



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
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by
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HB 1291 HD1 – RELATING TO SCHOLARSHIPS

Chair Luke, Vice Chair Cullen and members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i (UH) supports the intent of House Bill 1291, House Draft 1 (HB 1291 HD1). The bill encourages students who previously received special education services to pursue postsecondary education and training by providing access to scholarships at the University of Hawai'i.

The UH encourages all of Hawai'i's residents, including students with disabilities, to pursue education and training beyond high school. Financial assistance is available for students who have disabilities and who enroll in one of the UH's ten campuses. Students who have disabilities have access to need and merit-based scholarships at UH.

HB 1291 HD1 calls UH to award scholarships to high achieving students who have graduated from a public high school in the State and received special education services for two or more years during their enrollment in grades kindergarten through twelve. The bill calls for these students to receive scholarships for both the Hawai'i State Scholars Program, HRS 304A-504, and the Hawai'i Promise Program, HRS 304A-506.

The Hawai'i State Scholars program is a need-based scholarship for Hawai'i students who graduate from Hawai'i public schools with a grade point average of 3.0 or higher and have a demonstrated financial need. The UH respectfully requests that the Hawai'i State Scholars Program continues to be a need-based scholarship that supports all eligible students. Consistent with the intent of this bill to make college affordable for all high achieving students, students who previously received two years of special education services, are high achieving students, and have financial need would already be eligible for the UH's current Hawai'i State Scholars Program. Students who do not have financial need should be commended for their accomplishment and be considered for merit scholarships.

The Hawai'i Promise Program (HRS 304A-506) is a "need-based scholarship" which supports all UH Community College students, including students with disabilities, who meet the need-based eligibility criteria. Hawai'i Promise was established to cover the direct "out-of-pocket" costs for all eligible students on the basis of financial need. UH Community Colleges respectfully request that Hawai'i Promise continue to be a need-

based scholarship that supports all eligible students. Consistent with the intent of the Hawai'i Promise Program to make college affordable for all students, high achieving students who previously received special education services and have financial need should receive Hawai'i Promise irrespective of their academic achievement. High achieving students who previously received special education services but who do not have financial need should be commended for their accomplishment and be considered for merit scholarships.

In 2019-20, UH Community Colleges awarded Hawai'i Promise scholarships to 1,797 students who had financial need. The average award was \$1,337. Hawai'i Promise scholarship recipients had less student loan debt, earned more credits, earned better grades, were more likely to continue in college and more likely to earn a degree than their peers.

Also, UH Foundation scholarships, established by donors, specifically support students with disabilities:

- Walter Serikawa Memorial Scholarships for part-time students attending any UH Community College who have a disability and for UH Manoa students, graduate or undergraduate, who are legally blind and/or deaf or hard of hearing,
- Kal Warrington Silvert Scholarships for UH Manoa undergraduate students who are wheelchair users because of a permanent disability, and
- Masao and Michiko Okasako Scholarships for UH Manoa undergraduate students and for UH Maui College students who have a documented disability.

UH welcomes the opportunity to support additional scholarships to increase financial support available to students with disabilities, provided that the Legislature fund the additional scholarships.