HB 2587, HD1 - MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO ESTABLISH CREATIVITY ACADEMIES

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, and Members of the Committee:

I am here today to testify in support of House Bill 2587, HD1, that makes an appropriation to establish Creativity Academies within public high schools in partnership with the University of Hawaiʻi Community Colleges.

As described in the bill, the performance of our young people in mathematics and science lags behind the performance of most states. It is critical that we adopt new approaches that get an increasing number of students to engage in educational programs that prepare them with the skills necessary for their future success, as well as enabling them to contribute to the expansion of Hawaiʻi’s innovation economy.

I believe it is our responsibility as educators to provide the enriched environment that allows our people to develop the skills and knowledge that will allow them to fully participate in our economy and society. Over the past decade, the University of Hawaiʻi Community Colleges, in partnership with a growing number of DOE high schools and various industry groups, have developed a number of successful career-focused academies, including the Cisco Networking Academies, the Construction Academies, and the HiEST Academies that focus on the development of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) skills and knowledge. Using contextual based hands-on curricula, these initiatives have increased the engagement of students who have previously not been involved in a rigorous program of study. This, I believe, is what we can expect from the implementation of the Creativity Academies Program.

The mission of Creativity Academies is to provide students with the knowledge, attitudes, and workforce skills in the creative use of applied technology/Digital Media; skills necessary to become creative, innovative, and entrepreneurial in the 21st century. The fusion and blending of the creative and problem solving processes essential to both the scientific and artistic endeavors as well as in business, health and hospitality endeavors, is the cornerstone of the Creativity Academies and a life skill in the 21st century global community. The Creativity Academies expand existing New Media Arts, STEM and eventually programs in hospitality, business, health, culinary arts, etc. training for students K-12, infusing innovative thinking through contextual
learning in creative areas such as animation, game design and development, interface
design and creative writing/publishing.

This initiative is consistent with the planned University system strategic outcomes that
include: to develop the educational capital of the state; to develop our workforce; to
diversify the economy; and to increase our efforts on behalf of underserved regions and
populations, particularly Native Hawaiians.

The University of Hawai‘i Community College system is well situated to provide
leadership in promoting education in STEM and Digital Media/ New Media Arts
programs. Both Honolulu CC and Kapi‘olani CC have been innovative and creative in
their approaches to developing programs focused on different aspects of STEM and
New Media Arts related careers. Most relevant to HB 2587, HD1, Kapi‘olani CC has
developed and implemented a highly successful STEM Program for high school juniors
and seniors. The goals of this program are to enhance the quality of science,
technology, engineering and mathematics instructional and outreach programs; to
prepare students for STEM careers; and to increase the number of STEM students
transferring to 4-year degree programs. Kapi‘olani CC’s one year old STEM program
enrolled 205 students of which 165 are native Hawaiian students. Also, Kapi‘olani CC’s
Digital Media/ New Media Arts Program with 70 majors, has produced students who
have won national and international awards for their creative use of an art form that
uses technology as its medium. Through programs such as STEM and Digital
Media/New Media Arts Program, our Community Colleges are promoting creative
thinking, problem solving, and decision making through the sciences and the arts.

The establishment of the Creativity Academies will result in the blending of skill sets in
thinking, problem solving, decision making and technology/Digital Media not only to
STEM and NMA, but to programs such as hospitality, culinary arts, business, health
sciences, etc.

Furthermore, the Creative Academies focus on the creative application of technology
and how this technology can be effectively used to teach core skills for the twenty-first
century and how this technology can infuse and blend into STEM, the Arts, Hospitality,
Health, and Business curricula. This blending and infusing of technology/digital media
into STEM will attract students who feel challenged in Math and Science classes to
major in STEM disciplines.

If we are to be successful in fixing our leaky educational pipeline, we believe it is
important for our colleges to collaborate with the high schools throughout the State.
The Creativity Academies Program as well as other similar initiatives, through the efforts
of the UHCC system colleges and collaborating high schools, will provide our high
school students with new skills to use in the innovation economy, as well as the
opportunity to earn dual credit for their academic efforts, making a more efficient use of
available resources.

We support HB 2587, HD1, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely
impact priorities as indicated in our Board of Regents approved Executive Supplemental
Budget.