

JOSH GREEN, M. D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR
KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



BRENNA H. HASHIMOTO
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

BRIAN K. FURUTO
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT
KA 'OIHANA HO'OMŌHALA LIMAHANA
235 S. BERETANIA STREET
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-2437

Statement of
BRENNA H. HASHIMOTO
Director, Department of Human Resources Development

Before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR
Tuesday, March 18, 2025
9:30 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 309

In consideration of
SB1065, SD2, Relating to Skills-Based Hiring

Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and the members of the committee.

The Department of Human Resources Development (HRD) offers the following comments on SB1065 SD2.

SB 1065 SD2 prohibits the State and its departments, agencies, and political subdivisions from requiring a bachelor's degree as a condition of eligibility when hiring for a position in state or county employment, with certain exemptions, by adding a new section to Chapter 78, Hawai'i Revised Statutes.

HRD offers the following comments:

- Of the Executive Branch's 1458 civil service classes of work, none require a bachelor's degree as a condition of eligibility, unless prescribed by law. The minimum qualification requirements consistently allow for combinations of experience and education, as well as the ability to substitute relevant work experience for a degree as a standard.
- Minimum qualification (MQ) requirements for civil service classes are prepared in collaboration with all departments and include input from program managers, subject matter experts, and departmental human resources staff.

- In developing MQs, HRD adheres to the following policy requirements:
 - MQ requirements must be bona fide occupation requirements; qualifications must be essential and job-related.
 - MQ requirements should reflect the knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies required to perform the work.
 - MQ requirements should not pose artificial barriers, such as absolute educational degree, certification, or other requirement, unless they are bona fide requirements (e.g., licensure required by law).
- HRD supports increasing the applicant pool with qualified candidates and appreciates incorporating skills-based qualifications where appropriate; however, it should not replace experience and education qualification requirements used in the current civil service position classification and broadband classification systems.
 - The current methods of qualifications are the foundation for various personnel actions, e.g., job placements, promotions, flexible hiring rates, and other qualification-based personnel actions.
 - Incorporating skills-based qualifications will take time and resources to review impacts and make changes to current procedures and practices.
 - Over 1,400 civil service classes of work need review and evaluation, and class specifications rewritten to incorporate skills-based requirements, where appropriate.
 - Standards and valid assessment tests that comply with Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (1978) (UGESP) are needed to determine whether an individual has the abilities they claim to ensure qualified hires.

Position requirements, whether civil service or exempt from civil service, must be job-related, must not discriminate against job applicants and employees, meet legal requirements for the job, not pose artificial barriers, conform to the UGESP standards, and adhere to employment laws prohibiting discrimination.

HRD has started preliminary discussions with the University of Hawai'i (UH) at West O'ahu and the UH Community College System Office to develop pathways to State jobs. Prohibiting a bachelor's degree as a qualification, even with the

exception, may discourage and deter qualified candidates from pursuing a career in government and may in fact negatively impact UH enrollments.

- HRD supports developing various pathways into government service for individuals with diverse backgrounds and will continue our work to that end.
- There is a current effort (SB1567 SD1) to initiate a total review of the State's 1458 classes. Should this measure pass the legislature, HRD will work with the consultant to ensure that an individual's background and pathway, including their educational background, to a position with the State of Hawai'i is taken into consideration.

We are available for questions or further information as needed.



JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

LUIS P. SALAVERIA
DIRECTOR

SABRINA NASIR
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
Ka 'Oihana Mālama Mo'ohelu a Kālā
P.O. BOX 150
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT DIVISION
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT

TESTIMONY BY LUIS P. SALAVERIA
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR
ON
SENATE BILL NO. 1065, S.D. 2

March 18, 2025
9:30 a.m.
Room 309 and Videoconference

RELATING TO SKILLS-BASED HIRING

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

Senate Bill No. 1065, S.D. 2, adds a new section to Chapter 78, HRS, prohibiting bachelor's degree requirements for State employment unless the knowledge, skills, or abilities required for a position can only stem from a course of study that culminates in the award of a bachelor's degree.

B&F has concerns with this bill as applied to the department's professional positions. In general, the professional-level work in the department involves analysis of budget, financial and policy-related issues and problems, evaluation of alternatives to address those issues and problems, and presentation of conclusions in writing and orally. This professional-level work is directly comparable to what a college student must do to complete their course work to receive a college degree.

A college degree shows the department that the job candidate has:

- **Academic ability** – can complete academic work and is capable of thinking critically and solving problems;
- **Work ethic** – is dedicated, committed, and goal-oriented;

- **Capacity for learning** – has an ongoing interest in learning new things; and
- **Ability to handle responsibility** – can take on significant responsibilities and work through challenges.

