



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education
February 1, 2022 at 3:00 p.m.

by

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and

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SB 3354 – PROPOSING AMENDMENTS TO THE HAWAII CONSTITUTION TO ESTABLISH A HAWAII COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM THAT IS SEPARATE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

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

The University of Hawai'i (UH) respectfully but strongly opposes SB 3354, which, without explanation or identification of any problem that this bill seeks to address, proposes a constitutional amendment to establish a Hawai'i Community College System that is separate from the UH. After spending the last several decades deeply integrating the work of the UH campuses to better serve all students across the islands, it would be tragic to reverse this progress and reduce opportunities for Hawai'i's students statewide. It would further create substantial and unnecessary administrative duplication and expense. And at this point-in-time of declining enrollment in community colleges nationwide, creating a separate governance structure, administrative organization and system community college campuses would likely introduce competition and conflict among higher education systems that would be unlikely to advantage Hawai'i community colleges, Hawai'i universities or our collective students.

As a system of campuses with distinct missions -- research, regional comprehensive and community colleges -- UH provides a rich array of opportunities to the students of Hawai'i. UH policies, practices and systems enable Hawai'i to benefit from the synergies presented by this highly integrated system. UH provides multiple entrance and exit points for students to complete their degrees. Students may choose to start their education at a UH community college where they may benefit from open admissions and lower tuition or they can begin at a UH university to pursue a four-year degree. UH has multiple curricular pathways for students who start at a community college to move to a university to complete a bachelor's degree. As a result, more than half of UH four-year students begin their college education at a community college.

UH currently operates a common student information system as well as the award-winning STAR Guided Pathway System (GPS) to serve all credit students at all UH

campuses. This enables students at UH universities to seamlessly register for courses at community colleges and increasingly, UH community college students may register for courses at UH universities to advance their educational goals. STAR has a new process called “pinning” that allows students planning to transfer from a UH community college to a UH university to identify the optimal point of transfer based on their own academic record, major and graduation requirements. Dismantling Hawai‘i’s integrated public higher education system would create multiple barriers to student progress.

Our other major business and data systems -- human resources, finance, procurement, online learning, institutional data repositories -- are also all managed system-wide, This creates substantially improved economies of scale and enables comprehensive statewide reporting that would be lost if the UH System were dismantled. Our major support functions are also operated systemwide, including but not limited to legal services, collective bargaining and the statewide data network that services all UH campuses and facilities across the islands.

Duplicating or coordinating these services across two systems would reduce efficiency and increase the administrative costs of public higher education in Hawai‘i. Those costs would need to be borne by the taxpayers through increased appropriations and/or by students and their parents through increased tuition. Either would be unnecessary, inappropriate and financially burdensome to the people of Hawai‘i.

The unified and highly integrated University of Hawai‘i System (System) is a model for public higher education across the country and is working ever day to do even better across all dimensions. This System maximizes opportunity for students and keeps administrative costs low. The current structure of UH reflects the reasoned and informed work of the Board of Regents, which approved the current highest-level organizational structure for UH on March 28, 2019 after substantial review and input. This work reflects the current charge to the Board of Regents in the Constitution of the State of Hawai‘i:

The board shall have the power to formulate policy, and to exercise control over the university through its executive officer, the president of the university, who shall be appointed by the board. The board shall also have exclusive jurisdiction over the internal structure, management, and operation of the university.

- Hawaii State Constitution: Article X, Section 6

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony in strong opposition to this measure.