



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
February 20, 2019 at 10:05 a.m.

By
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SB 457 – RELATING TO THE PUNA DISTANCE LEARNING CENTER

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and members of the committee:

The University of Hawai'i (UH) supports Senate Bill 457 (SB 457) which provides positions and funding for a distance learning center in the District of Puna.

There is a critical need to strengthen rural outreach, education and economic development in Puna which is one of the most underserved areas in the state and also the fastest growing district on Hawai'i Island. It would be most feasible and beneficial for the residents of Puna for the Center to be under the University of Hawai'i, with UH Hilo and Hawai'i Community College collaborating and partnering to provide higher education and career options to the people of Hawai'i Island.

Given the geography of Hawai'i Island, Hawai'i Community College is committed to building a "distributed" model of higher education that relies on multiple locations to best serve our community.

However, a critical missing piece of this plan is the ability to serve the highly populated, geographically remote District of Puna. Establishing an education resource center in Puna would be a tremendous step in establishing an island-wide model of higher education that can help us fulfill our mission to serve "all segments of the Hawai'i Island Community."

This bill supports the strategic decision to better position Hawai'i Community College as a provider of post-secondary education to the entire island of Hawai'i.

We support SB 457 on the condition that any requested positions or funds do not supplant any portion of the University's Biennium Budget request.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 457. Aloha.