



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Lower & Higher Education
Tuesday, February 12, 2019 at 2:15 p.m.

By

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And

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HB 1547 – MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

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

Thank you for this opportunity to submit this testimony of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Athletics Department (UHM Athletics) in support of the intent of HB 1547 provided it does not adversely affect UH priorities as set in our budget request. This measure provides funding in support of a Division I collegiate athletics program for the State of Hawai'i.

UHM Athletics is very appreciative of the intent of HB 1547 to support its Division I athletics program with increased funding that could be used to expand its meals program for student athletes. Providing certain meals is an important health and wellness component of UHM Athletics' efforts to enhance student athlete success.

UHM Athletics is striving to improve its bottom line, while still allowing the University to host a Division I collegiate athletics program for its student athletes, students, the community and the state as a whole. While the department has made strides with various recent initiatives such as its multimedia rights partnership with IMG College, its "All Sports" apparel partnership with Under Armour, and its travel partnership with Hawaiian Airlines, UHM Athletics continues to have to overcome uniquely higher costs than its peers have. In 2017, Hawai'i had \$7.2M of higher expenses that are unique to Hawai'i such as higher travel costs due to the longer distanced traveled, travel subsidies required by conference opponents to play in Hawai'i, etc. If not for the unique higher costs, UHM Athletics would have reported budget surpluses rather than deficits for the past several years.

Additional funding, as intended by HB 1547, would help UHM Athletics address its operating costs in general, and for meal costs specifically. During this legislative session, UHM Athletics has as its priorities that it is asking the Legislature to consider are the reinstatement of \$2.7M of operating support as recurring from non-recurring, and allow special funded positions to be reclassified to general funded. Either or both of

those initiatives would provide support of the athletic program on a more general basis and not targeted specifically to a single cost component such as meals.

UHM Athletics is very appreciative of any funding the Legislature might offer in support of the athletics program at the University, including HB 1547. In order of priority, the higher and more flexible operating funding that would result from reinstating the \$2.7M as recurring and/or the reclassification of the positions to general funded, would be a higher priority than the funding offered through HB 1547. However, all funding in support of the program is appreciated and will be utilized in support of the student athletes.