



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Higher Education  
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By  
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SCR 215/SR 208 Proposed SD1 – REQUESTING VARIOUS STATE GOVERNMENT ENTITIES TO TAKE CERTAIN ACTIONS TO EFFECTIVELY LEVERAGE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES IN THE STATE TO ENSURE CAREER READINESS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today. The University of Hawai'i (UH) would like to provide comments on the proposed Senate Draft (SD) 1 for Senate Concurrent Resolution (SCR) 215 and Senate Resolution (SR) 208.

The UH provides information in response to assertions in SCR 215/SR 208 SD1 below. While we appreciate the concerns underlying this resolution, we believe the resolution to be unnecessary and recommend it be deferred.

### **Nursing**

The State is facing a nursing shortage brought about by a combination of factors:

- The pandemic;
- Retirements and restructuring in the health care system;
- Already existing issues associated with rural health care; and,
- Faculty shortages.

These problems are not unique to Hawai'i but exist nationwide. The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) has recently started convening meetings on the health care shortage across the western states so that higher education institutions can share strategies and best practices as we respond to this critical and growing need. UH has been participating in these meetings. Prior to the WICHE initiative, UH was already hosting systemwide convenings with the health sector and educational institution partners, including the Hawai'i DOE, to determine how we can best work together to address the nursing shortage and related issues across the state.

Our UH Community Colleges (UHCCs) recognize the critical need to develop statewide Hawai'i's workforce, including healthcare and nurses. Within our discussions, UHCCs are working collaboratively to meet workforce needs statewide while avoiding duplication of programs across campuses. For example, Kapi'olani Community College offers its nursing program at Leeward Community College, and Kaua'i Community College offers its Medical

Assistant training program at Maui College. SCR 215/SR 208 identifies a concern about nursing workforce needs in the Kalihi area. In response, UHCCs would propose to assess the feasibility of offering nursing and/or other needed allied health programs for the Honolulu Community College's service area without necessarily starting a completely new program requiring substantial expense and startup time, including accreditation.

In addition, as noted in our response to SCR 35/29, now that our pandemic constraints have primarily passed, we are planning to implement an institutionally-supported pre-nursing pathway at UH West O'ahu to replace the program that previously was federally funded. Furthermore, UH Mānoa recently started a distance learning BSN program to assist RNs on Maui to continue upward career mobility. This program can be further extended to other islands and locations as well.

### **Hawai'i P-20 Partnerships for Education**

These resolutions question the engagement, oversight, and direction of the Board of Regents (BOR) and the Office of the Vice President for Academic Strategy (OVPAS) over Hawai'i P-20. Hawai'i P-20 is a statewide collaboration of the Department of Education, the Executive Office of Early Learning, and the UH, the latter of which agreed to host the partners and does so under the auspices of the OVPAS.

Hawai'i P-20 updates the BOR on its activities, most recently at the November 18, 2022, and May 20, 2022, meetings of the BOR. The BOR designates a Regent to serve on the Hawai'i P-2020 Advisory Council – a high-level advisory group composed of leaders from education, business, labor, government, and the community who have a shared vision and mission of improving educational outcomes for Hawai'i. In addition, Hawai'i P-20 widely engages with education stakeholders throughout the state about its many initiatives that help inform the agenda for state action around education goals and attainment efforts. Operationally, the Hawai'i P-20 executive director participates as an integral part of the OVPAS leadership team, meeting weekly to discuss the systemwide academic vision and goals for UH, including Hawai'i P-20 initiatives and programs in collaboration with the DOE.

