

STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES
TESTIMONY ON H.B. No. 657, RELATING TO VETERANS SCHOLARSHIP
PROGRAM

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION, BUSINESS, & MILITARY
AFFAIRS

February 3, 2009

Good morning Chair Angus L.K. McKelvey, Vice-Chair Isaac W. Choy, and members of the House Committee on Economic Revitalization, Business, & Military Affairs

I am Mark Moses, Director of the Office of Veterans Services (OVS). I appreciate this opportunity to support the intent of H.B. 657, which would provide a veterans scholarship program at the University of Hawaii and other approved educational institutions.

The OVS supports the intent of this measure as long as its implementation does not impact or replace the priorities set forth in the Executive Biennium Budget for Fiscal Years 2009-2010.

Hawaii is fortunate to have a large veteran population. Some remain eligible for education under previous and current federal authorizations, others are eligible through the VA, and some would rely on the measure before us.

Twenty states provide no education benefits, while others provide a monthly stipend, deferment, waivers and scholarships.

Unfortunately, due to our current economic circumstances, it may not be practical to implement this measure at this time.

If this committee chooses to pass out this measure, we suggest that the following clarifications/changes be made:

Clarify the meaning contained in (c) at line 13, page 1. Will the University of Hawaii select approved courses of study leading to a specific vocation, or is the intent that scholarship applicants choose any of the University of Hawaii approved courses of study?

Will other schools, for example, non University of Hawaii Colleges be recipients of scholarships?

The legislation lists various conflicts and wars starting on page 2, line 15. We suggest the following wording, "(e) In addition to the requirements of

subsection (d), an applicant shall be a veteran as currently defined by the federal Department of Veterans Affairs. Then remove lines 16-22 on page 2, lines 1-22 on page 3, and lines 1-3 on page 4. The proposed changes would make identification of eligible veterans manageable and more precise.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of Hawaii's veteran community.

I will respond to questions from the committee.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Economic Revitalization, Business & Military Affairs
February 3, 2009 at 8:30 am

by

Karen C. Lee

Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, University of Hawai'i

HB 657 – RELATING TO VETERANS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM.

Chair McKelvey, Vice Chair Choy, and Members of the Committee:

The purpose of HB 657 is to establish a veterans scholarship program to be placed administratively within the University of Hawai'i.

The University supports the overall intent of this bill, provided that its passage does not adversely affect the Biennium Budget priorities approved by the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents. However, it is the University's understanding that most, if not all, of the students who would benefit from this bill would already be receiving federal aid that would cover tuition & other costs of attendance as well as general living expenses. Therefore, we anticipate that very few, if any, would be eligible for this scholarship.

Regarding the bill, the University does have several important administrative concerns:

1. We assume that the legislature will be providing the entire funding for the scholarship. The University is not financially prepared to fund such a scholarship.
2. As written, the University has the responsibility of administering the scholarship for Hawai'i residents who attend other, non-UH institutions. The University does not have the capacity to evaluate and re-evaluate eligibility and candidacy of applicants or to administer the scholarship to non-UH students. We humbly suggest that the scholarship be limited to UH students.
3. We also have concerns about any financial assistance that has scholarships converting into loans, should a student fail to comply with any of the requirements. Conversion scholarships are confusing to students and administratively difficult to award. We humbly suggest that this remain a scholarship and that paragraph on Page 2, beginning at Line 11, be deleted.
4. The University also has concerns about Sections (e) and (f) which detail specific veterans requirements. Being unfamiliar about exactly what types of documents could prove these requirements, we humbly suggest that the Hawai'i Office of Veterans Services or some other comparable state office screen this eligibility for the University and provide us with documents to prove eligibility.

Finally, we have technical amendments to the bill as written:

1. Page 1, Line 11 should read: "Scholarship amounts should be no greater than the cost of tuition, books, etc." The original wording would limit the scholarship to pay a particular type of charge, whereas different students may have unique charges necessary for their particular degree.

2. Page 2, Line 1 should read: "Be considered a Hawai'i resident for tuition purposes."
With the advent of distance learning, it is possible that a Hawai'i resident may try to earn a UH degree from outside Hawai'i.
3. Page 5, Line 13 should read: "An applicant shall not receive benefits under this section if s/he has accumulated a total of one and a half times the credits needed for the degree or certificate." This would be in line with federal financial aid policy. The original wording does not take into consideration transfer credits from other institutions which may be applicable to the degree or certificate.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.