



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committees on Higher Education and the Arts
and
Economic Development, Environment and Technology
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by
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SB 2940 – RELATING TO TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Chairs Taniguchi and Wakai, Vice Chair Slom and members of the Committees:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

One of the University of Hawai'i's (UH) strategic directions is to grow the portfolio of sponsored research done at the University and to promote innovation and workforce diversification in the state's economy. One critical phase of innovation is the ability to commercialize research ideas generated on campus. The phase is often known as "technology transfer" and is designed to strengthen economies by getting new ideas, inventions and processes developed in universities to the private sector as quickly as possible. Technology transfer occurs throughout the nation at other universities and it is vital for UH to be able to support its faculty and student researchers in these activities.

This bill -- and others like it -- attempts to address the consequences of applying a "one size fits all" State Ethics Code to the multitude of situations that arise during the course of operating the state government or UH. In particular, the University of Hawai'i is concerned that a strict and narrow application of the State Ethics Code would prohibit or severely hamper UH activities designed to "transfer" new technology and ideas from the UH laboratories and faculty offices to the larger society.

The University of Hawai'i believes that technology transfer should be permitted under the State Ethics Code where such activities are likely to create specific benefits to the state or the public, notwithstanding the simultaneous creation of commercial benefit or individual personal benefit.

The amendments proposed in this bill would facilitate technology transfer at UH by exempting such activity from certain sections of the ethics code. The University of Hawai'i believes these exemptions are proper and justified due to its unique mission and the countervailing benefit to the well-being of the state of Hawai'i and its citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.