



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education
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by

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HB 1291 HD1 – RELATING TO SCHOLARSHIPS

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i (UH) supports the intent of House Bill 1291, House Draft 1 (HB1291 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 was established in 2005. As described in HRS 304A-504, the program establishes scholarships for recent Hawai'i high school graduates who are high achieving: valedictorians, 4.0 grade point average or high college admissions test scores. If the legislature elects to make high achieving students who received special education services eligible for this scholarship, we recommend that the criteria be amended, as follows, to facilitate efficient administration to award scholarships to eligible students:

(D) Earned a high school diploma from a public high school in the State with a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 as determined for admission to the university if the student provides evidence that they qualified for and received special education services for two or more years during enrollment in grades nine through twelve;

Please note that this scholarship is awarded when funds are available. Funds are not currently appropriated for this scholarship.

UH requests that the Hawai'i Promise Program (HRS 304A-506) be removed from the bill. Hawai'i Promise is a "need-based scholarship" which supports all eligible 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 will receive Hawai'i Promise, irrespective of their academic achievement.

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 Mānoa students, graduate or undergraduate, who are legally blind and/or deaf or hard of hearing,
- Kal Warrington Silvert Scholarships for UH Mānoa undergraduate students who are wheelchair users because of a permanent disability, and
- Masao and Michiko Okasako Scholarships for UH Mānoa 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 funds the additional scholarships.