



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

TESTIMONY

S.B. 1642: RELATING TO TEACHERS

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Education and Military Affairs
and Committee on Labor

February 14, 2005

By

Randy Hitz
Dean
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

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Chair Sakamoto & Kanno, Vice Chair Hooser & Ihara, Members
of the Committees:

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of S.B. 1642.

The University of Hawai'i has been working hard on many fronts to address the shortage of teachers. The College of Education's (COE) capacity has been increased in recent years, especially in its ability to serve the neighbor islands. Today, the COE has over 200 neighbor island students enrolled in state-wide teacher education programs. Our community colleges are working with UH-West O'ahu to develop an early childhood baccalaureate degree program and our community colleges have developed programs to accommodate and encourage prospective teachers. Our faculty have received millions of dollars in federal grants and contracts to assist the Department of Education in addressing the shortage and our faculty have provided leadership on a number of committees designed to address the teacher shortage in one way or another.

The university is committed to providing quality programs. All of our teacher preparation programs are state-approved and we have the only nationally approved teacher education program in Hawai'i. We offer a wide variety of alternative routes to teaching including the traditional baccalaureate programs, non-traditional post-baccalaureate programs, and masters degree level preparation programs. We do this in order to accommodate as many highly qualified candidates as possible.

The reasons for the teacher shortage are many and complex and there is no single answer to the problem. We must recruit more people to teacher education, prepare them well, assist them in their first few years of teaching, provide on-going professional development and, most of all, make

sure that compensation and working conditions attract the best and the brightest into the field. S.B. 1820 is an omnibus bill that addresses the teacher shortage in a comprehensive way and will best meet Hawai'i's needs.

The ideas of providing tax credits for teachers and tax credits for anything that will help teachers afford housing will help.

Section 7 requires the University of Hawai'i to review its College of Education's admission standards and consider allowing incoming freshmen to declare education as their major. We will be happy to revisit this issue.

Sections 8, 9, and 10 provide support for professional development of teachers. This is an area that is too often neglected, and we are pleased to see it addressed here.

We support the teacher cadet program (section 17) and support its funding as long as it does not supplant the University budget.

The University has concerns about references to alternative teacher preparation programs. The University of Hawai'i and other IHEs in Hawai'i have developed a wide variety of alternative routes to teaching. Frankly, if we knew of other viable routes, we would offer them. It is our belief that teacher education is best provided through universities in cooperation with practitioners where the worlds of research and practice are linked with the world of practice. This is the model for all major professions and it must remain so for education.

We oppose the idea of "exceptional hires". The state already has liberal policies in place that allow for emergency hires and the IHE have in place programs to assist these people in obtaining their teaching licenses within the four years allowed.

The legislature is to be commended for promoting the development and implementation of high standards for teachers. Doing so helps to ensure that our children have access to high quality teachers, and we know that quality teaching is the key to improving student achievement.

It is also important that maintaining high standards will, in the long run, actually alleviate the teacher shortage. High standards attract good people, and we know from research that teachers who meet the highest standards are more likely to stay in the profession longer than those less well prepared. Teachers who enter the profession through

weak preparation programs perform poorly and tend to leave the profession within a few years.

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