B&F strongly believes that the ability to require a bachelor's degree as a credential is a necessary tool to determine whether applicants are able to do the complex work that is required of them in the department.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



KEITH A. REGAN
COMPTROLLER
KA LUNA HO'OMALU HANA LAULĀ

MEOH-LENG SILLIMAN
DEPUTY COMPTROLLER
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OMALU HANA LAULĀ

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING AND GENERAL SERVICES | KA 'OIHANA LOIHELU A LAWELAWÉ LAULĀ
P.O. BOX 119, HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0119

WRITTEN TESTIMONY
OF
KEITH A. REGAN, COMPTROLLER
DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING AND GENERAL SERVICES
TO THE
COMMITTEE ON LABOR

MARCH 18, 2024, 9:30 A.M.
CONFERENCE ROOM 309 AND VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE, STATE CAPITOL

S.B. 1065, S.D. 2

RELATING TO RELATING TO SKILLS-BASED HIRING

Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on S.B. 1065, S.D. 2.

The Department of Accounting and General Services (DAGS) **supports** this bill and offers the following comments:

- 1) Obtaining a college degree in a field relevant to a position for which the State is hiring provides evidence of a basic foundational knowledge that is necessary to be successful in certain positions; however, college is not the only way in which that requisite knowledge can be learned.
- 2) Even then, the well-known effect of grade inflation, wherein students are assigned higher grades than their work would merit otherwise, diminishes the value of certain degrees, and cannot be relied upon as proof of the

needed knowledge, skills, or ability to be successful in the position; whereas a track record of successful employment with increasing responsibility stands on its own merits, regardless of any degrees obtained. DAGS has staff that are also adjunct faculty at various universities that can speak directly on this issue as warranted

- 3) Current position descriptions requiring degrees often specifically list tangential fields of study that have little to no useful implementation in the position for which a candidate is applying. Possessing a degree for the sake of a degree does little to make the State better at providing public service and stands the real possibility of excluding individuals who would otherwise be a valuable asset to an agency.
- 4) DAGS encourages the committee to consider allowing a degree, particularly advanced degrees beyond a bachelor's degree, to continue to serve as a corresponding number of years of experience (e.g., two years of college being adjudged the equivalent of one year of work experience) necessary to satisfy minimum requirements for the position - but not having a college degree should not serve as a barrier for those candidates who have successfully demonstrated knowledge, skills, and ability in similar positions for applying for any State opening. In this way, State positions should list a minimum number of years of experience required for the position, years that can be obtain through a combination of education and/or experience, save for those positions that absolutely require a degree to meet the requirements of professional certification.

5) Having no relevant degree or no experience in similar positions should still disqualify a candidate from applying for a position above entry level. The State must continue to competently provide public services to the People of Hawai'i and be good stewards of public funds. Entry level positions serve well as training grounds for those without experience and degrees but higher-level positions should require experience or a degree to ensure continuity and professionalism.

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

March 18, 2025 9:30 a.m.
Hawaii State Capitol
Conference Room 309 and Videoconference

To: House Committee on Labor
Rep. Jackson D. Sayama, Chair
Rep. Mike Lee, Vice Chair

From: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii
Ted Kefalas, Director of Strategic Campaigns

RE: COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF SB1065 SD2 — RELATING TO SKILLS-BASED HIRING

Aloha Chair Sayama, Vice-Chair Lee and other members of the Committee,

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii would like to offer its **support** for [SB1065 SD2](#), which would prohibit state agencies and departments from requiring a bachelor's degree as a condition of eligibility for a position in state employment unless "the knowledge, skills, or abilities required for the position ... can only reasonably be obtained" through a bachelor's degree.

A bachelor's degree is not necessary for many state jobs, even though it is often required. A degree may indicate a certain set of skills, but it is by no means the only indicator.

A study from the Burning Glass Institute and Harvard University researchers noted that "when employers drop degrees, they become more specific about skills in job postings, spelling out the soft skills that may have been assumed to come with a college education, such as writing, communication and being detail-oriented."¹

Maryland, Utah, Pennsylvania, Alaska and many other states have enacted policies aimed at removing arbitrary degree requirements for state jobs.² Grassroot believes that Hawaii should follow their lead.

¹ Joseph Fuller, Christina Langer, Julia Nitschke, et al., "[The Emerging Degree Reset: How the Shift to Skills-Based Hiring Holds the Keys to Growing the U.S. Workforce at a Time of Talent Shortage](#)," Burning Glass Institute, 2022, p. 3.

² Kathryn Moody, "[Pennsylvania ends 4-year degree requirement for majority of state jobs](#)," HR Dive, Jan. 24, 2023; and Joey Klecka and Elena Symmes, "[4-year degree no longer required for some state jobs](#)," Alaska's New Source, Feb. 14, 2023.

For the record, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that only about a third of Hawaii residents age 25 or older have bachelor's degrees.³

Similarly, the nonprofit Opportunity@Work reports that individuals who do not possess four-year bachelor degrees but who are "skilled through alternative routes" made up 59% of Hawaii's workforce in 2019, compared to 53% of the workforce nationwide.⁴

Given this data, it is clear that this measure would broaden employment opportunities for local residents.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ted Kefalas
Director of Strategic Campaigns
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

³ "[QuickFacts: Hawaii](#)," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed Feb. 4, 2025.

