



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance

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by

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S.B. 2959 S.D. 3 RELATING TO LABOR

Chair Takamine and Members of the Committee:

I am here today to testify in support of S.B. NO. 2959 S.D. 3 which proposes to establish a number of new functions in the community colleges in response to Hawai'i's growing workforce development problems. The community colleges were established to provide greater educational opportunities for adults throughout the state, regardless of their previous educational preparation. This is a mission that we have embraced as we develop programs and services in response to the changing needs of our various communities.

Career and technical education, including apprenticeship education and job upgrade training have been a major component of the community colleges from our beginning in 1964. In fact, we are the major state resource to prepare and reeducate Hawai'i's changing workforce, with short-term training, certificates, and associate degree programs in more than 120 different specialty areas. In addition, our Employment Training Center has developed considerable knowledge and expertise in working with hard to serve non-traditional students in a focused job preparation setting.

Hawai'i is facing a number of critical workforce issues that if left unresolved can derail our future economic growth. In 2003-2005, Hawai'i was selected as one of eight states to

participate in the National Governors Association (NGA) *Pathways to Advancement Policy Academy* project focusing on the need to change state higher education, workforce development, and welfare policies to help more adults obtain postsecondary credentials. This initiative was supported within the state by an inter-departmental team who compiled a detailed analysis of related demographic, workforce, and education data, and identified a number of critical issues confronting the State. These issues, a worker preparation gap, a job quality gap, and a worker supply gap, and a number of recommended actions to address them are detailed in the Attachment 1.

The issues are statewide and critical to the state's economic future. In response to these issues, the community colleges have developed a set of initiatives such as the Pacific Center for Advanced Technology Training (PCATT), the Culinary Institute of the Pacific (CIP), the Cisco Networking Academy, and the Construction Industry Academy (with federal grant resources) that need to be sustained. In addition, we have requested additional state resources to support the preparation of more nurses, and for the establishment of a rapid response customized training capacity within the community colleges to meet employers growing need for job upgrade training.

Nationally, and within the state, more people are recognizing that the community colleges are an important resource in developing the new workforce necessary to sustain and enhance economic development initiatives. One of the recommendations contained in the National Governor's Association's *A Governor's Guide to Creating a 21st-Century Workforce* (2002) is to Increase the use of community colleges for workforce training (Attachment 1, page 3).

With the appropriate resources, we have the expertise and willingness to play a larger role in the development and upgrading of Hawai'i's workforce within the scope our primary mission – education and training.