



## From the governor: ‘Our Keiki, Our Future’ benefits all

**F**rom Governor Ige’s policy perspective, a vision needs to be both ideal and real. What is our collective vision for Hawai‘i and how do we make it happen — in education, affordable housing and sustainability? The governor outlined some of the answers in his State of the State address and the steps Hawai‘i can take to move us forward. This edition and future issues of Capitol Connection will describe some of these initiatives and how the state hopes to make them a reality.

**Q. In this second term of your administration, are you feeling a sense of urgency to move these initiatives forward?**

**A.** Yes, it’s about maintaining the momentum from the successes we’ve had in our first term and recommitting to these priorities for the future. One initiative that could make the greatest difference involves our **first-ever Early Childhood State Plan**, which sets the foundation for statewide efforts in health, family services and education. As a state, we’re implementing our coordinated ‘Ohana Nui approach to break the cycle of poverty and provide families with the support they need. A vital piece of this involves universal, statewide access to public and private preschools.



FOR THE KEIKI: Gov. Ige, state leaders and legislators at the signing ceremony.

**Q. What led you to propose an expanded, statewide pre-kindergarten program in the public schools?**

**A.** We’ve had a good response to the 26 pre-K classes for 4-year-olds already offered in high-need communities. I thought it was important as a policy vision in the State of the State address to commit to a high quality, public pre-K program statewide because that’s the only way we can ensure everyone has access. We know making these investments early can change people’s lives and impact children long after their school years. Preschools on the neighbor islands are very sparse, and many in our community can’t afford the cost. Our long-term vision is to give every child in Hawai‘i a head start on learning and success in life by restructuring schools to pre-K through grade 5. Then grade 6 would become part of our middle schools, as they already are in some O‘ahu areas.

**Q. What are some of the first steps we can take in the short-term?**

**A.** The DOE has identified 22 classrooms in elementary schools statewide where there is demand and space available as a way to get started. Some middle schools have already changed to a 6,7 and 8<sup>th</sup> grade configuration. We’re focused on maximizing facilities in communities of highest need, especially in areas where they don’t have access even to private preschools.

**Q. What about questions raised as to cost, staffing or reconfiguration of some elementary schools?**

**A.** Obviously, it’s a big challenge. As we say in our Early Childhood State Plan, our long-term vision is that all 4-year-olds should have access to high-quality public and private pre-K programs. We’ve talked about what would be the most effective way to implement the program with existing extra classrooms. I’m confident as the Legislature looks at our budget requests that they will agree these areas are important and reflect the most pressing community needs.

**Q. What makes this month’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our state Capitol significant for you?**

**A.** I’ve always felt that our Capitol building was the most beautiful in the nation. Part of that is the architects’ commitment to capturing elements reflective of the islands as well as the open design. They wanted it to be “the people’s building” — inviting and accessible. I hope people can take time on March 15 or 16 to tour the building and take part in some of the activities.

# A 50th anniversary celebration for the state Capitol

A celebration to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hawai'i State Capitol is planned for this month with the public invited to tour the building and attend a free series of sessions on the history and design of the Capitol, legislative milestones and the future of civic engagement.

**"Democracy by Design: The Hawai'i State Capitol at 50"** activities will include a 10 a.m. ceremony in the rotunda on **Friday, March 15** with remarks by Governor Ige, Senate President Ron Kouchi, House Speaker Scott Saiki and 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary task force chair Sen. Brian Taniguchi. The community is invited to do self-guided tours of the Capitol and view exhibits. On **Saturday, March 16**, a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary symposium in the state Capitol auditorium will start at 9 a.m. and continue into the afternoon with speakers such as Don Hibbard, architectural historian, Robbie Dingeman, Honolulu magazine editor-at-large and Colin Moore, director of the Public Policy Center, UH Mānoa. Registration is required for this March 16 event.



The Capitol was dedicated on March 15, 1969 on the 10th anniversary of the passage of the statehood bill by Congress. Governor John A. Burns used his opening address to the Legislature to describe the openness and spirit of Hawai'i: "The open sea, the open sky, the open doorway, open arms and open hearts—these are the symbols of our Hawaiian heritage...It is by means of this striking architecture of this new structure that Hawai'i cries out to the nations of the Pacific and of the world this message: 'We are a free people...we are an open society...we welcome all visitors to our Island home.'" For more details and registration, go to <https://historichawaii.org/2019/01/31/democracybydesignsymposium/>.

## UH West O'ahu breaks ground for creative media complex

The next best thing to Hollywood is coming to **UH West O'ahu** with a creative media facility that will fuel students' imagination and talents and serve programs on all 10 UH campuses. The \$33 million complex, set to be completed in June 2020, will include a sound stage for filming, a 100-seat screening room, editing and sound mixing suites and a mill shop to create film sets as well as computer labs and an area for student-run companies.

