



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM

TESTIMONY

S.B 3109 RELATING TO EDUCATION

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Education

February 6, 2004

By

Dr. Doris Ching
Vice President for Student Affairs
University of Hawaii

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Chair Sakamoto, Vice Chair Hooser and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawaii supports the intent of SB 3109 establishing a financial aid post-secondary education and training for low-income students program. The University endorses the 2004 report of the Workforce Development Council to the Governor recommending an increase in financial aid to support low-income students. The University supports SB 3109 provided its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in the Executive Budget.

While the University of Hawaii provides a comprehensive tuition waiver program and administers federal financial assistance and privately funded scholarships, additional financial support is needed for low-income students. Low-income students face many barriers to full participation in post-secondary education, training and the workforce. In Hawai'i and other states, students from public high schools in high-income communities are more likely to go to college than their peers from low-income communities. Although the University receives state funds to support financial aid for needy students, the State of Hawaii is ranked last among the 50 United States in providing State support for higher education by the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP). The Legislature's approval of this measure will demonstrate Hawaii's strong support of education for financially needy students in the NASGAP survey.

The University requests deletion of the following sentence: (2) "Low-income student" means any junior and senior in high school eligible for free or reduced school lunch." The University would prefer no specific definition of "low-income" in the bill or text in the bill. The University prefers to use the federal definition and guidelines for the award of funds to financially needy students.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of SB 3109 and your continuing support for our students.