SB 2595 – RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Chair Keohokalole, Vice Chair Baker, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today. The University of Hawaiʻi (UH) supports Senate Bill (SB) No. 2595, Relating to the Department of Health (DOH). This bill extends the provision of time for the Department of Health to implement the transition of operations and assets for the Oʻahu-based functions of Hawaiʻi Health Systems Corporation (HHSC) into the DOH. As with the bill that eventually became Act 212, Session Laws of Hawaiʻi (SLH) 2021, the UH does not have any objections to the concept proposed in this bill. UH recognizes that such a transition must entail many issues to resolve whereby affording the department more time would be extremely valuable.

I will re-state UH’s position from last year for the record. The UH has a number of academic programs throughout its various campuses of relevance to the health care industry. The background of the approach proposed in the bill has considered that UH could partner and participate with the DOH on repositioning services offered by HHSC and/or redevelopment opportunities at Lēʻahi in advancing possible health services on the site. The UH does not object with this concept and believes we can be a very good partner in those regards.

The UH is the recorded landowner of the parcel where Lēʻahi Hospital is located. The UH also owns other parcels adjacent or near to Lēʻahi Hospital and Kapiʻolani Community College. Under the current arrangement, UH has leased the Lēʻahi parcel to HHSC at no cost for decades. While the UH would not intend to displace HHSC from the Lēʻahi Hospital property, if HHSC were to no longer use the property, the UH would expect that any new use would be consistent and compatible with our nearby campus and properties. Additionally, the UH’s strategic objective for real estate expects that non-UH use of real property will be to increase lease revenue, increase utility of the property for the UH, and/or increase broader academic opportunities. At this point, we are content that Act 212, SLH 2021, adequately recognizes and sufficiently accounts for UH’s interest in these regards. The University would welcome the opportunity to work with the Department of Health on their transition of Oʻahu-based health functions of HHSC.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.