



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented to the
Senate Committee on Higher Education
Senate Committee on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism
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by

Vassilis L. Syrmos, Vice President for Research and Innovation
University of Hawai'i System

SB 1510 – RELATING TO UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII ASTRONOMY ENGINEERING AND INSTRUMENTATION

Chairs Kim and DeCoite, Vice Chairs Kidani and Wakai, and Members of the Committees:

The University of Hawai'i (UH) strongly supports SB 1510 which appropriates funds to establish a UH center for the design, development and fabrication of ground-based astronomical instruments; its planning and design; and ten full-time faculty positions.

While astronomy contributes well over \$200 million annually to Hawai'i's economy, most of the current technology development and fabrication that supports the astronomical facilities on Hawai'i Island and Maui occurs outside of the state. Similarly, within the state's astronomy workforce of about 400 engineering and technical positions, only 30 percent are born and raised in Hawai'i.

SB 1510 is the tip of the spear for the UH's new Space Science and Engineering Initiative that aims to create a stronger pipeline and diverse network of local engineers that are equipped with the necessary educational background, experience and facilities to support the growth and sustainability of astronomy in Hawai'i. It is the result of over six months of extensive collaboration between UH Mānoa College of Engineering Dean Brennon Morioka, Institute for Astronomy Director Doug Simons and UH Hilo Chancellor Bonnie Irwin.

The new center will serve as a multi-disciplinary hub for education, research and innovation for both students and faculty, including ties to UH's new aerospace engineering program and a new link to the Akamai Internship Program that has served as a highly successful STEM pathway to astronomy for women, Native Hawaiians and other underrepresented groups for over 20 years. As an advanced manufacturing and prototyping hub, the center will bring a new source of jobs and create revenue for the Hilo community, and at the same time, help to further diversify the state's economy.

The University of Hawai'i supports SB 1510 provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in UH's BOR Approved Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.