



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Ocean, Marine Resources & Hawaiian Affairs
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by
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SB 848 SD2 – RELATING TO HIGHER EDUCATION

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

At this time the University of Hawai'i supports the intent of only parts of SB 848 SD2. This testimony provides our concerns about many portions of the legislation and provides specific requests for amendment should this bill move forward.

This bill expands certain roles of the College of Hawaiian Language at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, including the responsibility to establish a general education program to be delivered in the Hawaiian Language; permit a UH System-wide pilot project in instruction through the medium of Hawaiian Language; and establishes a working group to develop implementation plans for the recommendations created by the university's report requested by S.R. No. 97, S.D.1 regular session 2015.

There is no doubt that the UH Hilo College of Hawaiian Language ("College") 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.

However, the bill reaches into the internal management of the University to describe several expansions of the role, responsibility and authority 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 Hawai'i System that engages in these activities, nor should it be. Indeed, in recognition of Hawaiian as an official language of the State, we hope and believe that many colleges in the System can achieve the integration of instruction and operations through Hawaiian as the College of Hawaiian Language has achieved. Legislation that reaches into the internal management of the University to assign these roles and functions to only one college on one of the ten UH campuses is not only inappropriate but suggests that these are roles and responsibilities unique to that singled college on that single UH campus.

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 can provide general education through the medium of the Hawaiian language by itself; no single unit has the range of faculty expertise and language fluency to teach the range of courses required for general education in Hawaiian.

It is a goal of the university to develop the ability to teach general education through the medium of Hawaiian, and we plan to mobilize faculty expertise and fluency across the UH system to begin such a program. To be truly impactful and succeed in delivering general education through the medium of Hawaiian will requires coordinated efforts and collaboration in curriculum development with all 10 campuses working together.

The University believes the College can be an important collaborator in 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 university 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. The faculty across the system must determine the required fluency level of Hawaiian

appropriate for each general education course to ensure articulation across our 10 campuses so as to not disadvantage students as they move forward in their education. And it must consider questions of how delivery in Hawaiian impacts content as we, quite naturally, bring a greater indigenous world view into a general education program delivered in the Hawaiian language.

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 of Hawai'i system greatly appreciates the interest of the Legislature in helping us become a model indigenous serving university. We have established the Hawai'i Papa O Ke Ao initiative with leadership from all ten campuses to advance this goal, including increasing the use of the Hawaiian Language as a medium of instruction. And we believe we are now poised to achieve this as a system and do not need the assistance of additional legislation at this time.

Moreover, we believe that passing legislation regarding the internal management of the university and assigning specific roles and responsibilities to just one college on one campus will be detrimental to what would seem to be key objectives of the legislation: to further the normalization of Hawaiian Language and advance the provision of higher education in Hawaiian.

The University would be able to support this legislation should it be amended in conformance with the spirit and intent of this testimony. This could be done by removing in their entirety Section 2 and Section 3, which reach into the internal management of the University to assign specific roles and responsibilities to just one college on one campus. We find that Section 4 is not necessary but appreciate the support of the Legislation for work we have just started across the UH system with other educational partners at the K12 level. And we believe that Section 5 is not appropriate given the work already started without the use of a legislatively mandated working group.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.