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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
HIGHER EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY

RE: HB 1531 - RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2022

OSA TUI, JR., PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **supports HB 1531**, relating to collective bargaining. This bill establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawaii.

According to Article 23(4) of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, “everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.” Likewise, the International Labor Organization, the UN agency responsible for safeguarding international labor standards, states in its Constitution and Declaration of Principles that the freedoms to associate and bargain collectively are fundamental rights of workers worldwide.

Graduate student assistants at the University of Hawai'i must no longer be denied their fundamental workers' rights. Besieged by budget cuts over the past decade, graduate students have borne increased class sizes and workloads, while suffering the same low pay of \$17,500 since the 2003-2004 academic year. Like educators throughout Hawai'i, they have seen their purchasing power crushed beneath our state's highest-in-the-nation cost of living.

Graduate student assistants are vital to the university community, performing instruction, research, and administrative work. **Their labor, like all labor, should be publicly recognized by guaranteeing the right to bargain for fair wages and work conditions.** To give graduate student assistants the ability to protect their interests and promote higher education, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.



**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**
235 S. BERETANIA STREET, SUITE 1201
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-2437

TESTIMONY TO THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY

For Hearing on Wednesday, February 2, 2022
2:00 p.m., Conference Room 309 (Via Video Conference)

By

RYKER WADA
CHIEF NEGOTIATOR

**House Bill No. 1531
Relating to Collective Bargaining**

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

CHAIRPERSON TAKAYAMA, VICE CHAIR CLARK, AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE
COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY:

The purpose of House Bill No. 1531 proposes to establish a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawaii (UH).

The Office of Collective Bargaining (OCB) **opposes** this bill for the following reasons:

- Unlike other public employees, who are career, long term employees engaged in collective bargaining, a graduate assistant employment is temporary and is not a career or profession. However, the OCB defers to the UH on the definition of employee versus graduate assistant.
- Establishing UH graduate assistants as collective bargaining unit 16 could have significant cost increases for both the UH and the State since mandatory subjects of collective bargaining cover wages, hours, conditions of employment, and fringe benefits.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on this measure.

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR

GLORIA CHANG
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
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 (OFAM)

WRITTEN ONLY
TESTIMONY BY CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 1531

February 2, 2022
2:00 p.m.
Room 309 and Videoconference

RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

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

This measure allows graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i (UH) to collectively bargain by amending Chapter 89-6, HRS, to remove the exemption from collective bargaining (CB) for graduate student assistants employed by UH and to authorize a new Bargaining Unit (BU) 16.

The cost implications of allowing graduate student assistants to collectively bargain are a concern for both the State budget and UH's current fiscal situation. Negotiation of pay increases for graduate students need to be weighed against the foregone revenue from tuition waivers and other fees that graduate students do not pay as part of their assistantships. Further, their work hours and work conditions would all need to be part of CB negotiations that might not fit the flexible schedules that graduate students require to complete their academic program.

The Legislature has created two new BUs in recent years and is considering creating others, in addition to this one, this session. There are concerns with the

increasing administrative costs and complexities, negotiating, arbitrating, and managing of contracts for ever increasing numbers of BUs.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION
AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

RANDY PERREIRA, Executive Director • Tel: 808.543.0011 • Fax: 808.528.0922

The Thirty-First Legislature, State of Hawaii
House of Representatives
Committee on Higher Education & Technology

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 2, 2022

H.B. 1531 – RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO strongly supports the right of all employees to collectively bargain their wages, salaries, and terms & conditions of employment, including graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawaii as outlined in H.B. 1531.

We represent over 40,000 public sector employees, retirees, and associate members across the state, counties, judiciary, Department of Education, and the University of Hawaii system. Graduate student assistants continue to encounter a myriad of work-related issues including problematic working conditions with the Employer, budgetary setbacks, and increases in class size and workload, which would be most fairly resolved via the collective bargaining process. The language proposed in this measure not only removes the current exclusion of this group from collectively bargaining but also creates a unique bargaining unit with a dispute mechanism to resolve differences in contract negotiations with the Employer.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 1531.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director



HOUSE BILL 1531, RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

FEBRUARY 2, 2022 · HOUSE HIGHER EDUCATION
AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE · CHAIR REP.
GREGG TAKAYAMA

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus supports HB 1531, relating to collective bargaining, which establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawai'i.

There is a power in a union.

Today, political pundits prognosticate about the possible onslaught of austerity facing our nation. Many of these same pundits believe that labor unions are an impediment to economic prosperity, arguing that collective bargaining sets wages and work conditions above what the free market demands.

They couldn't be more wrong. Collective bargaining is a civil right. Unionized employees' compensation and work protections, moreover, are essential to creating an upwardly mobile middle class and continually increasing economic prosperity. As economist Paula Voos of Rutgers University School of Management and Labor Relations notes, "It is no accident that the prosperity and consumer boom of the 1950s—a period of unprecedented middle-class expansion, broad business growth, increased home ownership, rising consumer spending, and the shared

expectation that a college education was within the reach of everyone and that the lives of our children would be better than our own—followed the greatest sustained expansion of unionization in American history.”

Unsurprisingly, decreasing American middle-class incomes and the rapidly widening wealth gap in our country parallel a significant decline in union membership. It is imperative, then, that we promote higher productivity by strengthening labor-management relations. Through a union, employees have a means to engage with management about workplace problems, inefficient processes, unfair work conditions, and unsupportive compensation. Unions also reduce employee turnover and increase the retention of highly experienced employees, creating circumstances that favor professional development and mutual trust in the workplace.

Graduate student assistants at the University of Hawai'i have earned the right to demand respect from university management. In providing instruction to students and research that expands our society's knowledge base, graduate students tirelessly toil on behalf of the university community, often under fear of retaliation because of a lack of organizing power in resisting exploitation. Graduate student assistants are short-term positions. Yet, the duration of graduate positions only heightens the urgency of establishing collective bargaining protections, as temporary employees too often fall prey to employers who exploit the precarious nature of these positions and assume student workers will simply “deal with the pain and move on,” as one graduate assistant member of DPH Education Caucus maintains. Most startlingly, UH graduate assistants currently earn an average of \$18,256 per year, according to Glassdoor.com, a number that has not significantly increased in almost two decades. At the sunrise of 2019, that amount carried over \$6,000 less purchasing power than it did fourteen years ago *before* adjusting for Hawai'i's high cost of living. Even for graduate students, it is nowhere near a livable wage.

Thomas Jefferson wrote, “Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.” The same is true with basic civil rights, including the rights to freely associate and bargain for fair pay and work conditions, which are constantly under assault by a corporate mindset that puts dollars before democracy.

Kris Coffield · Chairperson, DPH Education Caucus · (808) 679-7454 · kriscoffield@gmail.com

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 10:52:37 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
John Witeck	Hawaii Workers Center	Support	No

Comments:

On behalf of the Hawaii Workers Center, I urge your committee and the House of Representatives to pass HB1531 to give collective bargaining rights to the graduate assistants of the University of Hawaii. The Hawaii Workers Center was founded to provide assistance and resources to low-wage workers and aid them should they choose to organize to improve their work situations and living standards.

Graduate assistants **are** public employees, but unlike most other public employees, the state legislature, in its 1970 public employee collective bargaining law, wrongfully failed to include the graduate assistants in the collective bargaining law's categories of bargaining units, thus denying these U.H. workers their constitutional right to form a union and to bargain for better wages and working conditions. This unjust situation has gone on for over a half a century, to the shame of the state and the University.

The Hawaii State Constitution in 1950 provided that persons in public employment shall have the right to organize for the purpose of collective bargaining. Yet although no one denies that U.H. graduate assistants are employed by the public and are public employees, they are denied this fundamental right to form a union and bargain for fair wages and benefits. These workers do the great bulk of research and teaching on UH campuses and yet they are treated as second class employees. This should be corrected at this legislative session.

We are in solidarity with Academic Labor United in its campaign to be recognized as a union and able to engage in collective bargaining. These workers deserve to be respected and treated equitably along with other public employees. Anything less is a contradiction to Hawaii's ideals and the guarantees of the Hawaii state constitution.

It should also be recognized that graduate assistants at a good many other state universities have been able to unionize and bargain for wages and benefit; among them are the University of Michigan (Graduate Employees Organization), California state universities (organized by United Auto Workers,UAW), University of Washington (UAW), Oregon State University (Coalition of Graduate Employees), University of Oregon (Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation). Graduate teaching employees are also unionize at NYU, Harvard, Tufts University, Brandeis, American University, Brown University, the New School, and Georgetown University.

It is time that Hawaii legislators get on board and support workers' rights again as Democratic Party legislators did in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Allow the academic graduate assistants to

exercise their right to organize and bargain collectively with the University for fair wages, benefits and decent working conditions. We urge you to approve HB 1531.



