



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

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by

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HCR 98 – EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR ONGOING EFFORTS TO PLAN AND DEVELOP A SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATH (STEM) EDUCATION AND TRAINING CENTER IN KAKA'AKO MAKAI

Chair Evans, Vice Chair Lowen and members of the committee:

The University of Hawai'i would like to express its strong support for efforts to develop a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education, research and training center in Kaka'ako Makai. As identified in the resolution, the future of our island state depends on having a well-trained workforce in the STEM disciplines. Our economy, culture and quality-of-life are integrally tied to wise stewardship of our land and ocean resources, as reflected by the traditional land divisions, ahupua'a, that extend from the land to the sea. Modern science integrated with traditional ecological knowledge is essential to insuring a bright future for Hawaii's people. We possess one of the best natural laboratories, the ocean, for engaging our students (K-12, undergraduate and graduate) and our broader community of stakeholders in the STEM disciplines. At present, no such facilities exist to adequately and effectively address Hawai'i's needs in STEM workforce preparation, or the need for bridging locally-relevant science to education, natural resource management and policy development. Hawaii's efforts under such programs as the Department of Education's "race to the top" would clearly be strengthened by having a world class facility to train our students and such a facility would also serve to enhance community understanding of critical issues such as climate change.

The effort to further develop and expand partnerships among various stakeholders, such as the University of Hawai'i, the Hawai'i State Department of Education, Kamehameha Schools, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, the Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources, appropriate Federal agencies and community groups supports the best opportunity to effectively and practically address the needs of our state and people now and into the future. The proposed STEM center could truly be a gathering place of great value to our communities.

The University of Hawai'i already has facilities in Kaka'ako Makai, including the Pacific Biosciences Research Center's Kewalo Marine Laboratory, that has a multimillion dollar

seawater system that could be used to provide unparalleled opportunities for the hands-on study of Hawai'i's marine life. Discussions are already underway on how a proposed STEM education, research and training center could partner with a proposed "Obama Presidential Center" to address ocean and island sustainability, including opportunities to bridge science to policy development and implementation regionally and internationally.

In summary, the University of Hawai'i strongly supports this resolution and would be a willing and fully engaged partner in efforts to improve STEM education for our students, to provide additional opportunities to invest in research relevant to Hawai'i, and to expand community outreach efforts in putting knowledge to work to insure the brightest future for Hawai'i and its people.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of this resolution.