



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I

BOARD OF REGENTS

Testimony presented before the
House Committee on Higher Education
February 10, 2015 at 2:00 p.m.

By
Randolph Moore
Chair, Board of Regents

HB 552 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Chair Choy, Vice Chair Ichiyama, and members of the Committee on Higher Education:

My name is Randolph Moore, and I am the chair of the University of Hawai'i's Board of Regents.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to HB 552, which proposes to change the composition of the board of regents to add three voting members to the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents to represent undergraduate students, research faculty, and other faculty, and to convert the existing student member to represent graduate students. I want to emphasize that although I am the board chair, I am speaking only for myself. The board has not had the opportunity to discuss the bill and to determine whether it wishes to take a position on the bill or what such a position might be.

The statute currently provides for a voting student regent and does not preclude a faculty member or additional students from applying and being selected to serve as a regent. I do not support this measure because it is contrary to the principles of good governance. There are already vehicles for these constituencies to convey their views to the board.

All board members bear the responsibility to act in the best interest of the institution, and to serve its many constituents, not just represent the interest of a particular constituency. The Association of Governing Boards (AGB), the only national organization focused on governance and citizen trusteeship at higher education institutions in the United States, does not support adding students or faculty as voting board members because of the inherent conflict of interest, especially for an employee, in serving on his or her own institution's board.

Taking the alternative approach and making such new membership non-voting does not resolve the concern behind this measure: meaningful engagement and communication. AGB warns that including a representative on a board does not ensure good communication between a governing board and the students or faculty on a campus. The current student regent position on the board provides student perspective, but is

not representation. Like all other regents, the student regent is appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate. The student regent is not elected by the students and therefore does not “represent” the students. Obtaining the perspectives of students and faculty can be and currently is achieved with selection of regents who are alumni or former faculty, both of whom currently serve on the board.

In addition to the current opportunities for students and faculty to formally convey their concerns, views and ideas to the board, the board has already taken and committed to additional steps to improve communications with the faculty, students and other internal constituencies. Over the past several years board leadership has developed a practice of meeting directly with student and faculty leaders. After discussion in committee and on the recommendation of the President, the full board also recently agreed to invite elected representatives of the faculty and students to formally present to the full board and to create additional informal discussion venues with students and faculty around board meetings. The board will continue to identify opportunities to maximize open communications with students and faculty.

In addition, as a matter of board size the current membership of 15 is considered to already be the upper bound for an effective board. Enlarging the board beyond this may make governance more unwieldy.

I welcome the opportunities to engage in public conversation with the Legislature about major policies, directions and priorities. However, I believe that maintaining the current composition of the board is appropriate.

I regret I am out of town and unable to present this testimony in person or to respond to questions at your February 10 meeting.