Eric W. Gill, Financial Secretary-Treasurer

Gemma G. Weinstein, President

Godfrey Maeshiro, Senior Vice-President

Tuesday, February 1, 2022

House Committee on Higher Education & Technology
Hawaii State Legislature
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: HB 1531 relating to collective bargaining

Chair Takayama and Members of the Committee,

UNITE HERE Local 5 – a local labor organization representing nearly 12,000 hotel, health care and food service workers throughout Hawaii would like to offer comments in support of HB 1531.

HB 1531 would recognize and provide graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawaii system their own collective bargaining unit. This measure is long overdue for our hardworking graduate assistants who carry significant teaching loads and contribute immensely to UH's financial stability. Like all other public workers employed at the University, our graduate assistants have a right to collective bargaining. We ask for your Committee's full support of HB 1531.

Thank you for your consideration.

Mahalo.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 8:02:58 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Kahala Johnson	Academic Labor United (Member)	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

As a Hawaiian-Filipino member of ALU and as a Māhū graduate research worker at the University of Hawai‘i Mānoa, I am writing testimony in support of HB1531 and the right to collective bargaining. We have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to be able to unionize and collectively bargain. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

Mahalo

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 8:33:40 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Jaehyung Kim	University of Hawai'i and a member of Academic Labor United	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Jaehyung Kim. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai'i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because I was forced to work in a pandemic with a miserable salary.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
HIGHER EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY

RE: HB 1531 - RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2022

MITZIE HIGA, LEGISLATIVE CHAIR
DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII LABOR CAUCUS

Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committee:

The Democratic Party of Hawaii Labor Caucus **supports HB 1531**, relating to collective bargaining. This bill establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawaii.

According to Article 23(4) of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, “everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.” Likewise, the International Labor Organization, the UN agency responsible for safeguarding international labor standards, states in its Constitution and Declaration of Principles that the freedoms to associate and bargain collectively are fundamental rights of workers worldwide.

Graduate student assistants at the University of Hawai’i must no longer be denied their fundamental workers’ rights. Besieged by budget cuts over the past decade, graduate students have borne increased class sizes and workloads, while suffering the same low pay of \$17,500 since the 2003-2004 academic year. Like educators throughout Hawai’i, they have seen their purchasing power crushed beneath our state’s highest-in-the-nation cost of living.

Graduate student assistants are vital to the university community, performing instruction, research, and administrative work. Their labor, like all labor, should be publicly recognized by guaranteeing the right to bargain for fair wages and work conditions. To give graduate student assistants the ability to protect their interests and promote higher education, the Democratic Party of Hawaii Labor Caucus asks your committee to **support** this bill.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 9:04:47 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Thomas Chapin	Academic Labor United	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Thomas Chapin. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because I was forced to work in a pandemic with no sick leave, and the brunt of all work at the university falls to us, who are not paid enough to afford rent and groceries here in Honolulu.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 9:07:42 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Joshua Tavares	Academic Labor United	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Joshua Tavares. I am an Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai'i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because I believe in working wages and benefits for Graduate Students at UH Manoa, since we provide so much for the school by teaching many classes and assisting in the success of many classes held at UH Manoa.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

Mahalo,

Joshua Tavares

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 10:09:18 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Michael Faundo	Academic Labor United (ALU)	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Michael Faundo. I am a graduate student and undergraduate research mentor at the John A. Burns School of Medicine, University of Hawaii and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied to ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain for fair pay, sick leave, and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because of many reasons. I remember my time as an undergraduate pursuing my B.S. in Molecular & Cell Biology at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and witnessing the previous labor movement as a 2nd year student. I remember their cries and marches across the campus, chanting and carrying signs to "Fix UH" and I didn't understand it at the time. Now I find myself in a similar if not same situation as them, and can truly empathize with what they were seeking to accomplish. As a graduate student in Tropical Medicine, Medical Microbiology, & Pharmacology, I and a countless number of my peers, if not all, have worked relentlessly throughout this pandemic. As life locked down and came to a halt for many, our did not. It did not slow down in the midst of uncertainty for our safety when so much was still an unknown for the virus and pandemic. The already high expectations and demands of graduate students that preceded the current climate we find ourselves in has been exasperated to its limits as we approach year two of this pandemic. The current system we have in place is not a sustainable one.

Without graduate assistant labor, the Univeristy of Hawaii could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. To those reading this I beseech you, please pass HB 1531.

With Sincerity,

Michael Faundo



Academic Labor United

academiclaborunited.org

Testimony from Academic Labor United

Attention: House Committee on Higher Education and Technology
Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair
Representative Linda Clark, Vice Chair

Re: Strong Support of HB1531 Relating to Collective Bargaining

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Academic Labor United (ALU) stands in strong support of this bill. ALU is working to improve the lives of the nearly 1400 graduate assistants employed at the University of Hawai‘i (UH) and gain recognition for the work we do.

HB1531 will amend HRS 89-6 to create bargaining unit 16 for graduate assistants and provide a conflict resolution mechanism for said bargaining unit that is consistent with other units representing workers employed at the University of Hawai‘i and in education in Hawai‘i. This will enable graduate assistants to organize for the purposes of collective bargaining. **This bill does not seek or require any additional appropriations. It offers public employees the opportunity to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement.**

Graduate assistants work in many roles at the university. Graduate teaching assistants provide education to undergraduates by teaching their own classes, teaching discussion sections and labs, and meeting with undergraduate students during office hours. Many teaching assistants are in charge of teaching their own classes. They do all the grading and lecturing, as well as design the syllabus and manage the classroom. Research assistants are often working on multiple independent projects, and performing the cutting-edge research that has recently seen UH named in the top 1% of research institutions worldwide. Other graduate assistants (GA) are working in administrative offices and running key facilities, like student support services such as Native Hawaiian Student Services and the Center on Disability Studies, services which make our university more accessible and better serve our community.

Article 13 Section 2 of the Hawaii State Constitution states “Persons in public employment shall have the right to organize for the purpose of collective bargaining as provided by law” (Hawaii. Const. art XIII, sec. 2). Graduate assistants, in every role, meet the common-law test’s criteria for employment as well as the so-called ABC test’s criteria. Graduate Assistants do not control their own hours and have employment taxes withheld from their State of Hawaii issued paychecks. Graduate assistants are required to attend trainings and undergo periodic evaluations. A graduate assistant’s supervisor, often a University recognized employee, controls the means and manner in which a graduate assistant carries out their work. Graduate assistants further qualify as employees under HRS 377-1 and HRS 377-4.6(C). They are recognized as employees by the National Labor Relations Board, the State of Hawaii, and the



Academic Labor United

University of Hawaii. It is clear that graduate assistants have a constitutionally guaranteed civil right to organize for the purposes of collective bargaining (Hawaii. Const. art XIII, sec. 2).

In August 2016, the National Labor Relations Board reversed a Bush-era decision that had prevented graduate assistants at private universities from engaging in collective bargaining. They found that it “deprived an entire category of workers of the protections of the Act without a convincing justification” (National Labor Relations Board, 2016). We are now seeing unions form at private universities such as Columbia University, Harvard University, and many more.

There are currently graduate assistant unions at public universities in 18 states in the United States. They include several of UH Mānoa’s peer and benchmark institutions including the University of California System, the University of Iowa, the University of Washington, the University of Illinois Chicago, and most recently, the University of New Mexico Albuquerque.

Graduate assistant unions have existed for 50 years. We are not seeking to depart from the norm. Collective bargaining for graduate assistants has become the norm. While executive management has made an annual pledge to turn over a new leaf and argued that they are better at handling workplace issues than organized workers, they have failed to obtain consistent or substantial wage increases for graduate assistants while organized workers represented by a union have received regular wage increases. Graduate assistants start at \$18,930 for a 9-month contract at UH Mānoa and \$14,382 for a 9-month contract at UH Hilo. ([University of Hawaii at Mānoa Graduate Division](#), [University of Hawaii at Hilo](#)). This is a less than 4% for GAs at UH Mānoa since 2016 and a 0% increase for those at UH Hilo. When accounting for inflation and a rising cost of living in Hawai‘i, this amounts to a pay cut.

Executive administration has also consistently testified before this legislature that they can and will improve poor employment conditions which could be resolved through the collective bargaining process by working “in house” with our Graduate Student Organization, but again have failed to do so for many years. For example, two years ago at the start of the pandemic, graduate assistants began actively advocating for a paid sick leave policy that would allow GAs to protect their health and that of our community by staying home when sick. Despite two years of promises, a paid sick leave policy has never been implemented.

Another example is that executive administration has failed to mitigate sexual harassment on campus. According to a recent campus climate survey 1 out of 6 graduate students experiences sexual harassment (including nearly 1 in 4 women and 1 in 2 people identified as transgender or gender nonconforming) (Loui et al. 2019). UH Mānoa, harassers were significantly more likely to be bosses or supervisors than at other campuses (Loui et al. 2019). In the two years since the previously published survey, sexual harassment rates did not decrease. Sexual harassment at these levels is not the result of a few bad apples, but rather the result of extreme power imbalances between faculty, administrators, and graduate assistants. Faculty and administrators not only have complete control over a graduate assistants’ current employment,



Academic Labor United

but also control their academic work, and whether or not a graduate receives a positive recommendation from their supervisor plays a significant role in their future employment prospects as well.

