



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committees on Higher Education and  
Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs  
March 27, 2018 at 1:30 p.m.

by  
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SCR 182/SR 108 - REQUESTING THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII TO RENAME THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII INSTITUTE FOR ASTRONOMY TO THE PAUL H.I. COLEMAN ASTRONOMY CENTER

Chairs Kahele and Nishihara, Vice Chairs Kim and Wakai, and members of the Committees:

The University of Hawai'i welcomes this opportunity to comment on SCR 182/SR 108, which requests the Board or Regents to rename the University of Hawai'i Institute for Astronomy as the "Paul H.I. Coleman Astronomy Center". The University is pleased to acknowledge the respect and appreciation for Dr. Coleman and his life's work, which the Senate has expressed in these resolutions.

Paul Coleman, an astronomer at the Institute for Astronomy, passed away at his home on January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Paul was the first Native Hawaiian with a doctorate in astrophysics. A graduate of St. Louis School, he received his BS in Physics from the University of Notre Dame, and his PhD in Physics at the University of Pittsburgh. His doctoral research focused on the sizes of distant galaxies observed at radio wavelengths, and the implications of these for cosmological models.

Paul's career took him around the world before eventually returning to his native Hawai'i, arriving at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in 2002. In his 15 years with the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Institute for Astronomy (IfA), Paul played a key role in its education and public outreach efforts. At local schools, science events, and conferences across the State, as well as on the mainland and internationally, he spoke passionately about astronomy, its importance to Hawai'i, and how Hawaiians should play a major role. He was a member of many committees and councils dedicated to increasing Native Hawaiian participation in the sciences.

Paul was a tireless advocate for astronomy in Hawai'i. He spoke to business groups, rotary clubs, and chambers of commerce advocating for UH and the IfA. He testified strongly in support of major telescope projects, including the Daniel K. Inouye Solar Telescope (DKIST) on Haleakalā, and the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) on Maunakea. Paul's vision was that Native Hawaiians, by engaging in the sciences and especially astronomy, would become major users of these facilities, connecting the future of astronomy with the rich history of Polynesian voyaging. He was an advisor for the

'Imiloa Astronomy Center in Hilo, and served on the State's Hawaiian lexicon committee, developing new Hawaiian words to keep up with advances in science.

At the IfA, Paul led its National Science Foundation (NSF) funded Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) program for nearly a decade. This highly competitive program brings a dozen undergraduates from around the country to conduct research with IfA astronomers during the summer. He helped lead the NSF's mitigation program for the DKIST, which advances Native Hawaiian participation in STEM fields. Paul worked closely with the Faulkes Telescope North project on Haleakalā, a remotely operable telescope designed to be used by students anywhere in the world. Every year, at the annual IfA Open House in Mānoa valley, Paul shared the wonder of astronomy with local families, making hundreds of sundials to show how we can tell time by the position of the Sun.

Perhaps most importantly, Paul served as a mentor to a new generation of Native Hawaiian scientists. These include Heather Kaluna, now a professor at UH Hilo, Brittany Kamai, a researcher at Caltech, and dozens of high school and college students beginning their careers. His dedication to the Native Hawaiian community and to Native Hawaiian youth in STEM will be sorely missed at the university and throughout the state.

It is unclear whether the intent is to rename the current IfA building in Mānoa valley or the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa IfA organizational unit. As indicated in the resolution, the authority for such renaming rests with the Board of Regents and is subject to Board policy. Board of Regents Policy requires that 5 years elapse after someone's passing to consider naming facilities or programs after her/him unless exception is made by the BOR under specified criteria. We would respectfully request that the resolution be amended to urge the University administration and the Board of Regents to find a recognition opportunity that is suitable for Dr. Coleman. This amendment will allow the university maximum flexibility in finding an appropriate means to honor him and his life's work.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.