



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committees on Higher Education  
and  
Water and Land  
Monday, February 12, 2018 at 1:15 p.m.  
by  
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### SB 3090 Proposed SD1 – RELATING TO GOVERNMENT

Chairs Kahele and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Kim and Gabbard, and members of the committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide official University of Hawai'i testimony regarding SB 3090 Proposed SD1. Respectfully, the University of Hawai'i cannot support this bill as written.

It should be noted that due to the extraordinary breadth and severe impact of this bill as written there are multiple UH testimonies today. They all contain information that the Legislature may find useful in its deliberations. This testimony represents our official position.

Fundamentally, we believe this bill is based on a premise that is not correct, that the current management structure has failed and must be completely replaced. In fact, the 2014 State Audit reported that *“We found that UH has developed several management plans that provide a comprehensive framework for managing and protecting Mauna Kea while balancing the competing interests of culture, conservation, scientific research, and recreation.”*

The complexity of balancing these competing interests is probably more of a challenge on Maunakea than anywhere in Hawai'i, and UH has not shied away from its responsibilities over these past years as we have developed plans and subplans with deep community consultation that have been approved by the Board of Regents and Board of Land and Natural Resources in full sunshine. As a result of this work, UH stewardship of Maunakea was honored externally on two occasions in 2017. This included the highest recognition of preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and interpretation of the state's architectural, archaeological and cultural heritage from the Hawai'i Historic Foundation, and the Pūalu Award for Culture and Heritage from the Kona-Kohala Chamber of Commerce.

The extremely critical 1998 Audit was based on an assessment of roughly the first 30 years of stewardship since the beginnings of astronomy on Maunakea. Since that time, UH has created open, transparent and effective processes and we are proud of the dedicated work of our rangers, the volunteer Maunakea Management Board, the volunteer Native Hawaiian advisors of Kahu Ku Mauna, the Office of Maunakea Management and the 'Imiloa Astronomy Center. All of these are part of our work to manage and preserve, to educate and discover. There is of course more to be done and we are actively working every day to continue to improve.

That said, UH has also consistently and publicly expressed our willingness to consider alternate models of management. UH agreed to support the Governor's 10-point plan, which represents a significant change with the return to DLNR of 10,000 acres as requested. UH is in regular conversation with Mayor Kim and we are inspired by his vision to make Maunakea a global exemplar of peace and harmony where indigenous culture and the best science in the world coexist synergistically in a truly awesome environment. And when legislators became interested in crafting a completely new approach, we expressed a willingness to consider their proposals. This is all consistent with the formal public position of the Board of Regents, which I wholeheartedly support, to move to a more collaborative model of management that engages more than just the University.

The testimony provided by many others today will point out multiple issues with this bill as written. So we will share here just a handful of key high-level concerns about fundamental approach that appears to underlie this bill as written.

- 1) Such a bill should establish a clear vision and commitment that astronomy and culture must coexist on Maunakea. Without that fundamental underpinning, whoever is responsible for stewardship will be accused of failure by those who do not accept the vision.
- 2) The bill would result in a dramatic increase in the cost of management, beginning with all the paid members of the new board, all the new executive positions, and all the new staff to work with the new board and executives. The bill does not explain the questionable premise that all these new costs can be covered by extracting more dollars from a smaller number of observatories and from commercial tourism.
- 3) The management regime proposed explicitly excludes the involvement of anyone directly engaged in astronomy, education or research relating to Maunakea. We believe that for these enterprises to thrive on the mauna requires expertise and knowledge about them.
- 4) Finally, the complete exclusion of the University from the education and research mission associated with Maunakea would likely result over the long-term in the loss

of inspiring astronomical science and engineering in Hawai'i, and an associated decrease in economic investment and vitality.

Being unable to support this bill as currently written does not mean the University is opposed to change. In fact, the opposite is true and that is why we share these concerns.

At the same time, we are continuing to move forward.

Internally, we are now planning some work that will restructure our internal programs to make them more efficient, clear and accountable. We will also increase the synergies between science and culture, including for visitors and workers on the mauna. This restructuring will be led by our new Senior Advisor on Maunakea.

Externally, the Board of Regents recently passed a resolution calling for a more collaborative approach to stewardship, with greater external engagement by other stakeholders. We will continue to engage with the Mayor of Hawai'i Island and the Governor around ideas and initiatives for improvement. And we would be happy to engage meaningfully with the Legislature if that is desired.

But please know that we are not sitting idle waiting for the Legislature or the Mayor or someone else to create a path forward for all of us. Even as we collaborate with others, we are working toward the long-term improvements in management that will be needed for the next stages of collaborative stewardship under any model. This is all completely consistent with the activities we must and will undertake as we begin to update the Comprehensive Management Plan for Maunakea, as is necessary for any living document to usefully serve in a highly dynamic and complex environment.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide University of Hawai'i testimony on SB 3090 Proposed SD1.