



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Senate Committee on Higher Education and the Arts
Senate Committee on Tourism and International Affairs
Friday, February 26, 2016 at 9:30 a.m.

by
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and
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SB 83 SD1 – RELATING TO APPROPRIATIONS

Chairs Tokuda, Taniguchi and English, Vice Chair Dela Cruz and members of the committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 83 SD1, which will appropriate funds from the tourism special fund for travel expenses and subsidies incurred for the intercollegiate athletics program at the University of Hawai'i.

The University of Hawai'i at Hilo Intercollegiate Athletics competes at the NCAA Division II level and is a member of the Pacific West Conference which consists of 14 member institutions. Of those members, four are from Hawai'i while the other 11 are located on the mainland (10 in California/1 in Utah). University of Hawai'i Mānoa competes in the NCAA Division I in the Big West Conference and Mountain West Conference depending on the sport.

UH Hilo faces the exact same financial challenges as UH Mānoa albeit on a smaller scale. In 2014-15, 70% of our entire operations budget was consumed by team related travel (airfare, hotel, ground transportation, food, etc.) with costs continuing to rise.

In comparison, the average team travel costs for the mainland schools in the Pacific West Conference is 42%. Other NCAA II schools in the West Region who we compete against such as in the California Collegiate Athletic Association allocate less than 30% of their operations budget for travel related expenses.

UH Hilo is the only school in the entire country that must travel by air for every contest away from home and contend with limited, direct mainland service. We also make 40-plus team trips to O'ahu to compete against UH Mānoa, and fellow Pac West rivals, Chaminade University, Hawai'i-Pacific, and BYU-Hawai'i, who will be replaced in 2017 by Biola University, which will add another mainland trip. Despite these costs, intercollegiate athletics is a proven economic engine for the community. This is evident

by our recent hosting of the 25th anniversary of the Amer-Ari Golf Invitational which attracted 19 of the top NCAA Division I men's golf programs in the country, who occupied 700 hotel room nights as well as revenues from car rentals, restaurants and visitor attractions. This is an annual event that UH Hilo has hosted for the past 25 years.

Both UH Mānoa and UH Hilo athletic programs provide significant economic benefits to the State in terms of additional visitors who travel with their teams to Hawai'i and significant benefits to the communities they represent in home team pride.

We appreciate the intent of this bill to help with UH athletics travel expenses but must defer the merits of the source of funding to the legislative process.

University of Hawai'i at Hilo requests the passage of SB 83 SD1. Mahalo for your consideration.