UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I SYSTEM

TESTIMONY

HB 1119

Relating to Long-Term Care

Testimony Presented Before the Joint
House Committees on
Health and
Human Services

February 5, 2005

by

John Morton
Chancellor, Kapi‘olani Community College
University of Hawai‘i

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Chairs Arakaki, Sonson, and Members of the Committees:

I am testifying in support of the intent of HB 1119 as a method to address Hawaiʻi's growing concern for its elderly population and their need for services. Kapiʻolani Community College (KCC) has a long-standing commitment to meeting the education and training needs of our students and community, including those training needs related to aging and long-term care. Today, our campus serves about 7,200 students in credit programs each semester and approximately 25,000 non-credit students annually through its array of non-credit offerings. Among our signature programs are Nursing and Health Sciences offerings that train students to become professionals or paraprofessional through 17 health career tracks. While KCC's Nursing and Health Sciences career tracks are the most comprehensive within the community colleges, the College has not had the capacity to focus on aging and long-term care despite the increasing incidence of age-related and other chronic illnesses. To address the increasing importance of this area, with the assistance of the State Executive Office on Aging, KCC organized a conference two years ago entitled the "Role of Community Colleges in an Aging Society" for the seven community colleges and their respective communities. Ideas generated at that conference have proved to be a springboard for future developments in this area.

The needs of our rapidly increasing aging population for housing, health and social support services are most challenging. Hawaiʻi's elderly population is increasing at a rate 2-3 times faster than the national average, and there is every

indication that the State's present infrastructure and ability to meet the workforce demands for long-term care healthcare workers will be inadequate.

Most paid providers of long-term care are paraprofessional workers. After informal caregivers, these workers are the most essential component in helping older persons and younger people with disabilities maintain some level of function and quality of life. It is this level of training that the community colleges have been best able to provide in many other health-related professions.

KCC, with input from caregiver coalition groups, have collaborated with the Executive Office on Aging to ensure that key information and elements have been incorporated into this bill. This bill reflects KCC's plans to build an effective program targeting Hawai'i's aging and long-term care needs with our educational resources and expertise. More specifically, KCC's workforce development strategy is to increase affordable care options for the elderly by: (1) addressing the need to increase its effectiveness in training quality paraprofessional healthcare workers (e.g., physical therapy assistant, respiratory care practitioner, occupational therapist assistant, nurse aide, etc.); (2) building the capacity of unpaid family caregivers by giving them the opportunity to develop their skills through the College's training programs; and (3) engaging active retirees to become a part KCC's community by offering to them a variety of specially-designed non-credit health and non-health related courses and programs in the classroom, print media, broadcast media, exhibits, speakers bureaus and conferences. This strategy expands upon the existing initiative between the U.S. Department of Labor, State Department of Health, and University of Hawai'i Community Colleges to improve the quality and capacity of training nurse aides Statewide.

The challenge facing Hawai'i requires the commitment and coordinated cooperation of many agencies and individuals. KCC is committed to collaborating with our sister UH community colleges to enable a Statewide approach to addressing aging and long-term care issues. Also, KCC is committed to working closely with the State's network of providers to help meet the State's goal of creating a better community of caring professionals, paraprofessionals, family caregivers, and volunteers for its aging population.

If this bill is passed with an appropriation, it should not displace any item in the Board of Regents' approved University's budget request.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony with the committees.