

## ECFC Places & Spaces Huddle for Local and State ECFC Members **June 20<sup>th</sup> Highlights: Funders working together on state EC/EL advocacy**

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**Al Castle, Samuel N. and Mary Castle Foundation**, shared the collective work of funders in Hawaii to advocate for children. As a result of consistent advocacy, the 2023 Hawai'i legislative session ended with a record level of legislative investments in Hawai'i's early education world. The Governor signed all ECE related bills (although he is redlining various building projects unrelated to ECE). More than a billion dollars have been committed to children and families, from infant and toddler learning to health and wellbeing. The public investment includes the following:

- **Removing economic stressors for families (\$820 million)** Increasing tax credits to help working families, reducing homelessness, and increasing affordable housing.
  - Living in Hawai'i is expensive, especially for families. Commit to Keiki<sup>1</sup> supported Governor Green's "Affordability Package" to reduce the economic stressors for families. While Governor Green's bill did not pass, several tax credit increases, estimated at more than \$120 million, were adopted and reduce the economic burden on families - HB 954: Earned Income Tax Credit is doubled, Food and Excise Tax Credit is doubled, and the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit is increased from \$2,400 per taxpayer to \$10,000.
- **Providing sufficient, culturally appropriate, quality child care and early learning services (\$235 million)** Expanding Preschool Open Doors subsidy program, creating charter school preschool classrooms, providing staff to operate more pre-k classrooms, kindergarten entry assessments, and building teacher housing.
- **Ensuring Hawai'i's youngest children can live a trauma-free life (\$195 million)** Enabling access to health care: Increasing Medicaid reimbursements, Child Wellness Incentive Pilot Program, and Hawaii State Loan Repayment Program for Healthcare Professionals. Addressing child abuse and neglect: Funding Child Protective Service contracts, foster board payments, sex trafficking victim support and the Family Resource Center Network.
- Housing is the largest portion of a family's budget. Governor Green's efforts to **address homelessness and provide more affordable housing** will reduce the economic stress on families and prevent homelessness. Almost \$700 million is being appropriated to address homelessness and expand affordable housing.
- In addition, \$235 million investment has been made in implementing a **"universal" access for all 3–4-year-olds to quality early learning**.<sup>2</sup> The project will take another decade to complete and will enjoy private as well as public support.

### **Some key points about funders working together in Hawai'i:**

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<sup>1</sup> Commit to Keiki is a statewide, non-partisan, government/non-government collaborative launched in 2021 with substantial philanthropic support to make sure EC was front and center on the 2022 Gubernatorial campaign (the result – EC issues were woven into debates like never before, and see below on Pre-K expansion win). It brings together Hawai'i's business, nonprofit and philanthropic leaders to work together to ensure that Hawai'i's youngest keiki and their families have a brighter start.

<sup>2</sup> In June 2020, the Hawai'i State Legislature, with strong coordinated advocacy from public and private partners, passed a bill that expands public Pre-K from just four-year-old's to all three and four-year-old's. However the state had little state money available to fund the expansion. Several vital private funders, including the Samuel N. and Mary Castle Foundation and Kamehameha Schools, stepped up to support initial implementation of the Pre-K expansion.



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- For 10 years, 10s of millions of dollars for early childhood were predicated on matching funding. Samuel N. and Mary Castle Foundation pledged funding immediately (even before other funders and larger funders committed).
- A deep focus on EC in Hawai'i began with the Kellogg Foundation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> Other foundations, like Omidyar Network have provided tremendous support and staffing for EC initiatives.
- Even though foundations have differences in history, how they work, trustee leadership and sometimes disagree on how to do things best, they all agree on one thing – the wellbeing of children. Around wellbeing of children, disagreements disappear and work can move forward. For example, Kamehameha Schools serves educational needs of native Hawai'ian children. Samuel N. and Mary Castle Foundation is founded in 18<sup>th</sup> century European enlightenment and Christianity – they fund everyone. Kamehameha Schools and Castle work together because you can have a indigenous and a generic funder working together to impact a system in ways that they couldn't do on our own.
- Many foundations in Hawaii some are quite sizable, and committed to collective advocacy for 0-5. They actively look for co-funding opportunities and leverage opportunities to get work done.
  - Recently, eBay (owners live in Hawai'i) came to the community foundation to offer support for the Hawai'i version of an early childhood funders (Keiki Funders) to meet occasionally to talk about good projects that lack collective funding, to talk about how to make funding happen. The group meets every 4-5 months.
- Hawai'i funders have been advocating for the recent legislative wins for a long time. Next they will be working together towards making sure implementation is equitable, quality, sustained over time, and monitored repeatedly.

