



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I

TESTIMONY

HCR 84/HR 57
Urging The University Of Hawaii To Speedily Rebuild A
School Of Global And Public Health

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education

March 31, 2004

By

Peter Englert
Chancellor
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

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**HCR 84/HR 57 Urging The University Of Hawaii To Speedily Rebuild A
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Chair K. Mark Takai and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i supports HCR 84/HR 57. The University recognizes that Global and Public Health is of critical importance as a service to our state as well as an important way to meet our research mission. The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa has begun a process to establish a new Center for Global and Public Health that is a new entity to capitalize on our strategic advantages to provide cutting edge research as well as to satisfy the state's workforce development needs in Public Health.

A 6-year state-by-state, health care study by the Pew Charitable Trust concluded that Hawai'i is lagging in the field of Public Health because of the closure of Mānoa's School of Public Health.

The closure of the School of Public Health has severely limited the ability of the University to meet the state's demands for the public health workers. The State now faces a shortage of public health workers at a time when their role in keeping us healthy is expanding. The lack of qualified public health workers is felt in our communities, as Hawai'i faces a number of public health crises, including the "ice epidemic," the aging revolution, bioterrorism, and health disparities.

The closure of the School of Public Health also has limited our ability to access public health research and training funds. This is a critical concern to Hawai'i and the world, because Hawai'i is at a crossroads for emerging public health issues and at this time more funds are becoming available for research. We also need a better Public Health infrastructure to follow up on opportunities to partner with other Research Universities in the Pacific.

The time to support public health research and training is now. The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa is beginning a process to establish a Center for Global and Public Health, to provide qualified workers and research opportunities. The timeline of our recent activities is as follows:

- On April 24, 2003 UHM was visited by Dr. Jong-Wook Lee, Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO), and an alumni of UHM's Public Health program.
- On August 4, 2003 we hosted a forum on *Public Health Issues in the context of Hawai'i*, focusing on Trans-Pacific Research University collaboration.
- During the Fall Semester 2003, we held approximately 10 meetings with Public Health faculty to discuss the process and purpose of establishing a Center.
- On November 20, 2003 Public Health faculty and administrators participated in the Homeland Security Summit.
- By May 2004, we will have established two advisory committees:
 - Internal Mānoa Committee to look at logistics and administrative barriers; and
 - External Vision Committee, with international membership to help guide how the Center is placed strategically within the larger Pacific community.

We anticipate that these groups will develop a plan for the Center that positions it for success. It is our intention that such a plan will be ready and available by January of next year.

I appreciate the Legislature's interest and support of our efforts to establish the Center for Global and Public Health.