



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS MARCH 24, 2006

by
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HCR 230 RELATING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF STATE-PROVINCE RELATIONS OF FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE STATE OF HAWAII OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THE PROVINCE OF ISABELA OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

Chair Hale, Vice Chair Cabanilla, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of this resolution which seeks to expand ties between Isabela Province and the State of Hawai'i. We recognize that student and faculty educational exchanges between Hawai'i and the State's sister provinces in the Philippines can serve to strengthen cultural, social, and economic ties.

The University of Hawai'i has had long-standing and a wide array of relationships with various academic institutions in the Philippines that include language teaching, agricultural research, student exchange, business school collaboration, distance education learning, among other activities, however there are no formal ties at present with institutions in Isabela province.

All exchange agreements are developed based on the interest and support of faculty members whose involvement is vital to the success of any partnership. It is therefore always necessary to assess interest across the University of Hawai'i System in order to determine if there is ample commitment to establishing and nurturing mutually-beneficial exchange relationships. Agreements are easily entered into but require time, commitment, and funding to actually fulfill their intent. Given the University's limited resources currently to support its relationships with partner institutions in the Philippines, it is essential that no new educational partnerships be entered into without careful planning and adequate funding.

In addition to a lack of funding, another deterrent to successfully hosting Filipino students, faculty, and conference attendees is the reality of the extremely low

issuance rate of U.S. visitor and student visas to Filipinos. This barrier is beyond our control and requires a great deal of care in selecting, mentoring, and counseling prospective Filipino students and faculty wishing to come to the United States. Often times the inability to satisfy a visa officer of one's intent to return to the home country means a student cannot come to pursue a degree or engage in short-term training, despite months of preparation. In many cases, this translates into UH faculty members having to go to the Philippines to deliver courses or training or to rely upon distance education as a means of collaboration.

Despite these challenges, the University certainly recognizes that more vigorous cultural and educational ties with the people of the Philippines simultaneously enrich the citizens of Hawai'i and the Philippines by providing a foundation for intercultural exchange, understanding and collaboration, but urges great caution and extreme care when considering new academic relationships. Discussions with sister provinces must include the academic community at the onset in order to set realistic expectations that can be met by all parties.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.