



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Education
Thursday, February 2, 2023 at 2:00 p.m.

By

Bonnie Irwin, Chancellor
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

HB 962 – RELATING TO HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Marten, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 962. The University of Hawai'i at Hilo (UH Hilo) urges passage of HB 962 without amendments. HB 962 seeks to exempt Hawaiian language immersion program students from kindergarten assessment requirements.

Among the colleges of UH Hilo is Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani (College), the Hawaiian language college established by statute, HRS §304A-1301. The College has a laboratory school program that includes the majority of preschools and charter schools where students are taught through Hawaiian. A large number of 'ohana in those schools have expressed their desire to have Hawaiian medium kindergartens exempt from any Board of Education and Department of Education developed kindergarten assessment. UH Hilo and the College support the will of those 'ohana as provided for in Sections 2 and 4.

UH Hilo and the College support Sections 3 and 5 regarding kindergarten entry disclosure of languages used in any preschool attended by a child.

UH Hilo and the College also support Section 6. This section provides that for the College's laboratory preschools funded through the Charter School Commission, the College is to take responsibility for improving language and academic outcomes and that appropriate data be collected from those laboratory school programs to be shared with various departments of the state government. With the College taking on the above responsibilities, the laboratory school preschools will be exempt from requirements placed on other preschools funded through the Charter School Commission.

UH Hilo and the College also support Sections 7 and 8, which further clarify the functions of the College and its use of moneys in its trust fund.

We are aware that HB 962 does not include any funding for the functions assigned to it through HB 962. UH Hilo and the College have sufficient resources to carry out the functions assigned to it by HB 962, at present, given the relatively small number of students that would be affected by this bill for the next few years into the future.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in strong support of HB 962.