Graduate assistants lack recourse when faced with administrative decisions that jeopardize their wellbeing and safety in the workplace. They have no formal protection guaranteeing their right to free inquiry and expression. These are issues that unions have had success resolving. The combination of stagnant wages well below the minimum cost of living, zero job security, and the absence of basic benefits like sick, medical, and parental leave, make the University of Hawaii uncompetitive when it comes to recruiting and retaining graduate students.

In the Governor's 2015 Veto Message, he stated the three flaws with the bill produced were that it 1) lacked a bargaining unit, 2) failed to identify the appropriate employer group, and 3) did not contain an impasse resolution mechanism. HB1531 assigns graduate assistants to bargaining unit 15, identifies the employer group as the Governor, the President of the University of Hawai'i, and the Board of Regents in a manner consistent with bargaining units 7 and 8. Additionally HB1531 includes an impasse resolution mechanism consistent with bargaining units 5 and 7. Revisions to the structure of the bill address all of the governors substantive concerns and are consistent with concepts of collective bargaining as practiced in Hawai'i.

The governor had additionally expressed concerns about the fiscal implications of workers gaining the ability to bargain for a better standard of living. He specifically mentioned the impact on the Employee Retirement System (ERS). **It is our understanding that that Graduate Assistants are already excluded from the ERS.**

Graduate assistants are an integral part of the UH system and the local economy. Over the course of the pandemic, the number of graduate assistants has grown from just below 1250 to nearly 1400, indicating an increasing reliance on our labor to make the university run. In our experience talking to other GAs, more and more GAs are being employed in support offices attending to an increasingly diverse array of duties. While attending UH, GAs constitute a committed learning community, conduct important research, and perform a substantial proportion of teaching and administrative duties. Unfortunately, we are poorly compensated and are vulnerable to capricious and arbitrary behavior by our employer. As individuals, we stand little chance of success in demanding better treatment and compensation, and the long history of failed attempts at improvements proves this to be true. Our best hope for improving our own situations, then, is to come together and collectively bargain for a better university. For these reasons, we strongly urge that HB1531 be passed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alex Miller
Academic Labor United

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 1:27:22 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Kawena?ulaokala Kapahua	Academic Labor United	Support	Yes

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Kawena‘ulaokalā Kapahua, I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and I am an organizer for Academic Labor United, the graduate student assistant union. We strongly support this bill to finally, after decades, empower Graduate Assistants at UH to exercise our constitutional rights that have been denied to us as public employees. Graduate Assistants have spent the past several decades, underpaid, under protected, and underempowered. We have not received a living wage, throughout the ENTIRE pandemic we have gone without access to sick leave forcing many of our coworkers to continue working with COVID due to no being able to take time off. Graduate Assistants make UH run, without our labor the university would not have been able to transition its courses online due to COVID, it would not be able to move them back to in-person, it would not get critical administrative work done, nor would much of the universities research be done. Our role at UH ensures the proper education of the next generation of community members and leaders, and yet we as those critical public employees have been unable to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain. This is the chance for the legislature to correct a decades long suppression of rights. This is a chance for this body to finally give justice to thousands of graduate assistants who have been unable support themselves, to put food on the table, to go to the doctor, or any of the other basic necessities of life. Do not miss this chance, pass this bill.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 1:56:10 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
COGS	UE Local 896	Support	No

Comments:

We, the graduate student workers at the University of Iowa, members of United Electrical, Machine, and Radio Worker's Union (UE) Local 896, offer our full and complete support of this measure to recognize the right of collective bargaining and unionization for graduate student workers at the University of Hawaii.

Our 26 year history has shown the clear importance of recognizing the legal status of graduate workers' unions as distinct from our role as students. Because of our legally-recognized right to collective bargaining, we have been able to negotiate for living wages and health care for graduate workers. These kinds of hard-won benefits enable our members to provide high quality teaching and research at our state flagship institution.

Institutions of higher education, like the University of Hawaii, rely on the many hours of labor of graduate teaching and research assistants. We say, the University only works because we do! It is incumbent, therefore, that the Legislators recognize the rights of graduate student workers at UH as laborers who deserve the same rights as all workers in the state of Hawaii.

- Campaign to Organize Graduate Students (COGS) - UE Local 896

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 11:50:44 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Hello,

My name is Nanea Lo. I come from Papakōlea, O‘ahu born and raised. I'm writing in support of HB1531. Establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate student assistants employed by the University of Hawai‘i and this is important to me as a former graduate student. We deserve rights.

me ke aloha ‘āina,
Nanea Lo

Mō‘ili‘ili District 1

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 5:05:32 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Shreya Yadav	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Shreya. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai'i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because I think having a graduate student union is critical to the University of Hawaii's continued functioning. Not only that, I think that this will significantly improve the quality of education that the University offers by ensuring that students are cared for in the ways that they need to be.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 5:07:15 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Nicoline Butler	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Nicoline Butler. I am a Graduate Assitant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because particularly in this time, we should be able to take sick leave when possibly exposed or positive for COVID (or any other sickness for that matter) without having to worry about it affecting our pay. I also support this bill as I feel there is a need to standardize the GA hiring system, making the process clear and transparent, and providing all qualified GAs the opportunity to apply for positions, rather than simply being assigned one. In addition, a union would be able to help us advocate for more clear expectations on what our duties as a GA do and don't entail, and ensure that we receive our GA placements in a timely manner (i.e. before the first week of classes).

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

Warmly,

Nicoline Butler

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 5:19:09 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Andrew Meyer	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Andrew Meyer. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because in the four and a half years I have worked here, my salary has consistently fallen well short of Honolulu's cost of living. My employer should pay me enough that I can afford to live here.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 5:29:57 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Dianne Deauna	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Good day. I'm Dianne, a Research Assistant at the University of Hawai'i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because the cost of living in Hawai'i is ranked highest in the US, and yet GAs are not given a living wage. Graduate student-workers are the backbone of this university - collectively, we teach undergraduate students, do research and publish work which uplifts UH's reputation as one of the best universities in the US. Our labor should be compensated fairly, and every student-worker deserves to be treated with dignity.

It is a fact that without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. The formation of a student union ensures that the rights of student-workers are respected. Please pass HB 1531!

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 5:45:52 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Sam Walker	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Sam Walker. I am a Research Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because the minimum payscale for graduate assistants is shockingly low, because we currently are eligible for 0 days of sick pay (in a pandemic!) and because we deserve to be respected as much as our professors and colleagues. Establishing a union will not automatically ensure these things, but it will allow for a process by which we can fight for our rights as graduate assistants and (under)valued members of the UH community.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 6:11:51 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Daniela Escontrela	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Daniela Escontrela. I am a Graduate Assisstant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because we have been paid below meager wages for years despite costs of living skirocketing, with many people even having to go on food stamps. This is despite graduate assisstants and teacher's assisstants havign to wor usually in excess of 40 hours a week making it virtually impossible to supplement their income with another job.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 6:14:55 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Letani Peltier	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

The ability to unionize is so crucial to ensure that workers are not taken advantage of by their employers.

Will Caron
Pālolo Valley
willcaronforhawaii@gmail.com

January 31, 2022
TO: House Committee on Higher Education & Technology
RE: Testimony in Support of HB1531

Aloha Committee Members,

I strongly support HB1531. The University of Hawai'i would not be able to function as it currently does without the labor that hard working graduate students contribute to its success. This simple fact alone proves beyond any doubt that, yes, graduate students are indeed workers.

In the United States of America, **all** workers have the guaranteed right to unionize and collectively bargain. In what is supposed to be the bluest, most labor-friendly state in the nation, it is absolutely unconscionable that the University of Hawai'i would fight to prevent its own graduate student workers from accessing one of the most important and basic labor rights available to other workers.

It is equally unconscionable that this initiative has failed to pass through the Hawai'i State Legislature's Democratic supermajority year after year.

Let's make this the year that Hawai'i lives up to its promise as a state that values all workers and their labor.

