



# 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  
Friday, February 7, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.

by

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### HB 842 – RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 842, which appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UH Mānoa) to establish three additional permanent mental health practitioner positions within the Division of Student Success' Counseling and Student Development Center.

The Counseling and Student Development Center (CSDC) at UH Mānoa is a critical resource providing mental health support to our students. Each semester, we serve nearly 500 students and conduct approximately 1,500–2,000 appointments, ensuring that students receive timely and effective care.

Students are matched with providers based on the nature and severity of their concerns, as well as the provider's qualifications and experience. The majority of students are seen by a licensed psychologist or advanced post-doctoral fellow, while trainees work with clients who are appropriate for their level of expertise under supervision.

Despite the essential role we play in student mental health, our staffing levels remain critically low. Our current team consists of:

- 1 part-time G-funded psychiatrist (0.5 FTE)
- 2 full-time G-funded licensed psychologists (2.0 FTE)
- 1 part-time G-funded licensed psychologist (0.5 FTE)
- 2 part-time temporary licensed psychologists (1.0 FTE)
- 1 G-funded Director (oversees post-doctoral students/interns; does not see clients) (1.0 FTE)
- 8 post-doctoral students/interns supervised by licensed psychologists, adding supervision duties to the caseloads of the current staff

This equates to a **total of 0.5 FTE psychiatrists and 4.5 FTE psychologists** despite the **recommended standard of 13–20 FTE** for our **student population of 20,048**. The demand for our services has continued to increase, particularly since students returned to campus after the pandemic. Increased walk-in appointments and urgent care requests highlight the growing need for immediate support. More referrals from faculty, staff, and parents indicate heightened concerns about student well-being.

Our **current ratio of 1 FTE to 4,010 students** is far below the **recommended 1:1,000–1,500**. Without an increase in staffing students may face longer wait times and limited access to therapy, clinicians will continue operating at an unsustainable workload, increasing burnout and turnover, and CSDC's ability to fulfill crisis response responsibilities will be severely impacted.

In conclusion, to meet the mental health needs of our students and fulfill our role as an essential service, additional full-time, permanent mental health professionals are necessary. The well-being and success of our students depend on immediate investment in CSDC staffing to align with best practices and accreditation standards.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our testimony in support and respectfully ask for your favorable consideration, provided its adoption does not impact priorities as indicated in our Board of Regents Approved Budget.