UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM
Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committees on Labor & Public Employment,
Higher Education, and Education

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By
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SB 2980, SD 2 Relating to Education

Chairs Caldwell, Waters, Takumi, and Members of the Committees:

The University stands in strong support of SB 2980 SD2, "Relating to Education." SB 2980 expands the Honolulu Community College (HCC) initiated Construction Academy program and the Apprenticeship Training programs at the University of Hawai'i Community Colleges.

As the Legislature is aware, the construction industry is faced with a tremendous shortage of qualified workers. The number of workers needed differs depending on the source, but all agree that something must be done to ensure that the industry's workforce needs are met and that Hawai'i's economy can continue its growth on the shoulders of the building industry.

In November 2005, HCC was approached by the industry to assist them with this issue. The result was a workforce development proposal which this measure is based on. The report titled, "Workforce Development Initiative: Proposal to Address Employee Shortages in the Construction Industry", responds to the industry's needs by:

1) Widening the pipeline of qualified construction workers by addressing educational issues at the front end (high school/secondary education) and expanding the back end (post-secondary apprenticeship training and construction degree programs).
2) Providing individuals who are either in high school or who are out of high school, with viable career opportunities in the construction industry.

The budget for this proposal calls for 46.00 positions and approximately $5.5M in funding. Of the $5.5M, over $3.0M will go toward resources that are directly placed in the high school classroom, $1.82M will be applied toward teacher training and assistance, and $1.4M will go into resources for classrooms, shops, and lab equipment to serve adult learners, both in the Apprenticeship and construction technology programs.

Honolulu Community College, as the State's primary construction training campus, accepts the responsibility of leading this initiative. The college, however, is concerned that the Construction Initiative has been viewed as being an add-on project solely for the benefit of HCC. Since HCC developed the proposal that became this initiative, it is understandable how this assumption can be made. It is important for the Legislature to understand that this initiative benefits the entire state with programs on each island.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.