Mahalo for the opportunity to support this important measure.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 6:34:49 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Zoë Erin Sprott	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Zoë Erin Sprott. I am a graduate assistant at the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because graduate assistants are the backbone of the university. Many of my peers worked tirelessly through the pandemic without any sick leave or hazard pay, and their departments relied on their labor. We do the jobs no one else will do, and we are often treated very poorly. I am lucky to have direct supervisors that appreciate me and my work, but I know that my position is tenuous. I cannot afford rent in Hawai'i without two roommates and freelance tutoring/editing to supplement my income. If I lived on my salary through the university alone, I would be homeless; I have an 11-month contract and one of the highest paying positions a Master's student can obtain. When I attempted to negotiate a pay increase after two years of exemplary work, the university was only willing to raise my yearly pay by roughly \$800/year, roughly \$66/month, which isn't even enough for a small trip to the grocery store. My supervisors drew from their own funding to ensure I could get a total raise of \$100 more per month, and that is still not enough to survive. The amount and quality of labor graduate assistants provide is disparate with the measly wages we earn. If we were granted the ability to unionize, we would have the opportunity to earn a living wage and to focus not on our dwindling funds and the threat of poverty, but on the intellectual innovations and contributions to which we yearn to commit our time. As both students and employees of a university, that is our purpose. Unionizing would allow us to fulfill our purpose.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 6:44:48 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Clemens Mayer	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Clemens and I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because I believe that graduate workers, like all other employees, deserve the right to bargain for liveable wages, fair working conditions and humane treatment.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 6:46:33 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Cristina Bacchilega	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am a Professor Emerita at the University of Hawai'i. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. I was Graduate Director for many years in my department, and feel **STRONGLY** that Graduate Assistants deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees. They work hard and provide an essential service to the university and the state.

No sick leave is unconscionable! And pay raises are a must as they are not paid enough to survive in Hawaii! Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Please pass HB 1531.

Cristina Bacchilega

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 7:16:51 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Annika Topelian	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Annika Topelian. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai'i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because I had to apply for the SNAP program to supplement my income. The pay graduate assistants receive is insufficient when taking into account the cost of living here in Hawaii. We deserve the right to bargain for fair pay.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 7:23:01 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Ellen Lee	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Ellen Lee. I am a graduate student (research assistant) at the University of Hawai'i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because I strongly believe that our wages are insufficient relative to the cost of living in Hawai'i. Furthermore, most graduate students in other departments receive significantly less than those in my department, which is extremely concerning considering that our own stipends can barely cover the cost of housing. We also do not receive sick leave despite the fact that there has been a global pandemic for the past 2 years.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 7:32:00 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Shirley Gabber	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments:

My name is Shirley Gabber. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because I think it is intolerable that graduate assistants have not had any sick leave during the pandemic. We also receive very low pay compared to the cost of living in Honolulu, and do not have any way to bargain for better conditions.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 7:34:04 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Jessica Schulte	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am not a student at the University of Hawaii but I am a student at Oregon State University and I support HB1531 and the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. At Oregon State University, we already have Graduate Assistant student bargaining and it has been **so** beneficial for the students. As graduate students, we dedicate (literally) years of our lives to work and research at universities for minimal pay and benefits. Without the access to student bargaining, Universities would take even greater advantage of our labor. At OSU, we have great health insurance, fair pay, sick leave, job security, and feel generally supported by the university. We have access to trainings and, most importantly, we have assistance and access to resources that we otherwise would not. The Graduate Student Union is integral to our work here and makes sure that we are treated fairly and rightfully - as any person should. University of Hawaii students deserve those same basic rights. Therefore, please pass HB1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 7:37:57 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Joel Temple	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Joel. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai'i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave, and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because I've now endured working through a pandemic with no sick leave or reasonable accommodations for the realities of COVID-19 with both private industry and a public institution (UHM). Not having the ability to collectively bargain is directly related to this lack of protection. So long as workers don't have a voice at the table, they will be endangered in their work. Please let us represent ourselves. UH is a respected institution, both domestically and internationally, and that reputation is propped up by the often hidden labor of graduate students.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 7:50:02 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Cuong Tran	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Cuong Tran. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave, and job security that is guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because we should have the same rights as UH faculty and staff like having a higher-paying salary to be able to afford to live in Hawaii. Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 8:08:08 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
HANNAH MOON	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

I am a Graduate Research Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining.

We have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to be able to unionize and collectively bargain. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

Graduate students are paid near poverty wages- just enough to fail to qualify for state assistance programs but not enough to live without outside support. Many graduate students, such as myself, do not come from families able to provide support. We are early career professionals training as specialists in our fields, yet we need to have second jobs, choose toothpaste or deodorant, and drive broken down and dangerous vehicles to get the experience and training we need.

As a graduate student, I was denied access to basic Employee Assistance Program (EAP) benefits. Even though I was in crisis and needed professional assistance beyond what the student center could provide, I was unable to obtain help available to any other employee of the university and state. The right to collective bargaining would make it possible for graduate students to bargain for access to basic assistance programs.

Academic Labor United and the right to collective bargaining is important to me because the inability to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security affects more than current graduate students. It contributes to the "ivory tower" nature of academia by self selecting only those with the weath, means, and support to pursue research without worrying about survival. Individuals capable of contributing immesurably to both our collective knowledge and Hawai'i are barred by the need to support families, manage disabilities, or pay previous student debt.

Thank you again for this opportunity.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 8:12:16 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Sasha Kovacs	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Graduate students who are employed by UH are employees who depend on their wages to pay for their living expenses while at school. Every Graduate student holds a bachelors degree and is performing the skilled work of an employee with this level of education. However graduate students are recieving much lower wages than an outsifde employee who holds a bachelors degree. Graduate students with bachelors degrees make poverty level wages. Graduate students also have no sick pay or vacation pay. If a graduate student becomes sick, for instance with COVID-19, and misses work they will not get paid during their sick leave, and they may be unable to pay their rent or living expenses. Do you have any idea how many homeless graduate students there are in America because of the poverty level wages they recieve from University student jobs?

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 9:10:23 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Jacob Hakim	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Jacob Hakim. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai'i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because Graduate Assistants deserve the right to fair working conditions and compensation, especially in such a strenuous time as this one. I have been a lecturer, teaching an undergraduate course independently, during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. Without the work of GAs like me, who make sure that students are continuing to receive an excellent education at UH, the university would not be able to sustain its high standard of academic excellency during the chaos of the pandemic. On top of this, GA lecturers are now required to transition the format of their courses to in-person seminars, despite the fact that GAs have not been granted basic workplace rights that would protect them from the hazards that come with this requirement, namely sick leave.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 10:23:47 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Thomas Louis-Goff	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Being a graduate student, especially in the state of Hawaii, is a privilege. We are passionate about our fields and we feel incredibly grateful to be part of this university and the opportunity we have been given to pursue a future here at the University of Hawaii and its multiple campuses.

However, we can no longer pretend that our privilege is without constant struggle. We are tired of being exploited, we are exhausted from being overlooked, but most of all we are outraged that we have a voice but no one listens.

Our working conditions and pay are pitiful. Many of the contracts we sign state that we work for 20 hours per week. Show me a graduate student that works 20 hours per week! For those of us with teaching assistantships, our emails are 24/7 on call service for our students. For those of us under research assistantships, it is a 24/7 excuse for our Principal Investigators to hound us for results. And for those of us teaching in labs and working with toxic or hazardous materials, we are not offered any form of yearly check-ups.

We are tired of hearing the "you're a graduate student, you're supposed to be broke" excuse. We are not asking to *not* be broke, we are asking to not be broken. Simply put, the University would not function without the endless and tireless work that graduate students devote to it. But again, it is not our working conditions nor our pay that is most enraging, but that we have no one with whom to speak about these conditions that is willing to listen and fight with us.

Addressing the rights of its workers should be paramount to any institution. It is when worker's rights and grievances are handled that the greatest benefits and achievements can be made to and by the institution. All workers big and small deserve this.

With the passing of this bill, you are telling us that our rights as workers, as students, and as humans, are worth something. That we, like you, have a voice and that people are listening. In solidarity, I thank you sincerely for considering this testimony and bill HB1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 11:11:14 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Olivia Wang	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha kākou. I am a graduate student at UH Manoa and a member of Academic Labor United here to voice my support for HB 1531, and our right for collective bargaining. We deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees. Graduate students are a crucial component of the university. During my time at UH thus far, I have worked as both a Graduate Research Assistant (RA) and a Teaching Assistant (TA). Last semester I taught an introductory biology class. My official work period began August 1st, but I was not paid until October 20th. A two-month delay in pay, especially in a city like Honolulu where the cost of living is 88% higher than the national average, is simply unacceptable and also a blatant violation of HRS Section 388-2(b). However, as an individual graduate student, it was challenging to navigate this situation on my own and figure out how to get the university to rectify this for me in a timely manner. A graduate student union would have helped me address this situation with more ease. Furthermore, the class I taught was in person; TA's do not get sick leave. For our safety as well as the safety of our students, during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and into the future, graduate students should at least have the opportunity to negotiate for sick leave through collective bargaining. Finally, graduate students simply deserve the right to be treated with dignity as employees within the university system. We have no job security, as our funding through RA or TA positions can be terminated at a moment's notice at our supervisor's discretion. If we have issues with supervisors or faculty and face abuse or harassment, we have no formal grievance process within our departments or union representative that we can consult. Graduate students deserve the right to unionize and collectively bargain for these basic employee rights. Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Please pass HB 1531. Mahalo for your time.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 11:11:44 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Dorian Daimer	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Dorian Daimer. I am a Teaching Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because the working and living conditions of graduate students in Hawai‘i are currently extremely poor. This makes it feel like our valuable contribution to the University of Hawai‘i and our role in providing higher education to the citizens of Hawai‘i is completely underappreciated. Collective bargaining rights would give us, the graduate assistants, a chance to remedy that injustice.