The creative media hub will help prepare students for work in tech-focused careers such as cinema, video game development, interactive design, computer animation, visual graphics, television production and new media. Transfer agreements with UH's community colleges allow creative media graduates from the two-year campuses to complete a four-year degree.

It's all part of a statewide plan spearheaded by Chris Lee, director of the **Academy for Creative Media (ACM) – UH System**, to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century jobs in a global marketplace and a platform for Hawai'i to tell its own indigenous stories. "This is a commitment to our students and the future," Lee said. "We started at UH Mānoa with the first program, and now ACM is supporting 17 programs at all 10 UH campuses. West O'ahu has been designed to be the hub for this whole system." Governor Ige praised UH West O'ahu, saying, "This facility will help our students move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, innovation economy jobs we want to create."



Gov. Ige, first lady and UH leaders at the Creative Media event.

## Tax filing tips from DoTax

The deadline to file federal 2018 tax returns is **April 15, 2019**. State income tax returns are due **April 22**. Here are a few tips from the state tax department to avoid delays and frustration:

**File early** - This is the best way to prevent cybercriminals from stealing your refund. You may enroll in the Department's ID Theft Protection Program by visiting [hitax.hawaii.gov](http://hitax.hawaii.gov). If you enroll, you will be notified when an income tax return is filed with your name and Social Security number, and you will be asked to verify that you filed the tax return.

**File electronically** - Compared to paper filing, e-filing improves accuracy, provides verification that your tax return was filed,

and processes faster so refunds are delivered to you quicker. **Use direct deposit** - This is the quickest and safest way to receive your refund. Processing times are longer for taxpayers who choose to receive their refunds by check.

**Check Your Refund Status** - You may check the status of your refund online 9-12 weeks after you filed your tax return. Visit the Department's website at [tax.hawaii.gov](http://tax.hawaii.gov) and click on "Check Your Income Tax Refund Status."

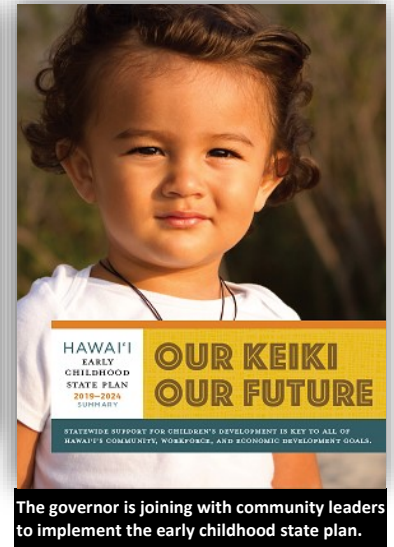
**For More Help** - If you are unable to resolve an issue after reading form instructions and searching the Department website, Taxpayer Services agents are available by phone at (808) 587-4242 Monday - Friday, 7:45 a.m. to 4 p.m.

# A community plan to invest in keiki and families

What if every keiki in Hawai'i could have a healthy start, a safe haven of family support, and a positive place to learn? Think of the impact on reducing crime and substance abuse. Imagine the benefits for community growth.

Gov. David Ige and state leaders believe the answers lie in the **first-ever Hawai'i Early Childhood State Plan 2019-2024**, a collaborative roadmap to guide public and private efforts now and in the future.

The five-year plan sets the foundation for statewide efforts for children, pre-natal through age 8, in children's health, safety and well-being, family resources and early care and learning.



**"All children in Hawai'i should have the best possible foundation for a successful life,"** said the governor. "This plan includes strategies and priorities that provide inspiration and structure to our efforts over the next several years." The state also has been awarded a \$1 million federal grant to help with the next level of implementation. The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) and its board will work with stakeholders statewide to move the plan forward.

"Hawai'i's early childhood system has been a patchwork of public and private programs and services administered by multiple state and county agencies, private childcare providers and nonprofit agencies that are not necessarily coordinated," said EOEL director Lauren Moriguchi. "To create a more cohesive and comprehensive system, the community is launching a new plan."

**The five-year plan, developed by a broad spectrum of representatives from public and private sectors,** covers five building blocks to address the needs of children, families and the workforce. These include child and family health, safety and wellbeing; family partnerships and support; foundations for early learning; a well-prepared, well-supported early childhood workforce; and a coordinated early childhood system.

**One of the key building blocks for the plan is the governor's goal of significantly expanding public prekindergarten access.** As the DOE points out, "A child's brain grows most rapidly during the first five years of life, and early brain development has a lasting impact on a child's ability to learn and succeed. Economic status should not be a barrier to quality early childhood learning in Hawai'i."

DOE Superintendent Christina Kishimoto emphasized the importance of early learning in a Honolulu Star-Advertiser interview. "There is very long-term research that says pre-K access matters in closing the achievement gap (between students from low-income families and students from higher-income families). We have a huge achievement gap in this state," she said.

