SB 200 – RELATING TO INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Chairs Kim and Wakai, Vice Chairs Kidani and Taniguchi, and members of the committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 200, which appropriates funds to the University of Hawaiʻi (UH) to fund one or more programs sponsored or organized by a UH Community College or a four-year campus to expand opportunities for international college experiences for UH students, and also requires UH to work with the Department of Business Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) and requires a report to be submitted to the legislature. The University offers the following comments.

UH has a long history of supporting opportunities for students to study abroad. Because of our location and international scope of our programs and faculty, it has been natural for the university to develop ways for students to learn about other cultures, languages, and peoples by studying in places outside Hawaiʻi.

The university also has a well-established working relationship with DBEDT to increase the number of students from abroad studying in Hawaiʻi. The robust programs at multiple campuses that bring faculty and students from other countries to work and study with us offers a significant enrichment of our programs and builds interest among our students in themselves studying abroad. Eight campuses and the system are members of the Study Hawaiʻi consortium, with whom we regularly engage at conferences and other events to encourage international students to study in Hawaiʻi. Together, Study Hawaiʻi and DBEDT promote Hawaiʻi as the pre-eminent study destination, “The Best Classroom in the World.”

Each campus supports, organizes, and offers over-seas study opportunities for students in different ways. More than 500 students systemwide study abroad each year in 30 countries. These credit programs range from one-week intensive courses to year-long adventures; some students live with host families while others choose to live in residence halls. And, most any major's requirements can be met while studying abroad – students can study language and culture, biology, business or architecture, to name just a few courses that are offered.
We appreciate and support the intent of this bill, which would provide funding to grow some study abroad programs at one or more UH campus. We are concerned, however, with how campuses or programs would be selected, or how funds would be appropriated. In some cases, funds to support students and faculty in a study abroad program might be the most impactful way to foster growth of opportunities. In that case, a scholarship fund for students studying abroad might be a mechanism to consider to implement the goals this bill supports.