As an international graduate assistant I feel the financial hardship especially strongly since my Visa status doesn't allow me to work outside of the University context. So I am completely reliant on the graduate assistant stipend to cover my costs of living in Hawai‘i and frankly that is hardly possible and I have contemplated leaving for a different university many times over just because of my strenuous financial situation.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 12:15:44 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Jun Shin	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments:

UH cannot run without its graduate assistants. they are the backbone of our universities, instructing, doing administrative work, tutoring, being support systems for their students. Their work directly and indirectly shapes the futures of so many. Support their efforts to build their voice in their workplaces.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 12:20:47 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Kevin Faccenda	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am a graduate student at UH Manoa and I strongly support this bill. State workers have a constitutional right to unionize but that has been denied to us. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 7:50:17 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Ella De Falco	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Ella De Falco. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because the graduate assistant pay is often not livable. In addition, working in a pandemic without sick leave has taken a toll on many of us, with not just our physical but also our mental health.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 8:13:38 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Jack Runburg	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Jack. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai'i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. As graduate assistants, many of us need to get second jobs because of our often unlivable wages. This impairs our effectiveness as researchers and teachers which hurts our students, UH's research capacity, and the academic community of Hawai'i. We deserve higher wages as workers because the university needs us to function so a union and good contract for GAs improves the university as a whole. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 8:22:41 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
bruce watson	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 8:30:33 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Wesley Sparagon	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Wesley Sparagon. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because we as Graduate Assistants have been chronically underpaid and taken advantage of as workers. The COVID19 pandemic has only highlighted these injustices, with Graduate Assistants having no sick-leave and stagnant wages despite the rapidly increasing cost of living in Hawai‘i. We, like all other workers, should have the right to collectively bargain for better working conditions.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 8:33:51 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
LynleyShimat Lys	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

So many of us suffer abuse as graduate assistants with no recourse to improve our conditions. Many of us work as instructor of record for multiple courses without earning a living wage. We end up having to work multiple jobs while we are in graduate school full time even to afford rent and food. As a graduate assistant I often had to choose between paying rent on time and having enough to eat. I had to choose between necessities and going to the doctor when I was sick. The current conditions are unlivable and graduate assistants should have access to their legal right to collective bargaining. The university considers us employees when it suits them but not when it would help us. This needs to change.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 8:37:25 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Kevin Armstrong	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Kevin Armstrong. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 9:12:50 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
jaeho kook	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Jaeho Kook. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave, and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because firstly, it is the right of the workers to claim our working conditions, secondly bargaining and negotiation is the democratic process to make a agreement between stakeholders, and thirdly, the current payment condition does not correspond to the cost for living and studying for the graduate student workers.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 9:24:21 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Alexandra Glenn	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Alexandra Glenn. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because myself and my coworkers were forced to work during the pandemic with no paid sick leave. My coworkers who work as Teaching Assistants were not allowed to take any leave during the semester at all. We are not supported or respected by our institution, and any support we receive is from individuals in the department who sacrifice their own time and money. This is not sustainable and it is not just.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 9:27:17 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Kaleiheana-a-Pohaku Stormcrow	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Kaleiheana Stormcrow. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because we are paid less than poverty wages living in the most expensive place in the world. Additionally, I was forced to work in a pandemic with no sick leave.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 9:35:16 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Fiona Agnes Miranda	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Fiona Miranda. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 9:58:07 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Kate Feloy	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Kate Feloy. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because *we deserve sick pay, especially during the ongoing pandemic.*

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 10:04:44 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Jessie Perelman	University of Hawai'i at Manoa	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Jessica Perelman. I am a graduate assistant at the University of Hawai'i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because we are state employees and have the right to speak up for unfair working conditions and wages.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 10:14:19 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Thomas Iwanicki	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Tom Iwanicki. I am a Teaching Assistant and PhD Candidate at the University of Hawai'i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because it is our constitutional right to collectively bargain and the University of Hawai'i administrators have not been bargaining our wages or working conditions in good faith. We need a strong collective bargaining agreement to offer workplace protections from harassment, wage theft, job security, among so many other issues GAs at UH face.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 10:15:15 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Samuel Kei Takazawa	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Samuel Kei Takazawa. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because my current contract only guarantees 9 months of work and I am at the mercy of my professor to continue working during the summer. With the current wages and living month to month, I could lose my housing situation if I cannot work the 3 months that are not guaranteed.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 10:21:17 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Sequoia Riley	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Sequoia Riley. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai'i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because the current pay is not enough to live off of here in the state of Hawai'i and there is no sick leave or vacation PTO's. We need better pay, sick leave and vacation PTO's.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 10:22:32 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Meagan Harden	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Meagan Harden, and I am a TA at UH Manoa and a member of Academic Labor United. I support HB1531 for collective bargaining. Graduate students have been consistently denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to be able to unionize and collectively bargain. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave, and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

The inability to collectively bargain has real, tangible impacts on my own life and that of my colleagues. When my grandmother passed away from COVID in January 2021, I had to rely on the goodwill of my supervisors to virtually attend her funeral; if my supervisors hadn't allowed me to do so, I would have missed my one opportunity to say goodbye alongside my family. I also have preexisting medical conditions that require frequent screenings and treatment, and the healthcare options provided through my TA appointment are wholly inadequate to cover expenses; I am currently going into substantial debt in order to literally survive. At least one of my friends currently lives out of their van, due to the high cost of living and low pay provided by their Graduate Assistantship, and many of us rely on food stamps to meet our basic nutritional needs.

There are undoubtedly countless more examples of graduate students whose lives are a constant state of economic anxiety, and whose emotional, mental, and physical wellbeing is dependent on individual supervisors' temperament. By failing to protect our collective bargaining rights, the state has failed to protect our lives. For many of us, continuing higher education has become a gamble on how long we can endure before the financial and emotional costs are simply too high to continue. If the state values education, equality, and the lives of graduate students, it will support HB1531 to guarantee our collective bargaining rights. Mahalo.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 10:23:05 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Makanalani Gomes	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Makanalani Gomes. I am a Graduate Assistant, Graduate Candidate, and the GSO representative for Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawai'i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave, and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because I believe we need a union to advocate for our wellbeing and a living wage since it is evident the university does not prioritize these matters. The university does NOT work if we don't!

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 10:34:55 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Alena Shalaby	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Alena Shalaby. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because I was forced to work in a pandemic with no sick leave and unionizing is a fundamental right that should be afforded to every worker.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 10:40:35 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Aya Shirayama	University of Hawaii at Manoa	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Aya Shirayama. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai'i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave, and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because I was forced to work in a pandemic with no sick leave.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 10:50:35 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Anne Innes-Gold	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Anne Innes-Gold. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because I was forced to work in a pandemic with no sick leave.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 10:57:41 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Lucie Knor	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Lucie Knor. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave, and job security that is guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because all workers, including graduate assistants, deserve representation, a contract and a functioning grievance process, which would be established with a union. During this pandemic, we have had to work without a sick leave policy. That is unacceptable.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 11:08:23 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Hannah Manshel	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Hannah Manshel. I am an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Hawai'i and a supporter of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, Graduate Assistants have been denied their ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. They deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a faculty member, I support this bill because graduate assistants are essential to the learning of our students and the functioning of our university, and they deserve the right and power to collectively bargain for fair and humane working conditions.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, they deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 11:09:42 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Henry Severino Osborne	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Henry Osborne. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees. I support this bill because as of Monday, we have been made to return to teaching in person but still have no guaranteed sick leave and no way to guarantee our employment if we get sick. As someone with health conditions that could make COVID complications a real and deadly threat, I have no recourse in my only source of income should I fall ill. In addition, our income is extremely low in one of the most expensive cities in the country- and we have no way to negotiate higher wages as the University has made it clear they do not regard our wellbeing as a necessity.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 11:21:14 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Bryanna	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Bryanna. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because I am forced to work in a pandemic with no sick leave.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 11:43:31 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Cynthia Franklin	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Cynthia Franklin. I am a Professor in the English Department at the University of Hawai'i and a supporter of Academic Labor United. I give my fullest support to bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, Graduate Assistants have been denied the ability to exercise their constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. Graduate Assistants deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to me, my colleagues, and other public employees.

Graduate Assistants are poorly paid. They regularly go into debt in order to pursue their graduate educations. They do this work and pursue their education despite having to contend with a lot of adversity. As workers who educate UH undergraduates, at the very least they deserve basic workers' rights. Without their labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, they deserve to be treated with dignity as they undertake the invaluable work of educating the citizenry of Hawai'i.

Please pass HB 1531--respect the Graduate Assistants's right to unionize, and support UH so that it and everyone who works and studies at this educational institution so crucial to Hawai'i's future.