**As a first step,** the governor and the DOE are proposing converting up to 22 classrooms into pre-K facilities at elementary schools statewide, where there is already demand and space available. "Ultimately, we will need more than 300 public pre-K classrooms. Clearly, this is a long-term goal. But we don't have to wait until we have funding for all of it," said Governor Ige.

In the future, the DOE plans to identify schools that are interested in moving their 6<sup>th</sup> grade to the intermediate level to make room for a pre-K program. To meet the increased demand for qualified pre-K teachers, EOEL director Moriguchi said her office offers an Early Learning Academy and supports DOE and UH efforts to recruit and certify more early childhood educators.

**Currently, the EOEL office has 26 pre-K classrooms operating in DOE schools on several islands with programs available free of charge to 4-year-olds who qualify based on family income.** Applications for the 2019-2020 school year are available from <http://earlylearning.hawaii.gov/>. Visit this website to see the full Early Childhood State Plan and learn how to get involved.



**"In Hawai'i and across the world, we know that when children can develop to their fullest potential, communities can as well."**  
— Early Childhood State Plan

# 'Jump Start Breakfast' launched

**F**irst Lady Dawn Amano-Ige and the DOE food services branch are on a mission: to encourage more students to start their day with a healthy school breakfast. "We all know it's hard to concentrate on an empty stomach," said Mrs. Ige, a former DOE teacher and vice principal. "When students eat breakfast and receive the proper nutrition, they're ready to learn and more likely to succeed."



First lady and Marcus Mariota in the courtyard with (from left) Chrischiah Keawe, Keith Amemiya, principal Anne-Marie Murphy and Kanani Kanewa.

The "Jump Start Breakfast" pilot program being launched at up to 10 Hawai'i schools has itself been jumpstarted by a \$60,000 grant from the **national No Kid Hungry campaign**. Other community non-profits such as Hawai'i Appleseed, the Safeway Foundation and the Albertsons Foundation are also supporters. In addition, Governor Ige has declared **March School Breakfast Month** to highlight for families the student benefits in improved health and academic achievement. According to Dexter Kishida, a DOE food services supervisor, the goal of the campaign is to **increase the average daily participation in school breakfasts at the pilot schools by 1,100 meals**.

For some students in low-income areas, this means they could have a nutritious start to their day at no cost or as little as 30 cents per meal, depending on the family income. In Hawai'i's public schools, breakfast is offered at all 256 campuses statewide through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) School Breakfast Program. The cost for the meal depends on the family's ability to pay. If the state's DOE breakfast participation increased, thousands more students would be gaining needed nutrition and more families statewide would benefit and save money. "Some students aren't eating breakfast at home," Kishida said. "They may just grab a bag of chips and barely get to school on time. At school we can provide a whole grain pizza pocket or banana bread and a fruit cup. **We're raising parent and community awareness of how vital a good breakfast is to help children jump start their day.**"

Kishida said the schools in the pilot program will be trying different approaches to increase participation, such as "grab and go" items students can eat on the run or breakfast in the classrooms. The pilot schools include Hawai'i island - Hilo Union Elementary, Kapi'olani Elementary, and Wai'ākea High; Leeward district - Ewa Elementary, Leihoku Elementary, Wai'anae Elementary and Intermediate; and Honolulu district - Central Middle, Fern Elementary, Linapuni Elementary.

**It was definitely a feel-good moment:** local boy and Tennessee Titans quarterback **Marcus Mariota** urging Central Middle students to "dream big" . . . and to be sure to eat their breakfast. Mariota joined first lady Dawn Amano-Ige and Keith Amemiya, Island Holdings (the parent company of Island Insurance) senior vice president, at Central Middle School in its newly refurbished courtyard. "We decided to renovate the school courtyard by repaving it and getting 10 picnic tables donated," said Amemiya. "The Hawai'i Appleseed Project, Island Insurance, Grace Pacific, and Marcus's Motiv8 Foundation joined forces to help beautify the courtyard and give students a place to eat, study and socialize."

## Hawai'i's Milken winner one of only 33 nationwide

**T**his year's winner of the \$25,000 Milken Educator Award actually helped plan her own Feb. 5 school assembly — without realizing it was all for her. Governor Ige had the honor of making the surprise announcement of **Sara King, Ala Wai Elementary's Title I coordinator**, as the recipient of the coveted award while students and colleagues applauded and cheered.

Every year the Milken Family Foundation honors educators nationwide as a way to elevate the profession. King is one of just 33 named this year in the U.S. and the only one in the state. The recipients don't even know they have been nominated until the award is announced. King was described as a leader and a mentor who focuses on helping children schoolwide reach their potential. Principal Michelle DeBusca said in a Honolulu Star-Advertiser interview, "(Sara's) all heart and loves her children. What makes her special is she's always helping her colleagues."



Well-wishers surround Ala Wai teacher Sara King as the state's Milken winner.

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