



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education and the Arts
Senate Committee on Human Services
Thursday, February 11, 2016 at 2:20pm

By
Robert Bley-Vroman, Chancellor
And
Noreen Mokuau, Dean
Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 493 HD1 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Chairs Taniguchi and Chun Oakland, Vice Chair Riviere, and members of the committees:

As Chancellor and Dean of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work, we strongly support HB 493 HD1, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget. By 2020, one in four of the state's population will be 65 years and older; this dramatic increase is associated with growing and devastating challenges including elder abuse, dementia, caregiving and long-term care. As Chancellor, I strongly support UHM's role in advancing instruction, scholarship and service around the urgent challenges in gerontology.

With support from the legislature, the Center on Aging (COA) can build capacity to respond to such issues. Currently, with an Interim Director and temporary researchers, funded through grants and contracts, the COA's capacity to expand is limited. Current projects address important community needs, but are limited to activities specified in COA contracts. The larger systemic needs of the community, for example, workforce development, are not being addressed.

We are in strong support, but would like to *amend and update the language*. Since the bill was introduced last year, a search has begun for a permanent director for the Center on Aging that will be funded by current general funds. So we are no longer requesting funding for a permanent director. Instead, we are requesting 2 faculty positions, who will be charged with addressing workforce development issues: 1) associate professor to develop and teach innovative gerontological education programs at UHM and 2) an assistant specialist to develop and implement continuing education and training programs in gerontology. As such, we would like to recommend *replacing current language with SB2207 language (introduced this year)*.

Funding for a permanent associate professor position and assistant specialist position, with support from ancillary UHM endowment funds, will equip the COA in achieving all

areas of its *mission*: to engage in workforce development through innovative programs of interdisciplinary gerontological education and practice; to engage in collaborative and interdisciplinary research within the university and with other academic partners in critical areas; and provide state-of-the art information to policy makers, program managers, clinicians and the general public.

COA is committed to the highest level of excellence in education, research and service to our community. Specifically:

- Being responsive to requests from the State to address the escalating needs and challenges faced by our growing aging population.
- Collaborating and conducting high quality gerontological education programs on the Mānoa campus as well as continuing education and training in the community.
- Seeking and securing extramural funds for aging research from local, federal, and international sources.
- Reinstating (currently on hold) and administering the undergraduate and graduate certificate in gerontology to build a workforce that is prepared to care for our aging population
- Working with faculty and students interested in gerontology to further their scholarship and publication.

Your support is requisite in providing COA with the capacity to be a community resource for students, professional groups, healthcare organizations, private and governmental agencies, service providers, caregivers, and diverse consumers, with the intent of improving our health care workforce and the quality of life for all older adults in Hawai'i.