



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Higher Education  
and

Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs  
February 9, 2017 at 1:15 p.m.

by

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### SB 848 Proposed SD1 – RELATING TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Chairs Kahele and Shimabukuro, Vice Chairs Kidani and Galuteria and Members of the Committees.

At this time the University of Hawai'i opposes SB 848 Proposed SD1, which expands certain roles of the college of Hawaiian Language at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo and which also assigns to this college the responsibility to establish a general education program to be delivered in the Hawaiian Language.

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 medium of Hawaiian language.

The bill describes several expansions of the role of the College of Hawaiian Language. All of those listed are either currently in place or can be accomplished without legislation:

- The college currently conducts its internal business in the Hawaiian Language and offers courses through the medium of Hawaiian on and off-campus and online;

- The college provides outreach to both indigenous and minority languages;
- The college currently maintains a language support center that provides support in all the areas listed in the bill;
- The college develops, pilots, and disseminates distinctive pathways, procedures, and rules that provide for the support and use of the Hawaiian language and other endangered languages, including use of such language in government functions
- The college collaborates with Native American and other world indigenous language medium education research;
- The college enters into agreements of cooperation and reciprocity with other entities as described in the bill.

Legislation is not needed for the college to continue these efforts. This college is not the only unit in the University of Hawaii System that engages in these activities, nor should it be. Indeed, we hope that many colleges in the System can achieve the integration of instruction and operations through Hawaiian as the College of Hawaiian Language has achieved.

The only expanded role for the college called for in this bill not currently undertaken by the college is to “Provide a specially facilitated general education, dual enrollment, liberal studies, and shared courses and programs pathways through the medium of Hawaiian language to serve students, using technology as appropriate.” At present, no single unit within the UH System is capable of providing general education through the medium of the Hawaiian language. The University strongly supports this goal, but it will be a complex process of curriculum development, faculty hiring and meaningful collaboration across departments, colleges and campuses to achieve.

The University believes the College of Hawaiian language will be an important component of the development of a Hawaiian medium general education program. General education lies at the heart of the modern university education and it is, rightly, the purview of the faculty to determine its scope and content. The full UH faculty must be engaged with the process of creating a Hawaiian medium general education program. This must address the required fluency level of Hawaiian appropriate for each general education course to ensure articulation across our 10 campuses. And it must consider questions of how delivery in Hawaiian impacts content as we, quite naturally, bring a greater indigenous world view into a Hawaiian-language curriculum.

The College of Hawaiian language alone does not have the subject matter expertise across all general education sciences, social sciences, arts and humanities to solely create and deliver a vibrant general education curriculum on its own, much less one that would be accepted across the entire UH system and beyond. Nor does any single school or college in the UH System. To accomplish this will require a bilingual faculty in multiple disciplines across our ten campuses.

The University would support a well-planned pilot to initiate development of a Hawaiian medium general education program across the UH System. But such a program must have the support of our faculty and engage our campuses. We believe enshrining this in statute is premature and we recommend it be deferred until the appropriate consultation with faculty and all campuses can take place.