This merger of the former Office of the State Director for Career and Technical Education (OSDCTE) with Hawai'i P-20 was designed to create essential synergies in workforce development at the critical juncture of K12 and higher education and reduce administrative costs. As of July 2021, under reorganization proposed by the UH administration, supported by stakeholders, and approved by the BOR, Hawai'i P-20 has served as the administrative arm of the State Board for Career and Technical Education (SBCTE). As defined in HRS §304A-302, the SBCTE's function is to administer the provisions of Acts of Congress related to CTE – currently, the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act, commonly referred to as "Perkins V." HRS §304A-301 designates the BOR as the SBCTE, the UH President as the administrative officer of the SBCTE. As such, Hawai'i P-20 reports to SBCTE and the UH President on matters related to the federal Perkins grant and assists the SBCTE in carrying out the purpose and provisions of the Perkins legislation. Additionally, Hawai'i P-20 now collaboratively develops and revises the State of Hawai'i Perkins V Plan, recommends establishing policies for CTE, and assists the Hawai'i Department of Education and the UH Community College System in planning, coordinating, and evaluating CTE programs and activities. With the recent reorganization, we expect to achieve greater integration and leverage

of the federally supported CTE program with other pathways for career education and training within and between UH and the DOE.

Hawai'i P-20 has grown since its inception and now executes multiple statewide initiatives and programs, primarily through grants, contracts, and philanthropy rather than state appropriations. The vast majority of Hawai'i P-20's operating budget is funded through these outside sources. For FY 2020-21, approximately 90% of Hawai'i P-20's operating expenditures were funded through extramural contracts and grants, including federal discretionary grants, state pass-thru federal grants, and private philanthropic grants.

Hawai'i P-20's grants and contracts have specific budgets, deliverables and outcomes associated with each award; in other words, these grants are restricted and used to support each award's intent and objectives. Likewise, Hawai'i P-20's current staffing mix, which now includes the former OSDCTE positions, comprises 10 permanent, generally funded positions (9 currently filled and one in progress); 4 permanent, federally funded positions; and 24 temporary, extramurally funded positions. Like the grants that support them, the extramurally funded positions like the grants that fund them, have specific functions tied to grant deliverables.

Hawai'i P-20 has engaged in college and career readiness (CCR) initiatives since its inception. It continues to promote CCR so that students have the knowledge and skills to enroll in and successfully complete credit-bearing courses, workforce training, and/or apprenticeship programs without the need for remediation. Such preparations ensure students conclude their programs ready to enter a career of their choice. Through its various grants, Hawai'i P-20 creates, expands, and integrates activities and programs that support students' academic and workplace readiness skills.

Across the State, many organizations are working on career and workforce initiatives. These programs are governed by their organizational structures, boards and hierarchy— all work towards achieving their goals through different strategies. In many cases, these programs are aligned with Hawai'i's current "55 by '25" attainment goal. Hawai'i P-20 does not have authority over these organizations or their programs; nonetheless, it continues to inform and influence its education partners and stakeholders through collaboration to take action in preparing Hawai'i's students for high-skill, high-demand jobs.

The UH would be willing to provide the Legislature with a more comprehensive internal report, even without a Resolution, on the UH's and related workforce development training programs that prepare residents for employment in Hawai'i, actions to improve the alignment of programs with state and county workforce development and UH strategic plans, and key performance metrics for UH's workforce development training programs. We are confident this would be more informative, useful, and cost-effective than a report prepared by the Legislative Auditor.

### **College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR)**

As a land grant institution, UH Mānoa (UHM) is home to faculty, extension agents, and a wide range of programs dedicated to serving the State's agricultural needs. Additionally, UH Hilo, UH West O'ahu, and the UH Community Colleges host programs dedicated to the State's agricultural needs. The leadership of CTAHR has been developing pathways for students starting at Community Colleges to transfer into UHM programs and is working with its CC

partners to ensure these transfer pathways are responsive and robust. Additionally, CTAHR provides both critical research and education in areas directly related to the current and future needs of agricultural growth in Hawai'i and has strong relationships with the State's agricultural sector. Among its critical duties and responsibilities is the research and education associated with key topics such as the suitability of specific crops for particular locations given soil and climate considerations and responsiveness to invasive species, which can completely decimate a crop if not controlled.

Given the importance of CTAHR to the State, the unsubstantiated allegations made against CTAHR and its Dean are of grave concern. These include specific department-level assertions that are false and could readily have been confirmed prior to introducing a public resolution. We understand that some legislators have become a welcoming home for complaints of many types from many sources. However, unsubstantiated allegations are not an appropriate basis to commit scarce state resources for formal legislative audits of accusations from an individual, which can be and are readily addressed in a more appropriate, more timely, and less expensive manner. There is no need to audit CTAHR based on the unsubstantiated allegations published in this Resolution.

