



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education
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By

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HB 1277 HD1 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII PROMISE PROGRAM

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of HB 1277 HD1, which would provide scholarships for the unmet direct cost needs of qualified students at any four-year University of Hawai'i campus. Importantly, it would amend Section 304A-506, HRS, to expand the Hawai'i Promise program to qualified Hawai'i resident attending 4-year programs at the University of Hawai'i. The Hawai'i Promise program provides financial assistance to students with financial need (as determined based on their Free Application for Federal Student Aid) to meet the cost of tuition, fees, books and transportation. It would be awarded only to students to meet need remaining after federal and other need-based aid is awarded.

Expanding the Hawai'i Promise program to qualified students in 4-year degree programs at the University of Hawai'i is the highest priority in the Board of Regent's budget request for the university this year. Expanding this program to all university undergraduate programs will significantly enhance the number of economically disadvantaged students who can attend—and graduate from—the state's public university. It will be a significant step forward in expanding access to economic opportunity for Hawai'i's students and preparing the educated workforce the state will need to grow in the coming decades. Our current estimate is that approximately 5,000 additional students would benefit from the expansion of this program as described in this bill: approximately 3,560 students attending UH Mānoa, 530 attending UH Hilo, and 1,020 attending UH West O'ahu. We expect this version of the program would encourage more students to attend a 4-year university in Hawai'i rather than going to college on the mainland.

The program is effective for students in the community colleges, where participation in Hawai'i Promise has led to increase student success in their programs. Many of these successful students will be ready to transfer to a 4-year UH degree program. A 4-year version of Hawai'i Promise will help these students afford the continuation of their education.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.