HB1531

My name is Olivia Meyer. I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. We have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union for many years. We deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate student, I support this bill because many of us live in extreme precarity. We often rely on piecemealing together various funding sources without any long-term security. As a graduate assistant at the University of Kentucky, before coming to the University of Hawai'i, I worked as a graduate assistant. I was paid more than graduate assistants at UH, despite the dramatic increase in the cost of living in Hawai'i. At Kentucky, graduate assistants were automatically enrolled in healthcare and guaranteed two (MA) to four (PhD) years of funding. In contrast, GAs and TAs at UH usually have to reapply for assistantships each year. Additionally, due to the enrollment process, many at UH are placed in precarious situations where they are left without health care for extended periods of time. Additionally, when graduate assistants such as a friend of mine must take a leave of absence due to mental health issues, they lose their funding altogether rather than simply pausing their funding clock. Another of my friends was awarded a prestigious grant, but when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, she was left without any funding, support system, health care, or security from the university. The UH system is built on graduate student labor, yet UH does not treat us as valued community members. Instead, the University treats us as expendable.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 11:51:53 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Petra Byl	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am an Oceanography graduate assistant at the University of Hawaii at Mānoa as well as a member of Academic Labor United. I am writing in support of bill HB1531, so that we as graduate assistants, have the right to collective bargaining. As graduate assistants, our cumulative research efforts are fundamental to the performance of Hawaii’s public institutions of higher education. We deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave, and job security as other public employees.

I support this bill because we have no existing leverage to determine work benefits, including maternity leave and sick leave. These benefits are judged at the discretion of our academic advisors, who also determine the trajectory of our careers through personal networks, letters of recommendation, and approval of graduate milestones and theses. While I am fortunate to have academic advisors that I trust to value my personal health, many graduate assistants are not so lucky. And even so, during the covid-19 pandemic, I have struggled to make the decision to take adequate steps towards isolation, testing, and quarantine, because to do so risks the failure of active laboratory experiments, and repercussion from my academic advisors. These cost-benefit decisions of taking sick-leave are not unique to my personal experience.

In short, graduate assistants deserve the freedom to advocate for personal health and security without fear of severe repercussion. I strongly encourage you to pass HB1531 for the function and health of all workers at the University of Hawaii.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 11:58:01 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Olivia Bianchini	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Olivia Bianchini. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because colleagues and I were forced to work in a pandemic with no sick leave.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 12:02:30 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
David Girbino	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is David Girbino, and I am a Graduate Assistant (GA) at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo's Biology Department. I am also a member of Academic Labor United.

I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees. As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because I was forced to work in a pandemic with no sick leave, and I do not have the ability to bargain for a living wage or sick leave.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 12:09:59 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Phil Patton	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Legislature.

I'm writing to voice my support for HB1531 and my right as a graduate student to collectively bargain. Currently, I am paid by the University of Hawai'i to produce research. If I am successful, the university will benefit from my labor because my research is effectively owned by the university. If I publish research, the university's research output increases, thereby increasing their prestige and ability to attract students and researchers.

Everything about this dynamic is identical to a standard employee-employer relationship, yet the University of Hawai'i insists that us graduate assistants are not employees and denies our ability to collectively bargain. Thankfully, HB1531 would rectify this error and correct the University's understanding of our relationship.

I look forward to the Legislature voting to pass this important bill.

Thank you.

Phil

Philip Patton

Graduate Research Assistant

Hawai'i Insitute of Marine Biology

University of Hawai'i Mānoa

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 12:12:23 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Paulina Perman	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support ALU because they have the right to unionize.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 12:13:20 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Gary Labao	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I fully support the ALU to unionize. I believe it is their right and that they deserve the protection and benefits of being unionized.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 12:14:43 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Yoko Liriano	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Yoko Liriano and I am the Co-Executive Director of the Hawai'i Workers Center. And We strongly support ALU's just struggle for union recognition and bargaining rights.

The Hawai'i workers center is a non-profit that organizes non-union, low-wage workers to advance and defend workers rights in Hawai'i.

Workers all across Hawai'i are barely scraping by. The pandemic has demonstrated to us how incredibly precarious all of our lives and living conditions are with wages far below a livable wage, with no laws for breaks or paid sick leave.

ALL workers should have the right to organize in pursuit and in defense of their and their families' basic needs. It is outrageous for the University of Hawaii, the state, and an obtuse judge to deny U.H. graduate students and teaching assistants this fundamental right!

The 1950 Hawaii State Constitution in Article twelve , Section 2, proclaimed that all persons in public employment have the right to organize and to present and make known their grievances and proposals to the state and any of its political subdivisions. It does NOT say EXCEPT FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS IN TEACHING AND RESEARCHER POSITIONS AT U.H.

The 1968 state constitutional amendments further strengthened and guaranteed the rights of state and county public employees to unionize and bargain collectively.

The University of Hawaii should stand up for its employees' and students' rights and not seek to suppress them! After all, its motto translates to: Above all nations, HUMANITY!" How humane is it to deny basic human rights to a sizeable group of UH employees!?!?!

In the face of sharply rising food prices and housing costs, ALU needs to be empowered to fight for the interests of grad students who do much of the research and instructional work at the University.

The state has been consistently failing our workers on issues of unemployment benefits, health and safety, and ALU has been standing alongside the overall labor community through these issues.

We urge you to approve HB 1531. POWER TO THE WORKERS!!

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 12:16:14 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Caleb Klipowicz	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

As a graduate student, a worker, and union member from the University of Iowa, I am writing to express my complete and total support for this bill to restore the collective bargaining rights of the graduate student workers in University of Hawaii. I employee the legislatures to support the graduate workers just as they have for faculty and staff in the past.

As a graduate student, having a labor union has completely changed my education and worker experience for the better. I could not have pursued my education with a living wage and health care without our union. UE local 896 has existed for over 25 years. We look forward to the members of ALU joining us soon!

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 12:17:33 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Jane Traynor	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Jane Traynor. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai'i and a member of Academic Labor United. I have been active as a graduate student advocate for seven years within three different university systems and have seen first hand the impact that unions can have on the safety and fairness of working conditions for graduate students.

I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave, and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because Graduate Assistants have been forced to work in a pandemic with no sick leave, are expected to live on less than a living wage, and are vulnerable to bullying and harrassment without means for moderation.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 12:31:17 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Suchitra Narayanan	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments:

My name is Suchitra Narayanan. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai'i and a member of Academic Labor United. **I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining.**

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because my entire graduate career has been in this pandemic and I have seen firsthand how the University of Hawai'i cares more about my productivity than my health. I have had to advocate myself to continue remote work as an immunocompromised individual and was nearly forced to leave my job because I was not being accomodated. If we had the right to collectively bargain, I, along with my fellow Graduate Assistants **would be in a much better position to advocate ourselves without fear of retaliation.**

For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise **our constitutional right to collectively bargain** as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

The University of Hawai'i works because we (graduate assistants) do. **Without our labor the University of Hawai'i could not run.** Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 12:42:00 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Emma Stierhoff	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Emma Stierhoff. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai'i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because I do not make enough to cover the cost of living here in Hawai'i. I have lost money every month since starting this job, and will likely need to pick up another job just to break even. I work extremely hard for the University, and deserve to have my basic needs covered each month. That will start with all of us Graduate Assistants getting the right to bargain for our needs.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 12:42:24 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Alexandria Holthaus	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Alexandria Holthaus. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because the current the teaching assistant salary is far too low in the College of Natural Sciences. Our dean acknowledges this, but refuses to increase our wage. Only a union will be able to negotiate higher wages for us.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.



Hawai'i Review

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Hemenway Hall 107 | 2445 Campus Road

Honolulu, HI 96822 | hawaiireview@gmail.com

Aloha mai kākou,

My name is Aaron Ki'ilau and I am the editor in chief for Hawai'i Review, the student-led arts journal at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I am writing on behalf of our editorial board in support of HB1531 (SB2552) which establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawai'i (UH).

All of our editorial board are graduate assistants employed by UH. While we are thankful that our assistantships come with tuition assistance as well as ample teaching and professional experience working in academia, we are currently denied a legal right to collective bargaining for our work as employees at UH. While studying toward our degrees, we are also *working* as lecturers, administrators, teaching assistants, and perform various other tasks that are elsewhere recognized as legal employment in the State of Hawai'i. Our workloads, which at best match and at worst exceed those of other UH faculty and staff whom are otherwise allowed collective bargaining units, reveal a problematic bias against the labor of a significant portion of the UH community.

We regularly receive communications from UH administration to remind us of policies and procedures by which employees—we—are to abide. It is confusing, then, that we are reminded how to conduct ourselves as employees while being told that, if we wish to unionize, our administration does not *technically* consider us to be employees. That we are employees when our labor is needed but *not* employees when we ask for a legal right to discuss the terms of our employment, is unfortunate.

It is our hope that HB1531 (SB2552) will help to heal the contentious relationship between ourselves and our employers, and we ask in the passing of this bill for a place to negotiate what our work is worth to us all. It should be highlighted that we all entered our employment here at UH in order to contribute more fully to the communities of Hawai'i. But our overall well-being must be better supported at the places we choose to put in the work.

