



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
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By

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HCR 205/HR 185 – URGING THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII TO ADOPT AND PUBLICIZE A STATEWIDE EQUITY STATEMENT

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of developing an equity statement for the University of Hawai'i (UH).

UH serves a diverse student and community population with several UH campuses having been recognized in recent years as being among the most ethnically diverse campuses in the nation by *U.S. News and World Report*. In addition to ethnic diversity, UH is home to many first-generation students, veterans, international students, and students from the continental United States – all of which help make each class of students complex and diverse. As a result, UH has a special burden to ensure that all students feel welcome within the institution.

This resolution comes at a time when some states are actively eliminating their diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts and the US Supreme Court has held that diversity is not a compelling state interest for the purposes of admissions. Thus, the University welcomes the support of the legislature in prioritizing DEI efforts, including encouraging the University to draft and post a systemwide equity statement.

UH is currently participating in a national equity action initiative focused on utilizing a framework to assist with implementing a variety of equity priorities. One such priority is the development of an official Equity Statement, which is currently in draft form and ready for consultation.

In light of national hostility towards DEI efforts and in an atmosphere where many states are actively seeking to undermine efforts to make higher education equitable for all students, it is refreshing to have the support of the Hawai'i House of Representatives in doing this work for the future of our state and the public good.