



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
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By

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SB 811 SD1 – RELATING TO DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on SB 811 SD1, relating to demographic data. The University of Hawai'i (UH) recognizes and celebrates the diversity of cultures and languages previously coalesced together in federal reporting under the category of "Asian American and Pacific Islander."

UH fully supports the legislature's intent to catalyze meaningful representation of our population relating to Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander ethnic groups. Indeed, UH has been engaged in these efforts for decades in order to properly distinguish and support the diverse cultures present in its student body, staff, and faculty.

UH is in compliance with federal regulations on ethnicity and race data collection for both students and employees. UH also currently disaggregates race and ethnicity data for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander groups. In terms of student data, UH deploys ten (10) distinct categories of Asian ethnicities and eight (8) distinct categories of Pacific Islanders, including Native Hawaiians. In order to determine which Asian and Pacific Islander ethnic groups to track, UH currently relies upon U.S. Census data for the State of Hawai'i, establishing a threshold of 1% of the state population for residents between the ages of 18 and 25. This led UH to begin separating out Marshallese as a distinct ethnic category last year.

UH believes it would be helpful for the legislature to include language in the bill that enables the reporting of people of mixed race/ethnicity and considers the question of prioritization. For example, UH has a matrix that sets reporting categories in which the Native Hawaiian designation is the top priority and supersedes all other races and ethnicities in its demographic reporting. The same matrix indicates, for example, that someone who identifies as both Tongan and Samoan should be reported as "Mixed Pacific Islander" and someone who identifies as both Japanese and Chinese should be reported as "Mixed Asian."

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.