



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education & Technology
February 5, 2021 at 2:00 p.m.

by
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HB 1070 – RELATING TO UNIVERSITY DISTRICTS

Chair Takayama, Vice Chair DeCoite, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today.

The University of Hawai'i (University) supports House Bill No. 1070, Relating to University Districts. This bill provides a framework that promotes more consistent land use planning and development across the University System throughout the State and better allows for project partnerships with the private sector.

The bill authorizes the University President to propose a university district to the Board of Regents. A university district can only include real property that is: (1) held by the University; or (2) held in partnership with “any individual, partnership, corporation, or any public agency possessing the competence, expertise, experience, and resources, including financial, personnel, and tangible resources, required for the purposes of a project and other qualifications as may be deemed desirable by the university[.]” A university district cannot include real property located within a conservation district, and the real property must be part of an existing campus or contiguous with it.

If the Regents approve the President’s proposal after a public meeting, the Regents may designate a university district. Once designated, the President must develop a campus development plan that the Regents must also adopt at a public meeting. If the Regents approve the development plan, the Regents must establish campus development rules under chapter 91, Hawai'i Revised Statutes, which allows for a public hearing.

The purpose of the rules is to implement the plan. The rules must follow existing county rules, ordinances, and regulations as closely as is consistent with standards meeting minimum requirements of good design, pleasant amenities, health, safety, and coordinated development. Once approved, the rules supersede all other inconsistent county ordinances and rules relating to the use, zoning, planning, and development of land within a university district.

This planning and land use framework ensures good planning, allows for public input, and creates opportunities for the University to leverage private sector investment in the development of the University for the benefit of its students, faculty, and staff. In particular, it helps advance public-private partnerships similar to what other universities have used for various campus projects such as parking structures, student and faculty housing, and transit-oriented development. All of the facilities, projects, and uses are already occurring and are customary on school campuses – and, they are built on State-owned lands of the University. The bill will provide an opportunity for consistent systemwide planning and resource allocation across the University's ten campuses, which are now subject to different use, zoning, planning, and development regulations depending on which county the campus is located.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.