Sincerely,

Aaron Ki'ilau, on behalf of

The Editorial Board of Hawai'i Review

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 12:51:03 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Nathalie de Rocquigny	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments:

My name is Nathalie de Rocquigny. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai'i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees. We should not be treated any differently, just because we are also students.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because where I come from, in Canada, unions are more common and more accepted than here in the U.S. I believe that all public employees should have the right to unionize, like they do in more progressive countries.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 1:01:21 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Max Asa Albert Dornfest	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Max Dornfest I am a graduate assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because I live off of SNAP benefits and struggle to make rent with the roughly ~\$19k I make each year. It is clear that I am paid by the state and I work for a public institution. We deserve the right to collectively bargain.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 1:08:43 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Jason Mark Alexander	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Jason Mark Alexander. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I strongly support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because the University of Hawai‘i stance is unjust and exploits the health and sanity of its workers. Many of my colleagues have been forced into precarious situations while trying to complete their degrees and contribute their skills to bettering society. Many have not been able to survive on the wages and conditions that their non-negotiable contracts provide, and have left their programs and this State because of it. The University of Hawai‘i's blatant refusal to comply with our constitutional right is disgraceful and legislation like HB 1531 needs to directly protect the people it tries to suppress.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 1:16:04 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Kyle Hart	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments:

My name is Kyle B. Hart. I am a Graduate Teaching Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave, and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because I would like my job to at least pay my rent. Right now, I have to settle for additional odd jobs that have zero relation to my graduate studies just because they have a flexible schedule that will work around classes. For some perspective, I served eight years in the Air Force. Two of those were here in Hawai‘i. My monthly UNTAXED housing stipend was roughly \$3100 a month, and I wasn't even especially high in rank. That stipend is adjusted regularly and even basic rates of pay are bumped by a certain percent every year. As a Graduate Student and Graduate Teaching Assistant, my take-home pay is \$1190 per month after taxes and my healthcare. I cannot put in the amount of effort that needs to be put into my studies if I have to work an additional job on top of my GTA job just so I can eat. I'm trying to finish the education that the military paid to help me start.

As I progress in my academic journey and into other post-graduate work, I want to be the best representative of the UH educational system that I can be. But right now, I can't do that. Graduate school work and GTA work alone exceed 60 hours a week. Other schools across the country have already remedied this situation. Why haven't we?

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 1:25:39 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Aleezah Ali	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Aleezah Ali. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave, and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because I have been forced to work in a pandemic with no sick leave. I got COVID-19 and there was nothing I could do without sick leave and my bosses did not care.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

The Honorable Gregg Takayama, Chair
and Members of the Committee on Higher Education & Technology

Date: Wednesday, February 2, 2022

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Place: Via videoconference

RE: Testimony in support of HB1531 relating to collective bargaining

Aloha e Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committee on Higher Education & Technology,

My name is Mary Janell Murro, a resident of House District 30. As a previous graduate assistant at the University of Hawai‘i, and member of Academic Labor United, I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. We have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union for many years. Graduate Assistants deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave, and job security that is guaranteed to other public employees.

Graduate assistants perform research, teach classes, hold office hours, grade student work, manage grants, provide deliverables, and recruit potential students into the UH system. The list goes on and this occurs while earning our advanced degrees. The UH system employs over 1,250 graduate assistants who are the university’s backbone.

As a previous graduate assistant, I support this bill because I, and many of my graduate assistant peers, were forced to work in a pandemic with no sick leave. Personally, this has been terrifying because we often report to our jobs on-campus, engaging in essential face-to-face activities, leading to an increased risk of exposure.

UH released its strategic plan in December 2020 with a mission to “Cultivate the potential within each member of our community.” Graduate assistants are an integral part of the UH community but have continued to be denied the same rights of public sector employees since the 1970s. The discrepancy between our wages and cost of living continues to grow, while UH administration continues to increase its reliance on our cheap labor for teaching, research, and administrative work.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. We deserve a seat at the table when key decisions are made that impact our lives, those of our students, and the community. Please pass HB 1531.

Mahalo for considering my testimony,
Mary Janell Murro

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 1:31:13 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Keith Scott	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Respected Members of the Committee:

My name is Keith Scott, and I am a graduate assistant in the Sociology Department at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of HB 1531. At some point every undergraduate student is taught by a graduate teaching assistant; graduate research assistants advance scientific frontiers; and graduate administrative assistants run key facilities on campus. The university increasingly relies on graduate labor to run. Graduate assistants deserve a seat at the table when decisions are made that affect their lives, those of their students, and the broader community. Unfortunately, graduate assistants are poorly compensated, with wages that are far below a living wage and far below competitive standards of other universities. Graduate assistant compensation has neither kept up with inflation, the cost of living, or rising productivity. Additionally, graduate assistants are vulnerable to capricious and arbitrary decisions from management without a proper mechanism for pursuing grievances.

On a personal level, I have worked as a teaching assistant and research assistant at UH Mānoa, and in that time I have had the great pleasure of teaching and working with many of UH Mānoa's bright and promising students. It is work that I have found highly rewarding. Unfortunately, the low pay has meant that I struggle to support my family of three, including paying for my son's preschool tuition. Fortunately, we have been able to keep our son in preschool, but I know many other graduate assistant parents who, when faced with the difficult choice of either paying tuition or paying the month's rent, have had to withdraw their keiki from preschool. Moreover, graduate assistants do not accrue vacation time and must work when the rest of the university is on break. Indeed, graduate assistants do not even have guaranteed sick days, a reality that has become painfully clear over the course of the pandemic. The fact that it is very difficult for graduate assistants to take time off from work means that parents struggle to find affordable childcare during times when schools are on break. I believe that, through collective bargaining, a graduate assistant union would be able to greatly improve the lives of parents like myself.

In 2016, the National Labor Relations Board reversed the decades-long ban on private university graduate unions at places such as the University of Chicago, Harvard, and Yale, declaring that graduate assistants are workers that deserve the right to unionize. There are currently dozens of graduate unions across the country at public and private institutions, in states such as California, Oregon, Washington, New York, Illinois, Montana, Massachusetts, Iowa, and many more. Graduate assistant unions have existed for 50 years, and all scholarly research has shown that unionized graduate assistants report higher levels of personal/professional support and higher pay that improves educational outcomes, and that faculty report that unionization does not inhibit their ability to advise, instruct, or mentor.

Hawai'i has led the way in breaking ground in supporting public sector unions, and it is my sincere hope that Hawai'i continues to show its strong support for unions and working people. For the cutting-edge research and instruction graduate assistants do, the ability to collectively bargain over compensation, benefits, and working conditions is essential and long overdue. I urge you to pass HB 1531.

Respectfully yours,

Keith Scott

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 1:37:29 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Federica Chiti	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Federica. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave, and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees. As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because I was forced to work in a pandemic with no sick leave and like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 1:48:04 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Ha'ani San Nicolas	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Ha'ani Lucia Falo San Nicolas. I am a Ph.D. Student and Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai'i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because I, like many graduate assistants, have been forced to work through a pandemic without sick leave. Further, we are given pay at a rate that is not sustainable with the high cost of living in O'ahu nor right for the amount of labor we produce.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 1:53:01 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Bjarne Bartlett	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support HB1531. I was a teaching assistant in the fall of 2021 and resigned 2 weeks into the semester for a job with better hours and pay. I was willing to negotiate a different deal with my supervisor to stay, but they were not willing to negotiate with me so I was forced to leave the students and department suddenly without a teaching assistant. I believe that the resignations of future TAs at UH can be averted if the terms of our jobs are governed through a collective bargaining process. For UH to continue as an excellent school, graduate students must be granted the time and money to focus on school and research. A collective bargaining agreement, in this way, could improve graduation rates and time to graduation for graduate students at UH. Graduate students require considerable resources to adequately train, including lab space, specialized equipment, research funds, travel funds, stipends and benefits. I believe such an agreement could help ensure that graduate programs at UH do not admit more graduate students than they can adequately support, raising the quality of the degree programs and work done.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 1:54:31 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Anthony Jake Atienza	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Anthony Jake Atienza. I am a Graduate Assistant (Teaching assistant) at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

I support this bill because I am not only a student but also employed by the University of Hawaii. My status as an international student is dependent on my employment as a Graduate assistant. Professors rely on their teaching assistants to carry out their work. Without GAs they would be overwhelmed. Any employee, whether faculty or GA, has the right to exercise their right to collectively bargain. This has particularly become evident during the pandemic and will continue to be thereafter. I recently faced a family emergency overseas, the possible passing of my father, and would have benefitted from access to e.g. sick leave.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 1:55:12 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Sara Maaria Saastamoinen	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments:

Aloha kākou. My name is Sara Maaria Saastamoinen, and my pronouns are she and they. I work as a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, and I am a member of Academic Labor United. I fully support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining.

