



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on
Economic Development and Technology
February 13, 2009 at 1:30 p.m.

by
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SB 900 – RELATING TO THE SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATH INCOME TAX CREDIT

Chair Fukunaga, Vice Chair Baker, and Members of the Committee:

The relatively low performance on assessments of mathematics and science by a significant number of Hawaii high school graduates have proven to be barriers to their ability to either become employed in high skilled jobs, or complete the postsecondary education programs designed to secure such employment. The University of Hawai'i stands in support of the desire expressed in SB 900 to increasing private sector financial support for science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) academies established within our public schools. However, we don't feel qualified to determine the measure's impact on either private revenue support for the academies, or its impact on state revenues and finances.

Through a contract the Department of Human Services, and with the coordination provided by the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism, the University of Hawai'i Community Colleges began a pilot of the Hawaii Excellence in Science and Technology (HiEST) academy in the fall of 2008. The participation of the high schools as well as the colleges was voluntary. At present, there are HiEST academies located in seven high schools across the state, involving more than 600 students.

We believe that successful implementation and expansion of the HiEST Academies if they prove to be successful, coupled with other similar initiatives, are vital to the future success of Hawai'i's economy. Our future success, separate from the current economic downturn, is dependent upon our ability to increase the number of young people who have the mathematics, scientific, and technical skills, as well as the formal education, that are being required for a growing number of jobs in Hawaii. We expect this demand to accelerate as an increasing number of our aging population leave the workforce during the next decade.

We would request that the following amendments be made to the current version of the measure:

- Page 1, Section 1, line 16. "...director of academies, Honolulu community college" should be amended to "...university of Hawai'i community colleges."
- Page 5, Section 2, line 16-18. "...approved by the department of business, economic development, and tourism or the director of academies, Honolulu community college..." should be amended to "...approved by the department of business, economic development, and tourism in conjunction with the department of education and the university of Hawai'i community colleges..."