



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Education

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by

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SCR 224/SR 147 Requesting the Center for Pacific Island Studies at the University of Hawaii at Mānoa to Establish a Task Force to Identify and Address the Needs of Pacific Islanders in Hawaii

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

I am testifying in favor of SCR 224/SR 147 which requests the Center for Pacific Islands Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa to establish a task force to identify and address the needs of Pacific Islanders in Hawai'i. I thank Representative John Mizuno for his sponsorship of this concurrent resolution, and suggest two amendments to the current draft.

There is a critical need to respond effectively and appropriately to the needs of Pacific Islanders in Hawai'i, and especially in light of the growing number of Micronesian immigrants from the freely associated states of the region. Education, employment, health care, and housing are areas of critical concern for recent arrivals from the Pacific seeking to adjust to life in our state. The successful response to these concerns requires a collaborative effort that includes representatives from the different Pacific communities, and officials from the appropriate state agencies and offices. I feel the Center for Pacific Islands Studies is uniquely positioned to facilitate this effort.

The center is the only congressionally recognized National Resource Center in the nation that focuses on the islands of the Pacific. The center has a core faculty of 4, with 38 affiliate faculty members spread throughout the various colleges and departments of the Mānoa campus. In addition, the center has very active conferencing and publishing programs. Our annual conferences focus on major developments and issues in the region, and attract an international audience. In collaboration with the University of Hawai'i's Press, the center is the world's leading site for publications in the field of Pacific studies.

The center also directs a variety of outreach programs, including workshops for local public school teachers, summer institutes for instructors from the nation's colleges, a visiting artist program, and a residency for Pacific writers. Taking advantage of its location, we sponsor a public seminar series that features a wide variety of speakers from island countries, educational organizations, and regional and international agencies. Committed to partnership and collaboration, the center has working relationships with eight other universities in the region, including those in Australia, Fiji, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, and Tahiti. Within the last four years, we have sponsored several workshops for different groups of service providers working with the state's Micronesian population.

The center espouses in strong and demonstrable ways the university's special commitment to the people of Hawai'i and the greater Pacific region as articulated in the Mānoa Strategic Plan. The center will continue to educate the general public on the Pacific Islands. Above all else, the center remains committed to the Pacific region and its people. We welcome the opportunity to direct a task force that identifies and addresses the concerns of Pacific Islanders living in Hawai'i.

As mentioned at the beginning of my testimony, I suggest two amendments to the draft resolution currently before you. First, I recommend that paragraphs (whereas) five and six be dropped as they include Native Hawaiians in the Pacific Islander population count for the state and its counties.

Secondly, I ask that the phrase, "including those from Micronesia" be added to the end of paragraph (whereas) seven so that it reads; "WHEREAS, there is a need to identify and address the needs of Pacific Islanders in Hawai'i, ***including those from Micronesia.***"

Thank you, Chair Sakamoto, Vice Chair Tokuda, and members of the Senate Committee on Education. I hope for your approval of Senate Concurrent Resolution 224 and with the two suggested amendments.