



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Lower & Higher Education
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By

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HB 398 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Chair Woodson, Vice Chairs Hashem and Perruso, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 398, which requires the University of Hawai'i to create additional distance-learning classes in teaching for students who are pursuing undergraduate degrees in education. The university offers the following comments.

The university places a priority on increasing the number of courses and sections of delivered online. Undergraduate students, in particular, are taking more courses online than in the past. These courses allow students to fit courses into their schedules, helping them balance work, family obligations and school. Last year, the legislature appropriated 10 positions for online course design personnel and the university is actively preparing new and additional online courses, including those offered in an accelerated, 5-week format.

There are two undergraduate pathways to licensure for prospective teachers. For students interested in teaching at the elementary level, an undergraduate degree from the College of Education is the first step toward licensure. The college offers online versions of courses leading to the elementary education degree. Both Leeward and Kapi'olani Community College offer courses that will transfer to this degree. In addition, the College of Education offers an Early Childhood/Special Education allowing candidates to be licensed in both early childhood and special education. Both the College of Education Elementary Education and Early Childhood/Special Education programs are four years in length.

For students interested in teaching at the secondary level, an undergraduate degree in a subject matter is required, plus a post-baccalaureate program in education. The university is actively increasing the number of courses delivered online that count towards many subject matter bachelor's degrees. These courses are not in an undergraduate education degree, but they are critical to increasing the number of secondary school teachers, particularly in high-demand subjects. As written, the bill would not include these degree pathways towards preparing public school teachers. The College of Education offers the post-baccalaureate program online programs in

Secondary Education and Special Education. To obtain licensure in secondary education requires 18 months of course work, field experiences, and teaching residency. For the Special Education program two years are required for course work, field experiences and teaching residency.

The College of Education will examine where demand for enrollment in online undergraduate courses can be met with additional sections. The number of additional sections that can be offered will depend on availability of instructors and the number of admitted applicants. However, increasing the number qualified applicants would help meet the university's goals of increasing online opportunities. Currently, the College has 18 sections of courses offered online with approximately 450 candidates enrolled online. The College of Education is committed to increasing online delivery of courses via synchronous, asynchronous and hybrid formats to increase accessibility into licensure programs. The College of Education has accepted and admitted all eligible applicants into our distance education teacher licensure programs.

The bill requires reports beginning in 2021 of the number of online sections offered in undergraduate teaching, enrollments in these sections, numbers of faculty needed to offer the sections, the costs associated with establishing additional sections, and the effect offering the additional courses has on reducing the shortage of qualified teachers. It will be difficult to assess the impact of the additional courses on teacher shortages in such a short period of time. In addition, to undergraduate teaching, the bill should be expanded to include graduate level programs such as our Master of Education in Teaching program. This is another program that provides teaching licensure to candidates in an online format.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.