



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committees on Higher Education and Human services
Tuesday, March 28, 2017 at 1:45 p.m.

By
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SCR 15 – REQUESTING THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII CENTER ON AGING TO CONVENE A TASK FORCE TO ASSESS CURRENT ELDER AND KUPUNA CARE SERVICES AND THE ANTICIPATED DEMAND FOR THOSE SERVICES IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THOSE SERVICES AND MEET ANTICIPATED DEMAND.

Chairs Kahele and Green, Vice Chairs Kidani and Chang, and Members of the Committees:

As Dean of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work, I support SCR 15. By 2030, 24% of Hawai'i's population will be aged 65 or older, compared to 21% nationally. The graying of Hawai'i is associated with multiple challenges, e.g., elder abuse, dementia, caregiving, affordable age-friendly housing and transportation, and long-term services and supports, as well as opportunities to enable older adults to engage in meaningful activities.

The kupuna care program, an alternative to traditional long-term care supports and services, strives to enable older Hawaiians to lead independent, meaningful, and dignified lives in their own homes and communities. It also strives to provide a safety net of services for all kupuna and their caregivers, including access to affordable and quality home- and community-based services, hot meals, transportation, case management, and personal care assistance. It is currently difficult to find appropriately trained providers of these services, and demand for kupuna care services is expected to increase as the number of aging people increases. The State needs a work force well trained in elder care and kupuna services to meet the demands of its aging population.

With support from the legislature, the UHM Center on Aging can take a leading role in building capacity to respond to these issues. As stated in SCR 15, the University of Hawai'i Center on Aging has been charged with convening a task force to review both the current elder and kupuna care system of services and the anticipated future demand for those services. Potential members of the task force have been identified in HCR 35 and represent the leading figures in the Hawaiian aging network. Based on this initial assessment of services, the Center on Aging and members of the task force would determine requirements for adequate training, workforce expansion, service expansion,

and financing to address any current gaps in the system and meet anticipated demand. A final report on findings, recommendations, and proposed legislation will be provided.

I recommend the following **amendments** for your consideration:

- The addition of the Dean of the Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work or the Dean's designee to the task force membership.
- The proposed task force is a worthy and much needed effort and the UHM Center on Aging represents the logical entity to convene it. However, given the Center's current low level of staffing, we request that the resolution be delayed for consideration until full staffing has been achieved. Given the urgency of the proposed resolution, if such delay would not be feasible, the Center would move forward as requested.