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### **CONGRESSWOMAN HIRONO VISITS QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAM**

(Honolulu, Hawaii, August 27, 2009) –Congresswoman Mazie K. Hirono (D-Hawaii) toured the Childcare Business Coalition member school-Rainbow Schools Kaneohe today, visiting with the program’s children and staff.

Congresswoman Hirono got to see quality care and education in action. After introducing herself to an eager group of four-year-olds as “Auntie Mazie” she read them a book about ocean babies and taught the children about the value of saving our oceans. She tried hula hooping and even joined in Circle Time songs. Childcare Business Coalition Liaison, Christina Cox, commented, “We were delighted that the Congresswoman was able to fit us into her busy schedule. She has been a long time supporter of quality preschool and we are hopeful that the Congresswoman will support the re-authorization of the Child Care and development Block Grant, which helps provide families access to child care and aims to improve the quality of that care. Recent cuts in the state-funded Preschool Open Doors subsidy program have greatly reduced the number of low-income families able to attend quality preschool programs.

After accepting handmade lei and cards from the keiki, Congresswoman Hirono spent time with some of Hawaii’s leading preschool providers including Ray Sanborn of Kama’aina Kids, Steve Albert of Rainbow Schools, Doug Mersberg of Waianae Coast Early Childhood Services and Christina Cox of KCAA Preschools of Hawaii discussing the needs of Hawaii’s working parents and the early education providers that serve them, as they work with the state’s Early Learning Council to develop a mixed delivery system of state-funded early learning programs. Congresswoman Hirono noted that the bill she recently introduced in Congress, the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009, includes an Early Learning Challenge Fund. She emphasized the importance of accountability and assured the group that early learning, with a strong educational component, will continue to be a top priority.

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