

Testimony Presented Before the Joint Senate Committees on
Science, Art and Technology; and
Consumer Protection and Housing

February 10, 2004

by
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SB 2912 RELATING TO CABLE TELEVISION

Senator Ige, Senator Menor and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on SB 2912 Relating to Cable Television.

The University supports the intention of this bill, which is to support public, educational, and governmental cable television access facilities in underserved areas. However, the University of Hawaii has grave concerns regarding the portion of this bill that would achieve this by reallocating resources from Hawaii's underfunded and desperately needed Education and Government network infrastructure, the Institutional Network.

The University is one of the users, along with the Department of Education and the Information and Communications Services Division (ICSD) of the Department of Accounting and General Services (DAGS), of the Institutional Network (I-Net). In brief, the I-Net is a network assembled from fiber optic cable and inter-island telecommunications capacity that is made available by the Cable Television company as part of the requirements of their cable franchise agreements.

The complete background, uses, importance, and future growth needs of the I-Net were described at greater length during the February 3, 2004 informational briefing conducted by the Senate Committee on Science, Art and Technology and Committee on Economic Development. It is important to note that the three user organizations, along with our most critical partner, the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA), have worked together for over a decade to plan, implement, extend, upgrade with new technology and continue to expand this network which serves Hawaii's schools, campuses, education centers, government offices and, most importantly, the public we serve.

DCCA, through their administration of the cable franchise agreements and with financial assistance, has been the cornerstone of Hawaii's ability to develop a network that now provides widespread access to educational and governmental services. In terms of infrastructure, DCCA has ensured the availability of fiber optic cabling on each island for our shared use and as well as capacity on the cable company's inter-island fiber network. Also critically, DCCA has been a

fourth partner in funding the cost elements associated with implementing, upgrading, refreshing and expanding the I-Net. As the bill notes:

In the past, up to \$500,000 of the funds used to administer the department's cable regulation responsibilities have been allocated to support the INET (a fiber optic cable network that state agencies use).

At the February 3, 2004 informational briefing the three user organizations, UH, DOE and ICSD shared our plans and needs to continue to upgrade the network and to expand its reach -- particularly to more of our rural and underserved communities. We must therefore respectfully disagree with the statement in the bill that:

Because the INET is largely deployed, current expenditure levels are unlikely to be needed in the future. Accordingly, the department intends to reallocate much of the current INET funding and redirect it to support PEG access in underserved areas.

The University respectfully requests that additional resources for PEG facilities not be reallocated at the direct expense of greater access to the educational and governmental services and benefits the University, DOE and State are desperately struggling to provide via the I-Net to people in the very underserved and rural communities this bill is intended to assist.

We would be pleased to work with the committees to develop language that would address our concerns.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.