



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM

TESTIMONY

HB 3157: Relating to the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Hawaiian Affairs

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education

February 2, 2006

by

Dr. Jonathan Osorio
Director, Kamakakuokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies

Committee on Higher Education

House Bill #3157

Tuesday, February 2, 2006

2:30 p.m.

Aloha mai Representative Waters, Vice Chair Shimabukuro, and members of the Higher Education Committee. I am Jonathan Osorio, Associate Professor and Director of the Kamakakuokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies and I am happy for the opportunity to testify in favor of House Bill 3157. Let me say from the outset that we are all grateful that you and your committee have seen fit to create and support this legislation appropriating 1.5 million dollars for Native Hawaiian education at UH Manoa.

I will make my testimony brief. When I came to this campus in 1984 as a 34 year old undergraduate, fewer than 1% of the faculty here were Hawaiian. When I entered graduate school in 1987, I very quickly took all of the courses in Hawaiian history that were offered at this school and joined probably fewer than a half dozen graduate students interested in Hawaiian history as a field of study. Hawaiian Studies was in its infancy then and had two faculty and one half-time secretary.

In fact, when I was first hired at the Center for Hawaiian Studies in 1992, I was one of perhaps three people in the entire state who had the necessary qualifications to teach Hawaiian history at this institution, and I was already employed in a full time tenure track position at Kapi'olani Community College. When I came to Kamakakuokalani our undergraduate program had some 60 students. We had four faculty and we taught about 300 students each semester. Today we have an undergraduate program of 85 students, a very new Master's degree with 18 students enrolling in our first year and we teach more than 1000 students each semester in perhaps the most popular first year course on the campus. Hwst 107: Hawaii: the Center of the Pacific.

Three years ago we doubled the enrollment of students in 107 and the next year, we doubled it again. We were able to do this in part because of the generous commitment of money first from former president Evan Dobbelle and then from former Chancellor Peter Englert. Both administrators provided, over three straight years, the kind of financial support that our programs, Hawaiian language and Hawaiian studies had never ever received before. It is true that our state legislature built us a beautiful building that we occupied in 1995. For quite some time we had plenty of space in our building. We don't anymore. Dobbelle's and Englert's support enabled us to hire new faculty, support staff and build a technological infrastructure that has allowed to expand not only the size of our student body, but greatly diversify the course offerings in Hawaiian Studies as well. In the past five years we have developed, proposed and begun to teach a dizzying array of courses in history, in la'au lapa'au (herbal medicine), fishpond, lo'i and resource management, voyaging, visual arts, music, politics and Hawaiian law, all with a faculty that is still small in comparison to other departments in this university, some of which cannot boast as large a number of students.

But we are not the only program that has benefited by strategic infusions of financial support. Our sister institution, the Hawaiian language department has also grown in very similar ways, with an outstanding undergraduate degree program and a new and popular MA degree. Like us, Hawaiian language has built its program with a small body of dedicated faculty and a large enrollment of

undergraduates. To this day, Hawaiian language is severely understaffed. It has no secretary of its own and until last year had no academic advisors. But that department has also developed new and exciting curriculum in our native language, has strong outreaches into the DOE schools through its training of Immersion teachers and has formed a strong partnership with us and with programs within the College of Education to produce able teachers who are fluent in our language and our customs.

And this isn't all that Hawaiians have done with this very strategic financing. From Nursing and Medicine to Engineering and Student Services, Hawaiian educators on this campus have produced amazing growth with the additional funding that we have been given these past three years. College of Engineering went from one Native Hawaiian student three years ago to a dynamic recruitment program that has brought eighty Hawaiians into that school and is currently riding a nearly 100% retention rate. The College of Education's Ho`okulaiwi program now has a cohort of 20 Hawaiians preparing to enter the ranks of immersion teachers, and there is tremendous interest among kanaka maoli to enter this program and become the next wave of teachers in the DOE. Indigenous Politics has the largest number of Hawaiians preparing for Ph.D.s in the next few years and will certainly have an impact on new research and publications.

Sir, I know about these programs because I have sat in the same room with representatives and faculty from all of these departments over the past three years as a member of Kualii Council. We have taken the money from Evan Dobbelle and Peter Englert and strategically shared it in order to raise the presence and participation of Hawaiians throughout this campus. I know of no other organization in the entire school that functions like we do, and it is becoming clear that we are a resource to the Chancellor and to the vice-chancellors who deal with campus wide challenges from housing to student services, from Academics to research, and Kualii has spent the better part of the last four years dealing with all of these areas and the ways that they affect our Hawaiian students.

We have much work ahead of us. Hawaiians now make up about 4% of the faculty on this campus but Native Hawaiian students amount to about 8% of the Manoa student body. Hawaiians are more than 20% of the state's population. Surely we can do better than 4 and 8.

Of course, it really isn't just about numbers and percentages. Our mission is to demonstrate the power of education to our young people, to encourage them into entering any field that interests them and to introduce them to our culture and to our intelligent and very capable ancestors. As each kanaka maoli child enters kindergarten, whether at Kamehameha or Keaukaha, let them understand that their relatives are faculty at the University of Hawai'i and that a career of research and teaching is not just a possibility for them but a definite calling.

Jonathan Osorio Ph.D
Director KCHS
University of Hawaii Manoa