



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committees on Education and Higher Education & Technology  
Thursday, February 11, 2021, at 2:00 p.m.

by  
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### HB 1291 – RELATING TO SCHOLARSHIPS

Chairs Woodson and Takayama, Vice Chairs Kapela and DeCoite, and members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 1291. The University of Hawai'i (UH) supports the intent of the bill which 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 ten UH campuses. Students who have disabilities have access to need and merit-based scholarships at UH as well.

HB 1291 calls for a ten percent set aside in the Hawai'i Promise Scholarship for students with disabilities. Currently, the Hawai'i Promise program supports all UH Community College students, including students with disabilities, who meet the need-based eligibility criteria. 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 Scholarship 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.

For the next fiscal biennium, the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents approved a budget request for the UH that was flat and did not seek any increased funding to the UH out of recognition that State revenues and funding are likely reduced. The UH

supports the intent of the bill and welcomes the opportunity to champion additional scholarships to increase financial support available to students with disabilities; however, we are unable to do so at the expense of current funding to UH and would need the Legislature to provide additional funds for implementation.