UNIVERSITY OF HAWAIʻI SYSTEM
ʻŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAIʻI

Legislative Testimony
Hōʻike Manaʻo I Mua O Ka ʻAhaʻōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
February 25, 2026 at 10:57 a.m.
By
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and
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and
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SB 2003 SD1 – RELATING TO NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawaiʻi (University) supports the intent behind this bill and acknowledges the Senate's demonstration of support for astronomy on Maunakea. The University continues to honor its kuleana to work closely with the Mauna Kea Stewardship and Oversight Authority (MKSOA) and other invested entities for the timely transition of stewardship of Maunakea, in accordance with Act 255 (2022). The University respectfully submits the following **comments** to SB 2003 SD1, as amended.

In the latest amendment, an additional substantive provision was added to extend, by operation of law, the terms of certain leases for Maunakea lands. As we have indicated in prior testimony, evidence of the State's commitment to astronomy as a matter of State policy is critically important at this juncture for continued investment by the countries and universities that own and operate the astronomical observatories on Maunakea. And while extension of the leases would be evidence of that support, it is unclear when the lease extensions are intended to go into effect, a detail that will be important to maintaining and measuring forward progress. Detailing how and when any of these lease extensions would be effectuated will provide needed clarity given the impending expiration of UH's 65-year master lease in less than eight years.

Another important clarification, which was discussed at the University of Hawaiʻi Board of Regents' meeting on February 19, 2026, is the range of milestones MKSOA needs to reach for UH to responsibly transfer stewardship of Maunakea lands on or before July 1, 2028. The University encourages the inclusion of meaningful milestones for all parties, including UH and MKSOA, to evaluate timely progress leading up to the July 1, 2028 transition date and beyond, including for the use, management, operations, funding and stewardship of Maunakea lands destined to be transferred to MKSOA. Setting clear,

mutually agreed milestones will promote transparent decision making, and trust-building among the many interested stakeholders caring for the mauna.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.