Coordinated Effort Will Create 80 Preschool Classrooms by August 2024, 465 Classrooms by 2032

(HONOLULU, HI) — Flanked by public, private and philanthropic providers, Lieutenant Governor Sylvia Luke today unveiled the Ready Keiki initiative, the administration’s multi-faceted plan to expand high-quality child care and preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds by 2032.

The plan identifies sites for additional classrooms, increases provider subsidies to expand access to children from lower-income households and envisions educational partnerships to train new preschool teachers and assistants. Ready Keiki partners unveiled the plan at Lincoln Elementary in Makiki, one of the sites identified for new classrooms. The Ready Keiki initiative also envisions onsite early learning classrooms at private businesses and UH campuses.

“Access to preschool is a social justice issue for Hawai’i,” said Lt. Gov. Luke. “Children who have attended high-quality preschool or child care programs are much better prepared for success in Kindergarten, but not every family has access to early learning programs. If we can provide enough classrooms at an affordable price, we can make sure all of our keiki are ready to learn.”

Lt. Gov. Luke began meeting with a consortium of public, private and non-profit providers and funders in 2020 as a state Representative and chair of the House Committee on Finance. That year, the state Legislature established by statute a goal to provide opportunities to enroll in preschool to all 3- and 4-year-olds by 2032. Last year, the state Legislature appropriated \$200 million to expand access to pre-Kindergarten eligible children. Gov. Josh Green has assigned Luke to oversee this important initiative.

“We will use that \$200 million appropriated last year to build or refurbish 80 classrooms before the start of the 2024 school year,” Luke explained. “There is also capacity in the state’s Preschool Open Doors program, and so we will also be asking the state Legislature to expand that program to include 3-year-olds, and allocate \$40 million to increase private provider subsidies to support expanded access to lower-income families.

“Knowing that classrooms need teachers and teacher assistants, we intend to develop programs to educate and train early education teachers,” Luke continued. “Those will be important initiatives in the 2024-2032 timeframe, along with building out an additional 50 classrooms per year.”

Ready Keiki Partners

The Ready Keiki initiative is supported by all four Counties as well as public, private and nonprofit educational partners and philanthropic foundations. The partners include: the State of Hawai‘i Department of Education, Department of Human Services, School Facilities Authority and Executive Office on Early Learning; the University of Hawai‘i; Kamehameha Schools; Early Childhood Action Strategy; Hawai‘i P-20; Chaminade University of Honolulu; Hawaii Data Collaborative; The Learning Coalition; Commit to Keiki; Harold K.L. Castle Foundation and the Hawai‘i Community Foundation.

“The School Facilities Authority is excited about this plan and its importance for the young families of Hawai‘i. We understand our kuleana as the ‘construction arm’ of this plan, and we are ready for the challenge,” said Alan Oshima, chairman of the SFA Board of Directors.

“The philanthropic community of Hawai‘i exists to create equity and opportunity for our underserved families and residents,” said Terry George, president and CEO of the Harold K.L. Castle Foundation. “Ready Keiki offers a combination of significant public financial support and a thoughtful plan for implementation and we are excited to provide resources to support the initiative.”

Also attending the news conference were Sen. Michelle Kidani and Rep. Justin Woodson, who, as chairpeople of the Senate and House Education Committees spearheaded legislation to put the 2032 goal for expanded access into law.

“This plan is an important step in achieving the ambitious goal set by the Legislature in 2020, and I congratulate all of the Ready Keiki partners for coming together for the good of our young learners,” Kidani said.

Woodson added: “I am happy today for all of the young families out there who will be able to give their children a solid start on school success because of this Ready Keiki initiative. And I would like to thank the private foundations who are partnering with us as well, because the state cannot do it alone.”

“We would not be here without the commitment of all of our partners, the state Legislature and Governor Josh Green,” said Luke. “This is an example of what can happen when we all come together to support our families and I am very grateful for the partners who care for educational equity in our state.”

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