



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
February 21, 2019 at 12:30 p.m.

By
Vassilis L. Syrmos
Vice President for Research and Innovation
University of Hawai'i System

HB 624 HD1 – RELATING TO THE STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT

Chair Luke, Vice Chair Cullen and members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i (UH) would like to provide comments to HB 624 HD1, which transfers the rights, powers, functions, and duties of the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation and Hawai'i Strategic Development Corporation to the University of Hawai'i.

Hawai'i's innovation ecosystem comprises of a vibrant and diverse number of incubators, accelerators, organizations, institutions of higher education and state agencies working to create a knowledge based economy that complements and transforms tourism, construction and military sectors to assure robust future growth by diversifying industries and revenues.

One of UH's four strategic directions is to grow the portfolio of its sponsored research and to promote innovation and workforce diversification in the state's economy. To help enable this, the Hawai'i State Legislature passed both Act 38 and Act 39, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2017, to allow UH to better engage in innovation and commercialization activities that include: the vetting the commercial potential of discoveries based on UH research, providing mentorship and entrepreneurial guidance to faculty or research staff, transferring UH-owned intellectual property to third parties via patents or licenses, and actively participating in public/private joint development, startup companies and partnerships.

The mission of the Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation (HTDC) is to help develop and retain high technology in the state through core initiatives that include the development and management of network of incubation services and facilities; business development services for new start-ups in the technology sector; secure and administer federal and private grants and contracts in support of technology research; and to support skilled workforce development for the technology sector through outreach programs and partnerships.

The charge of the Hawai'i Strategic Development Corporation (HSDC) is to develop investment capacity in the state and has combined various funding sources to implement a comprehensive investment program designed to generate a critical mass of startup activity to attract private capital investment.

By transferring the current functions of HTDC and HSDC into UH's existing research and innovation ecosystem, it is anticipated that both offices are aligned and complimentary to better assist with both the State of Hawai'i's continuing efforts and the University of Hawai'i's current and future innovation initiatives and programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.