



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Tourism  
Wednesday, March 16, 2016 at 10:00 a.m.

By  
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&  
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University of Hawai'i at Hilo

### SB 83 SD1 – RELATING TO APPROPRIATIONS

Chair Brower, Vice Chair Ohno, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 83 SD1, which will appropriate funds from the tourism special fund for travel expenses and subsidies incurred for the intercollegiate athletics programs at the University of Hawai'i.

The University of Hawai'i at Hilo Intercollegiate Athletics program competes at the NCAA Division II level and is a member of the Pacific West Conference which consists of 14 member institutions. Of those members, four are from Hawaii while the other ten are located on the mainland (9 in California/1 in Utah). University of Hawai'i at Mānoa competes at the NCAA Division I level and is a member of the Big West Conference and Mountain West Conference depending on the sport.

UH Hilo and UH Mānoa face unique travel challenges that are specific to Hawai'i. In fiscal year 2014-15, nearly 70% of UH Hilo's entire operations budget was consumed by team related travel (airfare, hotel, ground transportation, food, etc.) with costs continuing to rise. In fact, BYU-Hawaii has announced that they will be disbanding their athletic program after the 2016-17 seasons and the Pacific West Conference will be adding Biola University to take their place. This decision leaves UH Hilo with one less Hawai'i institution to schedule with and adds yet another mainland school thereby increasing costs even more.

In comparison, the average team travel costs for the mainland schools in the Pacific West Conference is 42%. Other NCAA Division II schools in the West Region that UH Hilo competes against such as in the California Collegiate Athletic Association allocate less than 30% of their operations budget for travel related expenses.

UH Hilo is the only school in the entire country that must travel by air for every contest away from home and also contend with limited, direct mainland service. We make 40-plus team trips to O'ahu to compete against UH Manoa, and fellow Pacific West rivals, Chaminade University, Hawai'i Pacific University and BYU-Hawai'i.

Despite these costs, intercollegiate athletics is a proven economic engine for the community and State. The economic impact has been well documented but one recent example is UH Hilo hosting the 25<sup>th</sup> Amer Ari Golf Invitational this past February. This prestigious event attracted 19 of the top NCAA Division I men's golf programs in the country that also brought parents and fans that occupied 700+ room nights as well as revenues from car rentals, restaurants and visitor attractions. This is an annual event that UH Hilo has hosted for the past 25 years.

Both UH Mānoa and UH Hilo athletic programs provide significant tangible economic benefits to the State in terms of additional visitors who travel with their teams to Hawai'i. We also provide significant intangible benefits to the communities we represent with home team pride. UH student-athletes are wonderful examples to our keiki in our communities and serve as strong role models while advocating the importance of education.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony. The University of Hawai'i at Hilo respectfully requests passage of SB 83 SD1. Thank you for your time and consideration.