



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education and Technology
Wednesday, February 14, 2024, at 2:00 p.m.

By

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HB 2719 – RELATING TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Chair Perruso, Vice Chair Kapela, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on House Bill 2719, which establishes a pilot program to offer tuition waivers for certain community college students starting in fall 2025.

The University of Hawaii (UH) is in support of conducting a review of providing certain community colleges with free tuition, and submitting its findings and recommendations to the legislature however feels that the bill may be unnecessary and would like to respectfully suggest that in lieu of this measure, a concurrent resolution be introduced for this purpose.

In reference to the establishment of the pilot program starting in Fall 2025, UH would respectfully request that this be delayed until after the review is complete.

If the committee is inclined to pass this measure, UH has suggested amendments for your consideration.

First, the requirement for students to submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) under Section 2(b)(2)(A) to the Board of Regents (BOR) is confusing. While federal funding provided by filling out the FAFSA can offset the costs of housing and other expenses associated with going to college if tuition is otherwise covered, it is unclear why the FAFSA would be submitted to the BOR. This requirement may create confusion among students, require additional administrative costs, and deter eligible individuals from applying for the waiver. Therefore, reconsidering the necessity of submitting the FAFSA application to the BOR is recommended or providing clear guidance on its purpose and relevance within the context of the bill.

Second, to align this measure with the current residency requirements as outlined in the Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR) on residency, in Section 2(b)(2)(B) we suggest changing the requirement of living in the county from two years to one. We also suggest

students shall meet the residency criteria that include graduating from a high school in that particular county and residing in the state for at least one year.

Finally, a general fund appropriation of approximately \$2,300,000 (based on FY2023 enrollments), would be required to make up for lost revenue for this campus.

Thank you for your consideration of these suggested amendments and the opportunity to testify on this measure.