



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committees on Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs  
and

Higher Education

Tuesday, February 12, 2019 at 2:45 pm

By

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And

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### SB 1537 – RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Chairs Nishihara and Kim, Vice Chair Wakai and Kidani, and members of the committees:

My name is Denise Konan, Dean of the College of Social Sciences representing the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Thank you for this opportunity to testify **in support** of SB 1537. I would also, respectfully, offer suggestions for your consideration on how the intent and purposes of this measure may be more broadly and more sustainably realized by modifying the implementing mechanism.

Our College encompasses the academic disciplines of economics, political science, communications, urban and regional planning, public administration, geography & environment, psychology, sociology, and anthropology. We advance interdisciplinary knowledge in women's and ethnic studies, and peace. We are designing new programs in public policy, and criminology and criminal justice, with a hope to launch new degree programs in the near future.

Our College hosts research that is responsive to Hawai'i's issues, including the work of the University of Hawai'i Economic Research Organization led by Professor Carl Bonham, and the Ecohydrology Lab led by Professor Tom Giambelluca. Both efforts are leveraging private sponsors and competitive grants to deliver data that our communities use to make critical decisions on construction, affordable housing, tourism, economics, rainfall, and climate change.

Our faculty are top tier, national leaders in their fields, including, for example, two professors in political science who were recognized just last week as the among the 25 most cited theorists in their field by The Political Science 400. The President of the American Criminology Association is Professor Meda Chesney Lind (Department of Women's Studies), and Professor Chris Yano (Department of Anthropology) is the President Elect of the Association for Asian Studies.

We have approximately 150 faculty who provide instruction and offer over 800 courses per year to thousands of UH students. We have approximately 1,600 undergraduates who have declared majors in the several College disciplines, and in academic year 2018, we awarded over 600 undergraduate degrees. The College has approximately 450 graduate students currently pursuing advanced degrees and engaged in research. In academic year 2018, we graduated approximately 100 students with advanced degrees, 34 with Doctorates.

I share these numbers to explain why I am completely aligned with the purpose and intent of SB 1537. We, too, believe that evidence-based research and data collection are vital to devising, formulating, and evaluating policies, programs, and procedures used by our sister agencies in the executive branch of the State.

As I survey the reservoir of talent, skills, and energy available at the University -- and as I am mindful that one of the core "missions" of a public university is to be of service to its hosting communities -- I support the legislative mandate to devote a portion of those University resources to address the issues facing our executive branch departments. There is a benefit for our students as well: Working on real-world projects complements in-class instruction.

Might I suggest that other state executive agencies, in addition to the department of public safety, would want the opportunity to tap into research resources at the College. The Department of Health, the Department of Transportation, and the Department of Land and Natural Resources come to mind immediately.

I envision any of the several executive departments "tasking" the relevant unit of the College with specific projects, as the need arises. I see the agencies and the unit of the College jointly brainstorming and devising a scope of work, a time frame, and an appropriate budget. I see the University and the executive branch creating an overarching framework of understanding and common terms and conditions within which these various task orders can be issued from time to time. A common provision might be, for example, how data and information shared during the course of the project are handled once the project ends.

To allow for this collaboration, I would suggest the possibility of centralizing the coordination at an institute or center administered by the College of Social Sciences. We would need funding and position counts to sustain a core staff at this institute. The bulk of the funding for specific research project can either come from the requesting department itself, or from appropriations directly to the University.

I would be happy to work with you and your staffs to explore these implementing mechanisms. Again, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of the intent and purposes of this measure.