



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education
April 13, 2021 at 3:00 p.m.

By
David Lassner
President, University of Hawai'i

GM 574 – Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Western Interstate Commission For Higher Education (WICHE), Gubernatorial Nominee, John Morton, for a term to expire June 30, 2024.

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in **strong support** of Governor's Message 574 and the appointment of Dr. John Morton to serve on the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) for the State of Hawai'i.

I have known and worked with Dr. Morton for some 40 years. During his 49-year tenure at the University of Hawai'i (UH), Dr. Morton served as an exceptional and committed administrator who championed open access to higher education and placed a tremendous focus on providing education opportunity that would meet the State's workforce needs—a mission he has dedicated himself to for nearly five decades.

From 2005 through his retirement in 2019, as Vice President for Community Colleges, Dr. Morton led the community colleges through some of the most challenging and transformative years. His work included efforts to decrease the cost of attending college and increasing access to higher education, including the launch of the Hawai'i Promise scholarship. He also launched innovative approaches to increase student success such as the implementation of co-requisite instruction for remedial education.

Dr. Morton also brought respect and recognition to the University of Hawai'i with his long-standing and active leadership role as a commissioner of the Accrediting Commission for Community Colleges and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), as well as his participation in the Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders, where he worked with the WICHE-region community colleges and technical schools as well as the state coordinating and governing boards.

Dr. Morton has extensive experience working with both public and non-profit sector Boards so he can be an effective WICHE Commission from Day 1. These experiences have included his service as the longtime chair of the Board of Trustees of the Assets School, chair of the Board of Directors of the Hawai'i Health Information Corporation, service on the Board of Directors of the High Technology Development Corporation, a Governor of the Pacific & Asian Affairs Council, and his active participation as a member of the Mānoa Wai'oli Lion's Club.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in **strong support** of Governor's Message 574, and I respectfully urge you to consent to Dr. John Morton's nomination to serve on the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education.