UNIVERSITY OF HAWAIʻI SYSTEM
ʻŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAIʻI

Legislative Testimony
Hōʻike Manaʻo I Mua O Ka ʻAhaʻōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education
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By
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SB 2706 SD1 HD1 – RELATING TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawaiʻi Community Colleges (UHCC) supports the intent of SB 2706 SD1 HD1, which would establish a five-year Agriculture and Biosecurity Workforce Development Pilot Program within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB), in collaboration with the University of Hawaiʻi at Leeward Community College (LeeCC) and the Department of Human Resources Development (DHRD).The UHCCs support this measure because it advances a practical and outcomes-driven approach to strengthening Hawaiʻi's workforce capacity in agriculture and biosecurity, areas that are essential to the state's resilience, food security, and public health. The pilot's emphasis on curriculum development, hands-on training, and real-world work opportunities aligns with best practices for building career pathways that lead to employment and advancement.

While the UHCCs welcome the partnership with DAB and DHRD, we wish to clarify the collaborative framework. To ensure program success and maintain compliance with institutional accreditation, LeeCC will lead the academic development of the curriculum, ensuring that the 'broad spectrum of topics' mandated in Section 1(b)(1) aligns with established higher education standards and lead to recognized industry credentials. This partnership allows DAB to define the 'what' (the skills needed), while the University defines the 'how' (the instructional delivery).

Furthermore, the UHCCs note that the development of a specialized biosecurity curriculum is a resource-intensive endeavor. To successfully launch this pilot, the UHCCs respectfully requests that the legislature consider a specific appropriation for FY 2026-27 to support specialized faculty and the procurement of necessary training materials. Without a dedicated funding stream, the development of this new career pathway may divert resources from existing programs.

LeeCC is prepared to contribute meaningfully to this effort through its established workforce development infrastructure and experience designing and delivering industry-responsive training. LeeCC's role as an open-access institution also positions the College to serve residents across a range of backgrounds, including working adults and

non-traditional learners seeking upskilling, reskilling, and rapid entry into employment.

The University of Hawai‘i supports the intent of SB 2706 SD1 HD1, as long as its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 2706 SD1 HD1.