Aloha, my name is Noah Dolim. I am a graduate of UH-Hilo, and currently a first-year M.A. student in Hawaiian History at UH-Mānoa. This is my written testimony to the Board of Regents against the construction of TMT.

1) UH leases the Mauna Kea Science Reserve from DLNR for $1-a-year, then subleases parcels to other institutions. Currently, the University of Hawai‘i is seeking a 65-year lease for the MKSR. The current lease that UH holds expires in 2033. If the construction of the $1.4 billion TMT is allowed, it would be completed in 2022. The TMT would have less than ten years of operational use. It seems that all the invested institutions know that the new lease will be set. If true, this means these parties have essentially negated the important process of community hearings and testimony, which is unacceptable.

2) The TMT has been billed as a great contribution to humanity through scientific advancement; and that Native Hawaiians and locals should be honored to contribute to the cause. But, the history of Hawai‘i has shown how the phrase “for the greater good” has operated, in places such as Kaho‘olawe, Mākua, Waikāne, and Pōhakuloa; which were all utilized in the name of American national defense. Although the TMT is not a military project, it is still being promoted as progress “for the greater good” and will result in irreversible damage to the land. ‘Āina cannot continue to be treated as the collateral damage of these projects. If built, TMT will reach into outer space to look at stars, galaxies, and possible alien life forms, while turning its back on the spaces we inhabit.

Another popular argument for the construction of the TMT is that ancestral Polynesians were skilled voyagers, and would therefore agree with the project. If we put these modern day astronomers down in a wa‘a in the middle of the Pacific, with their fancy data charts and knowledge, they would not be able to navigate. The skill of navigation is not just the romanticized notion of star-gazing; it was to truly know how the environment operated: sky, water, and land, and all elements in-between. These environmental features were the instruments of navigation. I am not against science or so-called “advancement”, but do not try to twist the history of our kūpuna to justify this project. Do not confuse your science with ours. Progress is the synthesis and negotiation between past, present, and future; one cannot devour the other.

3) The UH-Mānoa website states that “students get a great education and have a unique multicultural global experience in a Hawaiian place of learning—truly like no place on earth”. What kind of a “Hawaiian” experience is being talked about? Hawaiian culture can be seen on display throughout the UH system, through mediums such as art, language, and performance. The University of Hawai‘i
system, as an institution, utilizes Hawaiian culture but fails to recognize the voice of Kānaka, or Kānaka related issues.

Students, teachers, staff, and community members (both Hawaiian/Non-Hawaiian) have continually voiced their opposition to this project throughout the entirety of the process. However, when Kānaka raise their voice in opposition, we are quickly labeled as angry/ignorant Hawaiians, our culture becomes a hindrance to progress, and the ears of the institution seem to go deaf. Although public testimony in front of the Board of Regents offers a space to talk, it is a one-way conversation that does not appear to work. Effective communication comes from dialogue: an exchange of ideas between two parties, which involves listening (not just hearing). If the UH system is serious in wanting to create a “Hawaiian place of learning—truly like no place on earth”, it needs to re-balance its investment between Hawaiian culture and Kānaka. The establishment of a stable dialogue between students, teachers, staff, and administration should be well-nurtured. The UH system has the potential to set itself apart from other universities and colleges, and become the unique institution it wants to be.

E hoʻolohe mai i ko kākou leo.