



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 3184 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII RESIDENT TUITION FEE

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 3184 relating to expanding the criteria to qualify for resident tuition fees to include high school seniors and recent high school graduates. The University of Hawai'i (UH) supports this bill.

An educated citizenry is a foundation for a strong state, and as the sole provider of public education in the State of Hawai'i, UH seeks to reduce barriers to attendance by streamlining application processes for residents, especially recent high school graduates. The complexity of determining resident status for tuition purposes often creates one such barrier for our students. Focusing on being physically present in the State for the previous twelve (12) consecutive months prior to the start of the semester or term, and not being claimed as a dependent by the student's parents or guardians who are nonresidents of the State, helps simplify the process. The requirement that the student be enrolled in a Hawai'i high school for at least twelve consecutive months and receiving a Hawai'i high school diploma helps streamline the process for young people who are experiencing homelessness and/or those with complex family circumstances.

Hawai'i's "college going rate" of public high school graduates declined during the pandemic, dropping from 55% enrolling immediately after high school graduation (Class of 2019) to 50% (Class of 2020). The decline in college-going rates disproportionately affected lower-income, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander graduates. Among Hawai'i high school graduates, 37% fewer applied for UH Community Colleges during the pandemic (2021 compared with 2019), and fewer of the pandemic-disrupted graduating class enrolled in community colleges across Hawai'i's high school graduates and high school graduates nationally. This may be attributed to added uncertainties that the current health pandemic has created in the lives of our students. Recognizing Hawai'i's high school graduates as Hawai'i residents communicates the State's investment in graduates' continuing their education and training at UH.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this measure.