



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education
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by

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HB 425 – RELATING TO TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Hashem and members of the committee:

The University of Hawai'i (UH) supports this measure.

One of the University of Hawai'i's (UH) strategic directions is to grow the portfolio of sponsored research done at the University and to promote innovation and workforce diversification in the state's economy. One critical phase of innovation is the ability to commercialize research ideas generated on campus. The phase is often known as "technology transfer" and is designed to strengthen economies by getting new ideas, inventions and processes developed in universities to the private sector as quickly as possible. Technology transfer occurs throughout the nation at other universities and it is vital for UH to be able to support its faculty and student researchers in these activities.

The purpose of this bill is to adapt the application of the Hawai'i State Ethics Code to reflect current day realities of technology transfer activities and UH's unique mission as the state's largest research enterprise. If too stringently applied, certain requirements of the state ethics code will inhibit the efficient and effective commercialization of research generated at UH.

There is uncertainty in the application of the Ethics Code to UH-sponsored technology transfer activities because the same text of the Ethics Code must also be uniformly applied to cover a wide range of circumstances within state government. Compounding this uncertainty is that at one time, the Ethics Commission may have been liberal in permitting these technology transfer activities. At other periods of time, the Ethics Commission may have been more cautious.

The purpose of this measure is to provide clear guidance to UH and its individual and private sector collaborators by exempting technology transfer activities from selected provisions of the State Ethics Code.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.