



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

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House Committee on Finance
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By
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HB 1157 HD1 – RELATING TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION STUDENT IMMUNIZATIONS

Chair Luke, Vice Chair Cullen, and members of the committee:

The University of Hawai'i (UH) strongly supports HB 1157 HD1 which exempts post-secondary students in exclusively online education or distance learning programs from providing evidence of immunizations as required by Title 11, Chapter 157, Hawaii Administrative Rules (HAR).

Post-secondary online education and distance learning programs expand access to higher education and workforce development opportunities. Online and distance learning programs provide more flexibility in location and schedule for students who are working, have family demands or have other challenges participating in on-campus, in-person classes. Participation in UH's online and distance courses is robust with 1,428 online classes in Fall 2018. With the legislative support appropriated in 2018, the UH is increasing its online learning opportunities. A new, fully online Associate in Arts (AA) program, organized as a year-round program of 5-week "accelerated" classes, begins with an optional college readiness class on July 2, 2019 and a two and a half year series of courses beginning August 26, 2019. Students in the first cohort will graduate from Leeward Community College in December 2021 with an AA degree and may subsequently pursue a bachelor's degree online.

Currently, HAR requires that post-secondary students provide immunization records with evidence of identified vaccinations. These rules, last updated in 2001, apply to all enrolled students, whether students are attending in person or remotely via technology. The Department of Health (DOH) revised the HAR for Tuberculosis 2018 and proposed changes to HAR for immunization to exempt students who participate in fully online programs. These exemptions streamline enrollment in online programs, reducing paperwork which is often a barrier to participation. In Fall 2018, DOH held public hearings for the proposed HAR for immunizations and is currently reviewing public comments on proposed HAR; the proposed immunization exemption for students in online and distance programs will not be in effect until the revised rules are adopted.

Therefore, HB 1157 HD1 would exempt post-secondary students in exclusively online and distance-learning programs from immunization requirements in time to benefit students who are participating in UH's inaugural online accelerated AA cohort and would establish the exemption in statute.

In closing, I wish to thank the Legislature for their support of expanding opportunities for Hawaii's residents through online and distance education. We request your support for this bill to streamline enrollment for online students.