To clarify specific points raised in these resolutions related to CTAHR:

Reducing the budget of Molecular Biosciences and Bioengineering (MBBE) by 30% - The statement is factually inaccurate. The department's operational budget has increased 2- 4 times each year since FY18,

Budget cuts de-emphasized hands-on learning in MBBE - Since the department budget was not cut but increased, any changes to hands-on learning is a result of decisions made by the MBBE faculty, including during multiple years of significant pandemic impact. How the budget is used within the department is largely the decision of the faculty, not the Dean. Faculty are responsible for the curriculum and the types of learning utilized to help students meet the Student Learning Outcomes for specific courses and degree programs.

Fewer opportunities for MBBE student learning experiences with the Medical School - Faculty organize and decide on the program curriculum. There is no evidence that there are fewer opportunities, nor is it clear what "fewer" means in this context. In fact, several JABSOM faculty serve on MBBE students' graduate committees at the MS and PhD levels. The pandemic may have impacted other learning experiences, but without specific examples, we cannot adequately address this allegation.

Renewals of probationary faculty - The tenure process is rigorous and grounded in specific criteria designed by the faculty in their area of expertise and reviewed by the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Excellence, the Provost, and UHPA. Non-renewals indicate that the process works and is applied to ensure that the UH does not tenure a faculty member who cannot meet the expectations of their program or the university criteria. Individual cases of non-renewal are not an appropriate matter for public discourse. Where disagreements over individual actions (renewals or non-renewals) occur, there are robust processes for resolution.

Not followed through on promises to hire two faculty members in MBBE - This statement fails to consider both the impact of COVID-19 and the ongoing budget uncertainty, including the

targeting of UH Mānoa in 2021 for the most significant reduction in legislative appropriations. The positions referenced were approved, and a search was underway when COVID-19 hit in spring 2020. At that time, hiring throughout the UH system was frozen. As the UH budget situation has improved, UHM has made hiring one of its highest priorities and has approved limited hiring in AY 2022, where the hires proposed clearly articulate its post-pandemic priorities, are necessary for the accreditation of key programs, and/or address areas of highest program growth. Based on these priority indicators, CTAHR requested five positions, including one for MBBE, and received three, although unfortunately not the MBBE position.

Approved leave for faculty to pursue admin positions at another university - This statement misrepresents yet another personnel decision addressed appropriately at the college level. We will not disclose the details of an individual personnel action or how it has been remedied in a public hearing. Individual faculty making a complaint to their state legislators about their incomplete understanding of a confidential process are not in a position to know the details of these personnel decisions.

Dean has not resolved conflicts in the College – It is unclear what this specific clause seeks to address. When made aware of real or perceived conflicts or issues, the college and university administration investigates. While any individual involved may not like the outcome and may send their complaints to legislators, that does not mean the conflicts have been ignored. As in any large complex organization that includes individuals with highly diverse backgrounds and experiences as well as strong personalities and views, not every personal disagreement can be fully resolved to the satisfaction of everyone involved.

More generally, the University of Hawai'i System serves the State of Hawai'i by offering a wide range of degrees spanning certificates and vocational training to advanced graduate degrees in cutting-edge research pushing the boundaries of knowledge. The ten campuses in the UH System each have distinct missions and characters. Still, all work together to implement and support programs that educate the citizens of Hawai'i across the myriad current and future possible jobs, professions, and leadership opportunities. Like any complex system operating on a statewide scale, UH has an organizational structure that relies upon its leadership with relevant experience and expertise to shape our academic programs and allocate resources where they are most critically needed. In each of these areas we have dedicated faculty and administrators working to improve conditions in the state in an era of scarce resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the above mentioned comments.

**SCR-215**

Submitted on: 3/28/2022 2:56:45 PM

Testimony for HRE on 3/29/2022 3:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nicholas Comerford	Testifying for UH CTAHR	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Nicholas Comerford, Dean of the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources of the University of Hawaii at Manoa, will not be submitting testimony, but will be available for questions. Thank you!