



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Energy and Environmental Protection
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by
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HB 410 – RELATING TO TREE PLANTING

Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Marten, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

The University of Hawai'i (University) appreciates the intent of HB 410, which requires that eighth grade students and twelfth grade students in Hawai'i public schools, along with University of Hawai'i undergraduate students, plant trees.

The University understands and appreciates the importance of planting trees and supports the preference for indigenous plantings. We are proud of the work of Dr. Camilo Mora of our faculty, who has mobilized thousands of volunteers including students of all ages to plant trees in order to achieve carbon neutrality. And we are aware there are other tree-planting initiatives supported by public, private and non-profit organizations.

However, we cannot support the approach of making participation in tree-planting a requirement for graduation. In general, we are working hard to help more students graduate on time rather than to create more requirements that may present obstacles for students, such as those with disabilities and distance learners, or that may delay graduation for many more.

In addition, the University is not financed or equipped to address the physical or administrative requirements that this bill would present. Especially in a time of diminishing resources, we cannot support what would likely become a new unfunded or underfunded mandate.

To achieve the worthy goals of this measure, the sponsors might wish to investigate how to support and promote existing and volunteer tree planting initiatives across the islands.

The University respectfully requests that this measure be amended to remove the University from its requirements or deferred entirely.