



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committees on Economic Development & Business and Higher Education
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HB 2121 – RELATING TO WOMEN IN TECHNOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Chairs Evans and McKelvey, Vice Chairs Keohokalole and Hashem, and members of the committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding HB 2121 which establishes a Center for Women in Technology within the University of Hawai'i, Department of Information and Computer Sciences.

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of this measure, however, does not feel that the creation of a statutory section is required to accomplish this. The University has a strategic goal of increasing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) degrees, and recognizes that targeted outreach, learning, mentoring and other programs help to increase the number of women in such programs.

We would like to clarify that increasing women in STEM, including computer science, are efforts across ten-campus, led by the UH System, and not specific to a single campus. Initiatives are already underway. Some examples:

- The University of Hawai'i Community College system office was awarded a National Science Foundation ADVANCE grant for its project, "Building Relationships to Increase Diversity and Gender Equity" (BRIDGE). The five-year, \$1.1 million project will work with the seven community colleges to improve recruitment, retention, promotion, and success of women faculty in all STEM fields. The BRIDGE grant supports women in all STEM fields, including, but not limited to, computer science.

The project also has a partnership element between the UH CCs and UH Hilo, using virtual tools to connect remote island campus locations in mentoring and coaching trainings for administrators and senior faculty.

The UH President's Commission on the Status of Women, with commissioners appointed from all campuses and the system, has agreed to be a member of the Advisory Board for the BRIDGE program, and discusses issues such as disparities of women employees or students in the STEM fields.

- Maui College's NSF grant awarded for "Capacity Building: Cyber-Security Education across Disciplines with Focus on Minorities and Women," which includes working with high schools.
- Society of Women Engineers at UH Mānoa, established to build community, network with local professional women engineers, and demonstrate the value of diversity in this career field.
- "Girls Who Code" free workshops hosted by Hawai'i Community College for girls in grades 6-12, affiliated with a national nonprofit association Girls Who Code.
- The "Exploring Diversity and Gender Equity" (EDGE) project which had been awarded to UH Hilo, and aligned with the NSF-ADVANCE goal to increase representation and advancement of female faculty in STEM and in academic leadership positions.

With the variety of ongoing efforts in a range of technology fields, the University would be pleased to work with the committee toward crafting a resolution focusing on this important issue.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.