



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Ocean, Marine Resources, & Hawaiian Affairs  
January 31, 2017 at 10:00 a.m.

By

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HB 950 – RELATING TO HIGHER EDUCATION.

Chair Ing, Vice Chair Gates and Members of the Committee.

At this time the University of Hawai'i opposes HB 950, which would establish the University of Hawai'i at Hilo College of Hawaiian Language as an autonomous university college.

There is no doubt that the UH Hilo College of Hawaiian Language has contributed greatly to the revitalization of the Hawaiian language, the establishment of immersion instruction in Hawaiian at the K-12 level, and the development of curricula and instructors of the Hawaiian language at all levels of education in our state. The faculty in the College are to be honored for their accomplishments. They are among the key pioneers who have educated a generation of instructors who now make it possible for students at all levels to learn and learn through the Hawaiian language

Through this bill the Legislature would be directing an internal reorganization of the University to alter the relationship of the College of Hawaiian Language with the rest of the University of Hawai'i at Hilo and the entire UH System. It would separate the College and its faculty from its colleagues on its campus and throughout the UH System by making it an autonomous university college of the UH System, a designation that is unclear and unprecedented.

The University of Hawai'i does not see the need to separate the College as a university college to accomplish the goals of this Bill, which are objectives not only of the UH Hilo College of Hawaiian Language but of the entire University System and its ten accredited campuses. The proponents of this separation have been asked to clearly articulate the barriers they see to progress that this significant structural change is intended to overcome. So far there have been no such specific barriers identified, much less barriers that cannot be overcome.

At the same time, there appear to be disadvantages should the Legislature decide to assign a single new autonomous university with these responsibilities of the entire UH System and the

State. For example, if we share a goal to teach more general education courses in Hawaiian, it would be most effective and efficient and appropriate to engage the Hawaiian-speaking subject matter faculty of all ten UH campuses rather than just the Hawaiian language faculty of the UH Hilo College of Hawaiian Language. A critical task to advance the teaching of the Hawaiian language is to create pathways that articulate Hawaiian language instruction throughout all ten UH campuses and with the public and private school systems. This bill would increase separation rather than advance collaboration and would make it harder to find common purpose within and across our campuses, colleges, schools, and the broader community. More generally, we believe the substantial work before the state to normalize the Hawaiian language within Hawai'i can best be advanced with all our campuses, faculty, staff and students, many of whom are engaged in partnerships with education and government at many levels to advance understanding, utilization and appreciation of the Hawaiian language across our islands.

S.R. No. 97 S.D. 1 of the 2015 legislative session established a working group to consider both the restructuring of the College of Hawaiian Language and to examine the expansion of Hawaiian language instruction throughout the University of Hawai'i system. The report of the working group reflects its discussions of expanding instruction in the Hawaiian language throughout the University of Hawai'i System, and it concluded with a recommendation that the group continue its work in 2016 to develop an implementation plan for expansion.

The report also includes a recommendation by the College of Hawaiian Language to establish itself as a university within a university. This was not a recommendation from the broader Hawaiian language community across the University system or the University itself. But this is only part of the working group report addressed by HB 950. We believe it is premature to consider this bill until the appropriate consultation has taken place with the broader university-wide Hawaiian language constituency. I have asked the proponents of this separation to discuss their recommendations with Hawai'i Papa O Ke Ao, the UH systemwide group that provides leadership on how to advance the mission we have embraced to be a foremost indigenous-serving university. This consultation has not yet taken place and Hawai'i Papa O Ke Ao does not support this bill at this time either.

The report of the SR 97 working group recognizes that expanding instruction through the Hawaiian language is a complex process requiring collaboration and common purpose across all 10 campuses, their colleges, and the schools in the state who prepare students for study at the University. The entire university system is committed to expanding instruction in and through Hawaiian at UH and in the state and does not see this as the responsibility of just a single new autonomous unit.

We recommend deferring action on this bill until the University of Hawai'i campuses, programs and stakeholders, including Hawai'i Papa O Ke Ao, can develop a shared recommendation on how to best expand instruction of and through Hawaiian in our state and advance the broader purposes called for in the Constitution.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.