Some other reflections on what funders can learn from early childhood efforts in Hawai'i:

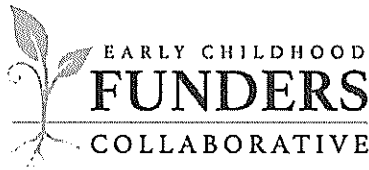
- [Building Early Education Opportunity Through Cultural Equity: The Hawaii Case Study, Q&A with Al Castle of the Samuel N. and Mary Castle Foundation](#) in advance of the ECFC 2018 Hawai'i Study Tour.
- [Early Childhood in the State of Hawai'i- Inspiring Focus on Cultural Equity, Inter-generational Change, System Change, and Most Underserved Children](#), reflections from Omidyar Network following the ECFC 2018 Hawai'i Study Tour.

**Nancy Jost, West Central Initiative and MN Start Early Funders Coalition** shared how funders have been working together in and major legislative wins they saw in 2023 as a result. Twenty years ago, early childhood advocates in MN didn't have a lot of cohesion. They had a legislator that kept pushing them to work together (who is still around and pushing them). The [Start Early Funders Coalition](#) was formed in 2011 to bring some cohesion to funders interested in early childhood, and now has about 15 members.

Every year they put out a policy agenda – see their [2023 Start Early Public Policy Agenda](#). They develop

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<sup>3</sup> A few examples of Kellogg's work in Hawai'i: [Hawai'i P-20 initiative](#), [The SPARK Initiative](#) which funded grants in eight states including Hawai'i.



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their policy agenda by looking at other groups/advocates/nonprofits, and they have a parent and provider committee, and other organic ways of generating their priorities. Their funder members are also heavily involved in other organizations – that helps them see where others are focused on early childhood, where there are gaps, and to avoid competition.

They create their own agenda/select their policy priorities (vs. endorsing other organizations EC agendas) because there's a lot going on in EC in MN, and their policy agenda is focused on areas where the funders think they can have and impact. They do a lot of work with nonprofits, and other EC advocates. They work with/listen to higher education as well as K-12 in our advocacy. We have to work together and not fight each other or even be passive to each other.

This year, the MN legislative session concluded with historic investments in families with infants, toddlers and young children including: a **\$2 billion investment in increasing access to early child care and education and stabilizing the workforce**; passage of Paid Family & Medical Leave; 1,000 new child care and early learning slots; increased reimbursement rates and retention packages for child care providers; decreased co-payments for families; a new Family, Friend and Neighbor Care program; and a \$4 million increase to home visiting funding.

MN had a 17billion dollar state surplus last year. This new funding will come out of that surplus, and some of this funding will be permanent while some is one-time funding. Even though these are huge wins, MN has been in early childhood drought for a long time so they are playing catch up, and still have a lot to keep pushing for.

Check out these for more on the many wins they saw this year:

- [2023 Session ECE Wins Infographic](#)
- [2023 Legislative Update](#)

### Questions for both:

#### How much did funders invest compared to how much EC funding was won in recent legislative sessions:

- Nancy – the MN funders pool their funds for advocacy work. They didn't put a lot of funding in (maybe \$30K). A lot of their work was people-power, writing letters, holding rallies, attending meetings, making phone calls.
- Al – Hawai'i funders didn't pool funds, they looked for ways their individual investments could have the most impact. Castle Foundation put in no more than \$300K, other foundations may have invested more (e.g. Omidyar invested over a million), but the investment was still small in comparison to the return of a billion dollar win.