



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

Debora Halbert, Vice President for Academic Strategy
University of Hawai'i System

SB 1233 SD1 – RELATING TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 1233 SD1. The University of Hawai'i (UH) supports the establishment of a state-funded internship program within state departments and agencies as outlined in this bill. This program presents a strategic opportunity not only to address workforce shortages but also to cultivate a well-prepared, diverse talent pool for public service employees.

As the bill correctly identifies, many state departments and agencies are struggling with workforce shortages. One challenge in public service recruitment is that pathways into state jobs are not always clear or intuitive for students. A structured internship program is a possible way to address these challenges. By providing internships, the state can help fill positions in departments where vacancies are most pressing, providing short-term relief while simultaneously developing a pool of qualified candidates for future full-time roles.

The creation of an internship program specifically targeted at state departments and agencies offers students a direct, hands-on experience with the diverse career opportunities in public service. Internships are invaluable in helping students understand the types of roles available in government, from policy research and administration to technical and operational positions, and everything in between. By exposing students to these roles early, the state creates a natural pipeline for future public servants.

This internship program is not just an opportunity for traditional college students but is open to recent high school graduates, post-graduate students, and individuals seeking a career change. By providing these opportunities, the program ensures that students from diverse backgrounds, including those underrepresented in public service, have a clear pathway into state government positions. This inclusivity is vital to building a workforce that reflects the communities it serves, improving the state's ability to meet the needs of its people through inclusive and innovative policies.

Thank you for your time and consideration.