UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM
Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education and the Arts
Tuesday, February 9, 2016 at 1:30pm
by
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SB 3073 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT HILO

Chair Taniguchi and members of the committee:

My name is Donald Straney, Chancellor of the University of Hawai'i at Hilo and I am presenting the University's testimony in support of SB3073. This bill will help advance the development of a degree program of aeronautical science.

For the past two years, I have been working with the late Senator Gilbert Kahele to establish an aeronautical science program at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo. Together we have had to work through a number of issues in trying to develop plans for the program to be successful and financially sustainable. Beginning with a comprehensive study of opportunities and options, we have developed a four year curriculum for the degree program. We are in the final stages of identifying a provider of flight instruction and securing facilities at the Hilo airport to house the program.

Aeronautical science programs are expensive for students because of the number of flight hours required. These programs are complex for a campus due to the need to contract with a third party to provide both the flight instruction and the aircraft and simulators required. We continue to develop our recruiting strategy and the business plan for the program.

The University appreciates the financial support provided by this bill. This measure will help alleviate the significant funding component to make the program sustainable and more affordable to potential students. UH-Hilo will also be pursuing approval from the UH Board of Regents in order to establish a new degree, and legislative appropriation specific to the program will help ensure financial sustainability. Board of Regents' approval for the program is required before we can recruit students.

The University requests that SB3073 be amended so that its funding appropriation is spent over multiple years, rather than via a single year appropriation in FY2016-17. Section 2 of SB3073 specifies that funds be "appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of $500,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2016-2017 for implementation costs, including salaries and facilities, of establishing a school of aviation at the University of Hawaii at Hilo."

In order to establish the aeronautical science program, it would be optimal to provide $250,000 in the inaugural year to establish the program (FY2016-17), but the University would request annual funding be added to the UH-Hilo base in the budget. UH will work with the Legislature to ensure the funding can be appropriated into the base budget at UOH210 – University of Hawai‘i Hilo.

We seek the ability to attract outstanding aeronautical science educators to provide their knowledge and experience in the program building process. A recurring yearly allotment of $250,000 in appropriated aeronautical science faculty positions is the single best way to ensure Senator Kahele’s vision is realized. UH Hilo shares the Senator’s vision of a “world-class aviation training program” established in Hilo to provide opportunities for the youth of our community and beyond.

The University supports the intent of this bill to work towards achieving Senator Kahele's dream that our keiki can earn an aeronautical science degree in the state and enter careers in aviation.