



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education
March 18, 2014 at 2:34 pm
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SB 2131 SD2 HD1 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Chair Choy, Vice Chair Ichiyama and Members of the Committee:

SB 2131 SD2 HD1 proposes to require the University of Hawai'i to waive the nonresident tuition & fee differential for veterans of the five major branches of the U.S. Armed Forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard).

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of the bill, recognizing the outstanding service that military veterans provided to our country, and appreciating the different life experiences they'd bring to the college classroom, adding to the diversity of our campuses.

In recognition of the University's commitment to serving veterans, University of Hawai'i Interim President David Lassner, after meeting with U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki last fall, established a task force to assess current institutional policies, programs, and practices, and to provide recommendations that improve veteran access to the University and that promote the success of student veterans matriculating at the University's ten campuses. The task force has been meeting regularly and recently adopted a set of recommendations last Friday, one of which will include some tuition benefit for veterans.

Another significant development is the pending federal legislation. The US House passed legislation requiring colleges and universities to offer in-state tuition rates to veterans. The US Senate is considering an omnibus veterans bill similarly requiring in-state tuition for veterans. Legislative actions at the federal level may contain compliance requirements and provisions that supersede provisions in SB 2131 SD2 HD1.

Therefore, while we support the overall intent of this bill, we believe that recent initiatives by the University and legislation moving through the US Congress obviates the need for this measure. One of these University initiatives involves defining the specific parameters and conditions of tuition support for veterans that will be submitted for adoption by the Board of Regents as part of its statutory responsibility to grant or modify scholarships and financial assistance for students. One example of such parameter-setting involves extending the support of Hawai'i taxpayers only to veterans who intend to make Hawai'i their home.

The University greatly appreciates your support for enabling our veterans to improve themselves and the communities in which they reside through post-secondary education. Deferring this measure will afford the Board of Regents the opportunity to exercise its statutory responsibility with prudence over this matter. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.