Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education
and
House Committee on Education
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SCR 112 SD1 – REQUESTING THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION, TO REQUIRE COMPLETION OF COMPREHENSIVE COURSEWORK IN READING, LANGUAGE, AND LITERACY AS A CONDITION FOR GRADUATION FROM ANY STATE-APPROVED EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAM LEADING TO TEACHER LICENSURE.

Chairs Garrett and Woodson, Vice Chairs Amato and La Chica, and Members of the Committees:

The University of Hawaiʻi would like to provide comments on SCR 112 SD1 – Requesting the University of Hawaii System, in collaboration with the Department of Education and other institutions of higher education, to require completion of comprehensive coursework in reading, language, and literacy as a condition for graduation from any state-approved educator preparation program leading to teacher licensure.

We share the Legislature's commitment to strengthening literacy outcomes for Hawaiʻi's students and appreciate the continued attention to this important issue.

While we support the intent of the resolution, we offer the following comments for your consideration.

First, the resolution adopts a framing of literacy that centers primarily on cognitive and neuroscience perspectives and skills-based approaches. This body of research is important and is already incorporated into educator preparation; however, it represents only one dimension of a broader, well-established field. Effective literacy instruction is also informed by linguistic, sociocultural, and critical perspectives, which are especially important in Hawaiʻi's multilingual and multicultural context. Sociocultural approaches recognize that literacy development is shaped by language practices, identity, and lived experience, and are foundational to supporting multilingual learners. Although earlier proposed language included these perspectives, their omission in the current draft creates a disconnect, particularly given the resolution's reference to "language." A more

comprehensive approach that integrates multiple perspectives would better reflect the complexity of literacy and the needs of Hawai‘i’s students.

Second, the resolution includes statements suggesting that teacher preparation programs have not consistently required comprehensive literacy coursework or adequately prepared candidates. In Hawai‘i, teacher preparation programs are subject to state approval requirements and national accreditation processes, and they already include substantial coursework and clinical experiences in literacy instruction. Preparing effective educators is a complex endeavor influenced by multiple factors, including student diversity, community context, and access to resources.

Third, the proposed requirement appears to be largely redundant with existing policy. State Approved Teacher Education Programs (SATEPs) in Hawai‘i must already demonstrate alignment with Hawai‘i Administrative Rules §8-54-19, which require preparation in teaching reading, supporting students with reading difficulties, and working effectively with multilingual learners and students with disabilities. In addition, programs undergo ongoing accreditation review. Comprehensive literacy preparation is already embedded across coursework and clinical practice.

Finally, we strongly support continued collaboration among the University of Hawai‘i, the Department of Education, and other partners to strengthen literacy instruction across the educator pipeline. We believe this work is most effective when it is collaborative, evidence-informed, and responsive to local context, rather than prescriptive. Hawai‘i’s students benefit when educator preparation reflects multiple forms of knowledge and aligns with the mission of the University of Hawai‘i as a Native Hawaiian place of learning, including frameworks such as Nā Hopena A‘o that emphasize identity, language, and connection to place.

We welcome continued dialogue and partnership to ensure that all educators in Hawai‘i are well-prepared to support the diverse literacy needs of our students.