⁴ Communication with Ashley Edwards, Director for Data Services at Opportunity@Work, Aug. 17, 2022.

SB-1065-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/14/2025 8:29:20 PM

Testimony for LAB on 3/18/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cheryl Rzonca	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support skills based hiring and passing SB 1065 to do away with requiring a bachelors degree for state jobs when experience and skills can be substituted.

SB-1065-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/14/2025 11:29:01 PM

Testimony for LAB on 3/18/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elliot Miles	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill for the reasons stated below.

Instead, I recommend that you specify the job requirements may be changed or reduced on the pool of applicants that apply without a reposting of the job vacancy. For example, the ideal candidate has a bachelor's degree, but if none of them applies, then you will accept an associate's degree. And if still no one applies, then you will accept a high school diploma.

The bill did not specify, but what kind of jobs will be considered skills-based in lieu of education: blue collar jobs, office work, technicians? Our country has pushed college as the right of passage to a good-paying career since the end of World War II. Now, we currently have many recent graduates that work hourly wage jobs because they cannot get a job commensurate with a college degree.

By passing this bill, you are now going to worsen the student-debt crisis. You will totally devalue the intent and meaning of being a college graduate because for several decades, the bachelor's degree has been equal to a high school diploma as many college graduates find they had to get a master's degree to be competitive. An unemployed college graduate will most likely take an underemployed office job—and one with great benefits such as a county/state government job—than be unemployed.

By skills-based do you mean one who has at least four, six, eight, or more years of real-world practical experience in that field?

What about an enlisted soldier who served four years and went to war for his or her country? Will they be considered skills-based for a job that requires conflict resolution or risk analysis skills? Is their experience the equivalent of a bachelor's degree in public policy or international relations? Many service members have difficulty getting jobs after they get out because they do not have the required state or county licenses that are required in the civilian world. I could be wrong, but as far as I know based on job announcements I have seen, a combat-veteran cannot even get a job as an armed security guard without some kind of state license. Why not eliminate this requirement for veterans instead of coming up with a law that eliminates bachelor's degrees as a condition for employment?

Furthermore, I once went to a job interview with DoT at the airport in which I was asked if I had ever had a job where I had been part of the law-making process and if I knew how a law was made. My master's degree never really went into the specifics, but I did acquire the knowledge of this process from watching decades worth of news--and the old cartoon show Schoolhouse Rock back in the 1980s. As it turned out, I did articulate the process and yet I did not get the job and that was after one of the panelists said they did not even know how a law gets made!

Here is another idea, make a law that prevents nepotism and favoritism. When the new TV show Rescue HI Surf has a scene in which a character that did not get hired by the fire department because he did not know anyone in HFD nor is he "even a Hawaiian," as another character told him, then you know there is a bigger problem here than college degrees.

Speaking of HFD: I went to the fire fighter exam a few years ago. The Blaisdell Center was full of applicants. Is there a means of bypassing that exam if one has the necessary skills of reading comprehension, a bit of science, and arithmetic? If you are going to eliminate the college degree requirement, you might as well eliminate this test for college graduates as I suspect nearly 100% if not exactly 100% us will pass this exam--as I did. Since I knew I would pass, it was just an inconvenience or a required right of passage.

And yet another example: I got invited to a state job interview involving recycling. I told the guy that I did not have environmental conservation/planning experience, but he let me interview anyway. Weeks later, the first question out of his mouth was: do you have environmental experience? This interview was on Zoom and two of the panelists did not even turn on their cameras. How about a law that makes hiring managers invite the truly best-qualified applicants to interviews, not cannon-fodder folks as I suspect I was, and justify their hiring decisions to their leadership.

I get that at the end of the day, the bachelor's degree is an indicator that one has entered adulthood and has a proven track record of being reliable, punctual, hardworking, and has well-established written and oral communication skills and that's it. By eliminating the bachelor's degree requirement, all you are doing is telling everyone that the liberal arts are totally worthless. I mean, when was the last time knowledge of Western Civilization or poetry was necessary to solve a problem at the city, county, or state level (this actually makes a case in support of this bill)?

And if a college graduate applies to a job as a tree trimmer or road repair person, will he or she be a more viable candidate than one with only a high school diploma? If you dismiss this applicant because you consider this person as over-qualified, then you will absolutely destroy the concept of college. Instead, undergraduate school will be nothing more than an expensive prep-school for a master's degree program.

Here is another example: I have a master's degree and am a retired military intelligence officer. Will this make me a viable candidate to be a librarian without an actual library science degree? I go to the library all the time, so is this what you mean as skills-based?

Ironically, the one job that has the best pay, societal prestige, and technically does not require a college degree is that of politician. In fact, if we are talking about skills-based, the only necessary requirement is that one has the charisma and popularity to get campaign donations and win his or her race. And according to today's news, our politicians will be getting a sizeable pay raise soon.