



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented to the
House Committee on Lower & Higher Education
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By
Vassilis L. Syrmos
Vice President, Research and Innovation
University of Hawai'i System

HB 2256 – RELATING TO TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Chair Woodson, Vice Chairs Hashem and Quinlan, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i (UH) supports this bill.

In 2017, the Legislature supported UH's efforts to promote the commercialization of inventions and discoveries generated by its faculty, students and alumni by giving UH the responsibility to ensure that technology transfer activities it sponsors comport with ethic principles embodied in the State Ethics Code. Pursuant to Act 38, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2017, University of Hawai'i sponsored technology transfer activities would be exempt from specific sections of the State Ethics Code so long as these technology transfer activities were subject to ethic policies and a compliance program established by UH that were specifically adapted to unique features of university-generated innovations.

The transfer of compliance responsibility to UH by Act 38 would sunset, however, on June 30, 2022. At that time, the exemption would expire, and the State Ethics Commission would assume sole authority to provide advice, guidance, and decisions on issues.

This legislative measure would repeal the sunset thereby allowing UH to continue to develop and refine its compliance program for technology transfer activities unique to itself. This repeal of the sunset is appropriate for the following reasons.

To date, UH has examined conflict of interest policies from other research universities. Reference materials such as guidelines and advisory opinions from the Hawai'i State Ethics Commission have also been reviewed. The University of Hawai'i's compliance policies and procedures in related areas such as financial conflicts of interest and research integrity have been studied. With this context, a set of UH policies crafted specifically for technology transfer activities has been drafted and shared with the faculty for comment. An internal handbook for use by UH staff has been created, based in part, on models used at other universities.

The proposed policies and UH handbook are drafted as specialized documents that can provide more nuanced application for technology transfer. The policies are also developed with direct engagement from UH stakeholders, such as its faculty.

To continue these efforts, the University of Hawai'i respectfully requests that the sunset provision of Act 38, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2017, be deleted.