



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education
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By
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SB 3032 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROMISE PROGRAM

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the committee:

The University of Hawai'i strongly opposes Senate Bill (SB) 3032. SB 3032 would change the Hawai'i Promise Scholarship program for community college students from a grant program to a loan program. The proposed change is antithetical to the legislative intent of the Community College Promise, established by Act 142, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2018.

The Promise Program provides scholarships to qualified students enrolled at any University of Hawai'i Community College (UHCC) campus to address a statewide concern about cost as a barrier to college attendance. The Hawai'i Promise Scholarships provide state-funded "last dollar" grants, helping students with financial need to afford the "direct costs" of education – tuition and fees, books and transportation – through grants and scholarships.

In School Year 2019-2020, the University of Hawai'i Community Colleges awarded \$2.5 million of Hawai'i Promise Scholarships to approximately 1,600 Hawaii residents. Hawai'i Promise helps students to afford college, reduces students' need for loans and thus student loan debt, and reduces students' stress which allows students to be more successful in earning more credits, getting better grades, and progressing toward degree. Students are incredibly grateful for the support to pursue their education:

The Hawai'i Promise Scholarship helped me accomplish my goals by significantly eliminating the financial burden of receiving a higher education for me and my family. As a result, I was able to focus in school, successfully complete an internship at the County of Maui Prosecutor's Office, and graduate with two associates degrees. I am extremely thankful for this scholarship. Without it, I would not have been able to accomplish any of my goals and grow as a student.
Maui College Student

The award of \$775 will help further my college career at Leeward Community College and put me in a better position starting off the school year. It will take pressure off of me working full time to be able to afford tuition. With this scholarship, I can now focus and prioritize my time on my studies.
Leeward Community College Student

*With your help I am working towards my Associates in Business and my Bachelors in Early Education/Special Education. I go to school full time and work two part time jobs. Without scholarships like this I wouldn't be able to afford school and I wouldn't be able to make my dreams come true and meet me goals.
Kaua'i Community College Student*

Furthermore, administering loan programs is challenging. There are administrative and logistical issues in changing the Promise Program from a grant, which does not have to be repaid, to a loan that may be forgiven if a student continues to work in the state. While the University is willing to find ways to undertake and overcome such challenges, the processes of managing a large scale loan program will need to be adequately resourced.

The University of Hawai'i supports the continuation of the Promise Program as a grant to help Hawai'i residents to afford college. The Promise Scholarship helps students to envision their future as a college student by reducing cost as a barrier and reduces students' loan debt in pursuing their education.