



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Human Services & Housing
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SB 424, SD2 Relating to Human Services

Chair Shimabukuro, Vice Chair Rhoads, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i strongly endorses this bill to allocate funds to the Department of Human Services (DHS) to ensure that all TANF clients have continued access to post-secondary education provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in our Board of Regents approved Biennium Budget request. The University has actively supported access to post-secondary education for welfare recipients and actively partnered with DHS since legislation created the Bridge to Hope education program. In addition to the support of President McClain and the UH Commission on the Status of Women, faculty and staff at every campus have given their time and full support to its implementation on our campuses.

Since fall 2000, the University and the Department of Human Service have successfully partnered to provide on-campus employment and student support services for the needs specific to student parents. This partnership has resulted in over 600 First-to-Work clients participating in on-campus Bridge to Hope employment and student services. With students in the educational pipeline moving from community colleges to baccalaureate campuses, over 150 students have earned Associate of Arts degrees at the community colleges and nearly 100 have earned Bachelor of Arts degrees. Popular and highly employable degrees include: Social Work, Nursing, Dental Hygiene, and Education.

Although the University system includes 2-year vocational education degrees, we support access to the full range of educational programs. We are particularly disturbed with the restriction to baccalaureate education, which is particularly necessary for women to earn a wage sufficient to support a family.

The restriction to 2 years of vocational education does not take into account pre-requisite courses for many vocational programs, including the economically viable health sciences careers. For example, the 2-year medical lab technician program has 1 full year of pre-requisites required before the student can even apply. Limiting education activities to 2 years effectively limits students' participation in programs that can provide lifelong economic security.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of a bill that offers educational access to all our state residents.