



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 609 HD1 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Hasham, and Members of the Committee on Higher Education:

As Dean of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work, I strongly support HB609 HD1. By 2030, 24% of Hawai'i's population will be age 65 or older, compared to 21% nationally. The graying of Hawai'i is associated with challenges including elder abuse, dementia, caregiving, affordable age-friendly housing and transportation, and long-term care.

With support from the legislature, the UHM Center on Aging (COA) can build capacity to respond to such issues. Currently, with a permanent G-funded Director and a temporary researcher, funded through short term grants and contracts, the COA's capacity to expand is limited. Ongoing projects address important community needs, but are limited to activities specified in grant and contract language. The larger systemic needs of the community, for example, developing the eldercare workforce and retraining older adults to remain in the workforce, require additional professional support. Funding for a permanent associate professor position and associate specialist position, will equip the COA in achieving all areas of its *mission*: to engage in workforce development through innovative programs of interdisciplinary gerontological education and practice; to engage in collaborative and interdisciplinary research on critical aging-related areas; and to provide state-of-the-art gerontological information to policy makers, program managers, clinicians and the general public.

The UHM COA is committed to the highest level of excellence in education, research and service to our community. Specifically, we need staff to help us:

- Respond to requests from the state to address the escalating needs and challenges faced by our growing aging population.
- Assist state agencies to develop and evaluate services for older adults.
- Seek and secure extramural funds for aging research from local, federal, and international sources as well as support state agencies in grant proposal development.

- Provide high quality gerontological education programs, both on the Mānoa campus as well as continuing education and training in the community and through online courses to neighboring islands.
- Reinstate (currently on hold) and administer the undergraduate and graduate certificates in gerontology, informed by the latest national *Standards and Guidelines for Gerontology and Geriatrics*, as defined by the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE) and also conforming to AGHE's *Gerontology Competencies for Undergraduate and Graduate Education*, to build a workforce that is well-prepared to care for our aging population.
- Work with faculty and students interested in gerontology to further their scholarship and publication.

Your support is requisite in providing UHM COA with the capacity to be a community resource for older adults, students, professional groups, healthcare organizations, private and governmental agencies, service providers, caregivers, and diverse consumers, with the intent of improving our health care workforce and the quality of life for all older adults in Hawai'i.

Please note, I strongly support this bill provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our Board of Regents Approved Biennium Budget.