



# **UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM**

## **Legislative Testimony**

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Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Higher Education and the Arts  
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by  
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### **SB 707 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII**

Chair Taniguchi, Vice Chair Inouye, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in SUPPORT of SB 707 – Relating to The University of Hawaii. This bill seeks to establish an Office of Sustainability at the System level for the University of Hawai'i, and to provide funding for key staff to coordinate implementation of the Board of Regents' sustainability policy across all 10 campuses of the University. Given the State's ambitious energy and sustainability goals, this bill allocates resources to support the University of Hawai'i – one of the state's largest consumers of electricity – in reducing its energy use, better steward its resources, and contribute to creating a vibrant green sector of our local economy.

Over the last few years, a committed and growing group of representatives from students, faculty, facilities and administration have been developing a systemwide strategy to integrate sustainability into the culture and operations of the University of Hawai'i so that the institution can improve its energy performance, reduce its operational costs, and create graduates who are engaged, informed global citizens equipped with the skill sets required to help our communities meet the climate change challenges of our times. In response to the growing and enthusiastic support of sustainability from all 10 campuses, University of Hawai'i Leadership has dedicated funding, amended policies, and otherwise supported this strategic initiative.

Funding for a University System Office of Sustainability would allow the University to aggressively pursue the following priorities: 1) develop mechanisms to track and re-invest savings realized from sustainability initiatives; 2) support the establishment of a Strategic Energy Partnership in collaboration with stakeholders that may include the Public Utilities Commission, external experts as necessary, the utility company, the UH Foundation, and others to finance energy efficiency and demand management projects to reduce energy consumption and costs; 3) develop more opportunities for students to develop real-world skills to equip them to meet the sustainability challenges of our times by developing mechanisms to provide financial support through paid positions, internships and fellowships; 4) provide coordination across all 10 campuses to help students articulate courses in sustainability studies to support the growth of our green economy; 5) convene the annual Sustainability in Higher Education Summit, an important catalyst to integrate sustainability into campus life, operations, curriculum development, and community engagement across

all 10 campuses; 6) cultivate sustainability funding opportunities with UH Foundation; 7) work to implement the Board of Regents' sustainability policy to achieve carbon neutrality, zero waste, and local food self-sufficiency; and 8) support the state in achieving its sustainability goals as stated in the Aloha+ Challenge Resolution.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 707. The University will be happy to continue productive and forward-looking discussions on this issue.