



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

### Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Education  
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By

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#### SB 2937 – RELATING TO ACCESS TO LEARNING

Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on SB 2937. The University of Hawai'i at Hilo (UH Hilo) supports passage of SB 2937, which seeks to repeal the sunset date for the exemption of laboratory school programs of the Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani (also known as the College of Hawaiian Language) (CoHL) at UH Hilo from state English-medium standards, assessments, performance ratings, staff qualifications, and staff training requirements that were established by Act 46, SLH 2020. The intent is to ensure that the CoHL's Hawaiian-medium laboratory schools are not subject to non-applicable English-medium standards, assessments, ratings, and requirements but instead are able to use rigorous Hawaiian-medium measures and guidelines.

The legislature established the CoHL under HRS §§ 304A-1301-1302 in 1997, providing for the incorporation of laboratory schools that now include four K-12 charter schools as well as all of the 'Aha Pūnana Leo's ('APL) Hawaiian Medium preschools (13 Pūnana Leo) throughout the state. These Hawaiian Medium Pūnana Leo laboratory preschools are directly impacted by Act 46.

The purpose of Act 46 was to increase access to child care and early learning opportunities for children in Hawai'i while ensuring "that the implementation of new and expanded programs pursuant to this Act aligns with other statutory provisions that provide distinctive support for education through the medium of the Hawaiian language." Some of these statutory provisions include Act 47, SLH 1986 that affirmed the DOE's power and duties to include programs in the Hawaiian language; Act 79 of the same year that exempted teachers in Hawaiian language early childhood programs from academic certification; as well as Act 178, SLH 2012 that established the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) and affirmed that the state's public pre-kindergarten program shall prepare children for school and active participation in society through the use of either of Hawai'i's two official languages.

This statutory support for public education through the Hawaiian language has allowed for the development of Hawaiian-medium standards, assessments, performance ratings, staff qualifications, and staff training requirements. The CoHL has worked in partnership with the 'APL for over 40 years to develop performance standards and tools

to assess progress across domains, including Cognitive Development, Leadership and Team Building Skills, Literacy Development, and Hawaiian Language Proficiency. Testing instruments include Hawaiian-medium Curriculum-Based Measures that are being used at various sites for kindergarten entry assessments as required by §302A-1165. The CoHL and 'AHL partnership also provides preservice and inservice teacher training via coursework in the CoHL's Kahuawaiola teacher education program as well as ongoing professional development training to cultivate highly competent educators, addressing Hawaiian language proficiency, pedagogy, assessment, family engagement, and curriculum.

Furthermore, in October 2023, the CoHL was designated as the inaugural National Native American Language Resource Center that, in partnership with the 'AHL, will continue this work of developing standards, curriculum, teacher training and assessments not only for Hawaiian medium programs, but for Native American Language communities nationwide.

It is also worth noting that the Early Learning Board's Road Map for the implementation of Act 46, SLH 2020 (as required by SCR 217 in 2022), specifically calls for the permanent exemption of the CoHL's laboratory programs and all Hawaiian Medium learning environments from non-applicable standards, assessments, performance ratings, staff qualifications, and staff training requirements in two of its four action items, which is what SB 2937 seeks to accomplish.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this bill.