



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 Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Tuesday, April 2, 2024, at 2:00 p.m.

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

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HCR 205 and HR 185 calling for the University of Hawai'i (UH) to adopt and publicize a statewide equity statement.

UH serves a diverse student and community population, with several campuses recognized in recent years by *U.S. News and World Report* as among the most ethnically diverse campuses in the nation. 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 whom 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. The U.S. Supreme Court has held that diversity is not a compelling state interest for admissions purposes. Thus, the UH welcomes the legislature's support in prioritizing DEI efforts, including encouraging the UH to draft and post a systemwide equity statement.

UH is participating in a national equity action initiative that focuses on utilizing a framework to assist with implementing various 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 toward DEI efforts and in an atmosphere where many states actively seek 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 through the introduction of HCR 205 and HR 185 in doing this work for the future of our state and the public good.

Thank you for the opportunity to shine a light on this critical subject.