



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM

TESTIMONY

H.B 1335 HD 2 RELATING TO TUITION WAIVERS

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance

March 1, 2004

By

Dr. Doris Ching
Vice President for Student Affairs
University of Hawaii

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance

March 1, 2004
by
Evan S. Dobelle
President
University of Hawai'i

HB 1335 HD2 Relating to Tuition Waivers

Chair Takamine, Vice Chair Kawakami and Members of the Committee:

The University supports the intent of HB 1335 HD 2 providing partial and full tuition waivers for all Native Hawaiian students who meet admission standard. The University respectfully requests the legislature to complete a comprehensive study to insure that a Native Hawaiian tuition waiver or scholarship program can be adequately funded and legal issues and university policies are addressed before approving this measure.

The Strategic Plan of the University of Hawai'i recognizes the need "to strengthen the crucial role that the University of Hawai'i system performs for the indigenous people and general population of Hawai'i by actively preserving and perpetuating Hawaiian culture, language, and values." In particular, the University acknowledges the severe underrepresentation of Native Hawaiian students and is committed to increase the representation and success of Native Hawaiian students on all campuses.

Act 161 (1995) gave the Board of Regents authority over tuition waivers and also requires the legislature to appropriate general funds for "tuition waivers mandated by the legislature." Should the legislature approve HB 1335 HD 2 mandating partial and full tuition waivers for Native Hawaiians, general funds to support the cost of these waivers must be approved by the legislature. The University's education mission is one of the approved uses of ceded lands.

The University has begun a review of its tuition waiver program as it relates to the new University Strategic enrollment goals for various student groups, including goals to increase Native Hawaiian students. The University will need more information to estimate accurate costs for expected student enrollment increases at two year programs, baccalaureate, graduate and professional levels. In addition, it will be necessary to incorporate eligibility and use of federal financial need assistance and consider student support service needs. The University and the Legislature need to carefully address current legal challenges to Native Hawaiian programs, the Akaka bill in Congress, alternative sources of funding and the standards set by the US Supreme Court ruling on the University of Michigan's Affirmative Action program. It should be noted that the University is currently addressing a US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights

complaint regarding tuition waivers to financially needy Native Hawaiian students at Manoa.

Due to the importance and complexity of this issue, the University respectfully requests that passage of this bill be deferred until a comprehensive study is completed by the University and the Legislature. The University recommends that the Legislative Reference Bureau be requested to update and expand its 1991 report "Tuition Waivers for Hawaiian Students in Higher Education". Should the Legislature approve a study by the Legislative Reference Bureau, the University will be pleased to cooperate fully. The University will require some resources to complete its study on costs, funding sources, federal financial aid, academic and student support program needs, state and federal laws and board policies.

The University shares the legislature's concerns and continuing support of Native Hawaiian students. Thank you for this opportunity to share some of our concerns on HB 1335 HD2.