Graduate Assistants have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union for years. I, along with my fellow Graduate Assistants, deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave, and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a Graduate Assistant, I support this bill because a bargaining team of my peers, selected from a union of Graduate Assistants, should be able to work with the State and University Administration to negotiate fair contracts and working conditions that could include:

- Ensuring stipends and salaries keep pace with the rising cost of living in Hawai‘i. Aloha ka. The current pay rate for Graduate Assistants is not enough to live in Hawai‘i, save to retire one day, take care of family members, and build emergency savings.
- Defining sick leave policies that protect Graduate Assistants as workers, particularly in this ongoing pandemic when many Graduate Assistants are required to work in-person on campus. The current lack of protections for Graduate Assistants disregards our physical safety and mental health.
- Support for caretakers, whether that be child-care subsidies, paid parental leave, and more.

Without the labor of Graduate Assistants, the University of Hawai‘i could not function. We are more than simply students; we are essential labor for the university. Graduate Assistants deserve to be treated with dignity and to be able to exercise our constitutional rights like all workers do.

I ask you to pass HB 1531 urgently and to listen to the voices of Graduate Assistants who have been fighting for years to secure our right to unionize. Mahalo nui.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 2:08:47 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Leimaile Barrett	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am an alumni of the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. Graduate Assistants have been denied the ability to exercise their constitutional right to be able to unionize and collectively bargain. They deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 2:21:32 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Jordan Elicker	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

The ability to unionize is a constitutional right. Graduate assistants deserve union and collective bargaining rights, just like any other public employee. I support bill HB1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 2:27:56 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Cedar Wilson	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

O Cedar ko‘u inoa. No Lā‘ie mai au. I'm writing today in support of House Bill 1531 in relation to collective bargaining rights. E kala mai, I don't have much energy as I am typing while sick with COVID-19 so this'll be short. I believe that it should be legal for graduate assistance to organize/unionize. If HB1531 should pass, then there are hopes of bargaining for fair pay, sick leave, and COVID-19 specific PTO.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Cedar W.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 2:28:25 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Christy Handel	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Christy Handel. I am the Microbiology Graduate Representative of the School of Life Sciences at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and a member of Academic Labor United. **I fully support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining.** I have been a graduate assistant (GA) since Fall 2020 and the graduate representative since Spring 2021. Since procuring this position, I have been absolutely overwhelmed by the insurmountable problem of **inequity between** and **disproportionately low representation of GAs**. As one of four graduate representatives in the School of Life Sciences, we felt as if GAs voices were not getting heard, and the faculty, staff, and administration that claimed "to be doing everything they could to help", were not, and simply refused to truly listen and enable change. Therefore, one of the first practices we implemented as a graduate representatives was a graduate student safe space through Google Forms. Here, students could anonymously (or not) voice their concerns, as big and small as they were, and we could address them head on. The resounding concerns, to this day, are an unlivable wage and unfair working conditions, specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic. I would like to share an anonymous response to our Google Form, as I believe it represents the voice of nearly every GA at UHM:

"My mental health deteriorates under financial burden. **It is unethical to expect a high level of scholarship under these conditions.** [Some] professors have demonstrated clear disregard for their graduate student's professional and personal success. We have truly amazing graduate students and faculty, **we just need to prioritize the working conditions and help graduate students by providing material support necessary for them to live in Hawai'i.**"

For many years, GAs have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. The graduate students I represent and myself deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave, and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees. As a community, we cannot afford to lose the young generation of scholars to unfair working conditions and an unlivable wage. GAs should not have to choose between high scholarship and financial insecurity, which contributes to poor mental health, nutrition, and standard of life. We've lost members of our graduate community before, in more ways than one. Therefore, I believe it is our duty to enable GAs to collectively bargain, as is afforded by our constitution.

As a GA and graduate representative, I support this bill completely and without reservation. Without GA labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. **Please pass HB 1531.**

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 2:38:49 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Sitara Palecanda	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Sitara Palecanda. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai'i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because it has been clearer than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic that UH Manoa could not function without graduate assistants, yet so many departments treat their GA's as if we're disposable. I have been forced to make choices that go against my desire to stay safe or speak out against bad behavior in order to remain in the good graces of instructors and a department which control my means of income.

If the University of Hawaii won't look after the interests of GA's, and they have proven time and again that they will not, we deserve a union that will. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 2:53:03 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Ezikio Quintana	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I'm an undergrad student at UH Mānoa, and I hope to pursue a graduate degree one day. As an undergrad, graduate students have been a huge part of my educational experience, often teaching courses themselves. Graduate students deserve the right to unionize.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 2:56:12 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Casey Brinkman	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments:

My name is Casey Brinkman. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai'i and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. For many years, we have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees.

I have spent years watching my peers live in their offices or in their cars because their department is capable of paying them effectively less than minimum wage. I've spent the duration of the pandemic watching my peers being forced to work in person, choosing between their safety or their job security. As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because UH works only because WE do. I am sick of me and my peers bringing renoun to this university through prestigious fellowships, through publishable and press-release worthy research, through our labor as teachers to keep the undergraduate program afloat, only for that same university to deny our basic rights.

Please pass HB 1531.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 3:18:33 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Leif Salveson	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am a Teaching Assistant at the University of Hawaii and a member of Academic Labor United. I support the bill HB 1531 for the right for collective bargaining. We deserve our rights to unionize and bargain for fair pay, sick leave, and job security guaranteed to other public employees. Many of us, myself included, have difficulties making ends meet and live in a state of financial insecurity. A union is needed.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 6:41:45 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Alexia Thrash	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha mai kakou,

I don't know much about what grad assistants do, as i definitely did not go to grad school. However, I do know that students in general, do a lot of work in and out of classrooms. They dedicate much of their mental, emotional, and physical being to the tasks at hands, and the ones that are really special do so with an incredible amount of fire and passion. I image graduate assistants are no different, despite varying workloads assigned.

With that being said, I do believe that no one should have to struggle financially to make a living. Grad assistants included. This is why I support the HB1531/SB2552 in allowing for graduate students to unionize; so their voices can be heard to raise their pay to afford the ever increasing cost of living in Hawai'i while allowing them to enjoy life as well. I support a bill to allow their unionizing so they have paid sick leave because while COVID and its variants evolve, and students, staff, and faculty are called back to campus for in-person interaction, every person's health & safety is of the utmost importance in order for a university to function effectively. I support a bill in general that will give voice to a person or group of people that would essentially have the workers' best interests in mind, because it has been proven through companies like Four Seasons, where happy people make happy people. Productivity & End Result in general are better when workers are put and taken care of first.

Mahalo nui for your time!

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 7:05:21 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Justin Jansen	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am a resident of Honolulu and I strongly support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. Denying these workers the ability to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public workers is inexcusable. It is long past time that this should have been done, I am hoping the elected representatives this year will do the right thing and pass this bill.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 7:42:37 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Josiah Murphy	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha e kākou. My name is Josiah Murphy. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i, and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right of Graduate Assistants (GAs) to collective bargaining. Although I am a public employee, during my two years at UH Mānoa I have been denied the ability to exercise the constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same access as other public employees in the State of Hawai‘i to bargain for job security, sick leave, and fair pay.

GAs have been put in the position of teaching and doing other work for the University during a pandemic, but without recourse if we fall sick. The University instituted mask-wearing, contact tracing, and isolation as public health measures, but these fall short of caring for the UHM ‘ohana who contracted COVID-19 due to carrying out work for the University. We GAs have not been compensated for losing work time due to falling ill, caring for immediate family members who contracted COVID-19, and attending funerals of family members. Many GAs continued to work from our sickbeds because of economic instability; being paid such a low wage means we cannot stop working even when seriously ill. This is directly detrimental to the work of the University, as well as the mandate of the State, by interrupting the regularity and quality of teaching, laboratory experiments, partnered research, and more. Without Graduate Assistant labor the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity and adequate compensation for this work. Please pass HB 1531. Mahalo nui loa.

Aloha e kākou. My name is Josiah Murphy. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i, and a member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right of Graduate Assistants (GAs) to collective bargaining. Although I am a public employee, during my two years at UH Mānoa I have been denied the ability to exercise the constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. I deserve the same access as other public employees in the State of Hawai‘i to bargain for job security, sick leave, and fair pay.

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University, as well as the mandate of the State, by interrupting the regularity and quality of teaching, laboratory experiments, partnered research, and more. Without Graduate Assistant labor the University of Hawai'i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity and adequate compensation for this work. Please pass HB 1531. Mahalo nui loa.

HB-1531

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 8:59:09 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/2/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Kathleen Tatem	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am a former Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and member of Academic Labor United. I support bill HB1531 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining. We have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to be able to unionize and collectively bargain. I deserved the same right to bargain for fair pay, sick leave and job security that are guaranteed to other public employees. I deserved to live with dignity, with full recognition of my humanity, my inherent value, and my extensive prior qualifications and experience. When we deny rights to some members of our society, the loss is incurred by all. Everyone will benefit when Graduate Assistants have the rights and resources necessary to contribute at their full potential.