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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1       SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the equitable  
2 reimbursement for services rendered to the University of Hawaii  
3 is a matter of statewide concern. High salaries for executives  
4 and managers affect the fiscal health of the State, while low  
5 salaries for graduate assistants are often inadequate to cover  
6 the costs of living in Hawaii.

7       The purpose of this Act is to reduce executive and  
8 managerial salaries at the University of Hawaii for fiscal year  
9 2016-2017 to the extent necessary to provide \$4,000,000 in the  
10 same fiscal year for graduate assistant salaries.

11       The legislature intends for the funds provided for graduate  
12 assistant salaries pursuant to this Act to be in addition to any  
13 other sums appropriated, allotted, expended, or otherwise  
14 provided for graduate assistant salaries.

15       SECTION 2. Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, the  
16 salaries for all executive and managerial positions at pay grade  
17 12 or higher at the University of Hawaii for fiscal year 2016-



1 2017 shall be reduced by an equal percentage, to the extent  
2 necessary to provide \$4,000,000 in the same fiscal year for the  
3 salaries for graduate assistant positions at the University of  
4 Hawaii.

5 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2091.



**Report Title:**

University of Hawaii; Salaries; Graduate Assistants; Executive;  
Managerial

**Description:**

Reduces executive and managerial salaries at the University of  
Hawaii for fiscal year 2016-2017 to the extent necessary to  
provide \$4,000,000 in the same fiscal year for graduate  
assistant salaries. (HB1801 HD1)

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is  
not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*





# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Higher Education  
February 9, 2016 at 2:00 p.m.

By  
Risa E. Dickson  
Vice President for Academic Affairs  
University of Hawai'i System

### HB 1801 HD1 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Chair Choy, Vice Chair Ichiyama and members of the House Committee on Higher Education:

I am submitting written testimony on behalf of the University of Hawai'i regarding House Bill 1801 HD1 – Relating to the University of Hawaii – which proposes to reduce executive and managerial salaries at the University for fiscal year 2016-17 to the extent necessary to provide \$4 million in the same fiscal year to be used for graduate student assistant compensation.

The University of Hawai'i opposes the passage of such legislation that would statutorily mandate a reduction in University executive and managerial salaries.

We believe that the proposed legislation does not support the spirit and intent of Article X, Section 6, of the Hawai'i State Constitution which provides in part that the BOR *"..shall have the exclusive jurisdiction over the internal structure, management, and operation of the university."* Furthermore, *"The board shall have the power to formulate policy, and exercise control over the university through its executive officer, the president of the University, who shall be appointed by the Board"*. We believe that such proposed legislation removes and denies the board's constitutional governance and authority over the University.

The work of graduate student assistants is valuable to the University of Hawai'i (UH). A graduate student assistantship is awarded as part of an education and training specific to the degree program in which a student is enrolled. Graduate student assistants receive stipends for their work, not salaries. As a matter of course in academic institutions, graduate assistants are not compensated with salary. Their compensation can include any combination of components such as tuition waivers, stipends, scholarships, etc. – but, salary is not a form of compensation for graduate assistants. A graduate student assistantship is neither a career path, nor a vocation, but part of the educational training in an academic discipline that allows a student to further their education and training, make meaningful contributions to the discipline and the University, and be provided financial assistance toward their degree.

The proposed legislation asserts that the salaries of UH executives and managers are “high salaries” but without an objective review and determination based on an independent study and/or audit. It also appears to suggest that a comparison between compensation for graduate assistants who are in temporary positions as part of their education and training, and UH executives and managers, who are in professional career positions, is a matter of statewide concern.

Additionally, HB1801 HD1 is proposing a one-time \$4 million lump sum source of funding for graduate assistant stipends, without any certainty or guarantee that such funding will be maintained and/or achieved in future years without further financial resources or possibly negative impacts to the services currently provided by the University. Finding funds for graduate assistant salaries can be achieved and/or accomplished by other means rather than legislatively mandating the BOR to act in a prescriptive manner.

The University requests that this bill be held.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



Date: February 9th, 2016  
Time: 2:00PM  
Place: Conference Room 309

To: House Committee on Higher Education  
Representative Isaac Choy, Chair  
Representative Linda Ichiyama, Vice Chair

Re: Support for HB 1801 Relating to the University of Hawai'i

Dear Chair Choy, Vice Chair Ichiyama, and Members of the House Committee on Higher Education:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Jonathan Dial, and I am writing on behalf and as the President of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) Graduate Student Organization (GSO), which represents the approximately 5,000 graduate students at the UH Mānoa campus. I am writing in strong support of HB 1801, which seeks to supplement compensation for graduate assistants at UH. We also request that this bill be amended to include the requested amount as a recurring item in the annual budget for UH.

Graduate assistants are an integral part of UH's operations. They perform many necessary functions, such as teaching, research, and administrative assistance, without which the university would not be able to operate. Unfortunately, these employees are not compensated fairly for their labor. Currently, base pay for graduate assistants at UHM is \$17,500/year, while UH's website sets the cost of living in Honolulu for graduate students at nearly \$34,000/year in 2012. Additionally, the pay rates for graduate assistants have not been increased since 2003/2004. Regardless of the elimination of the bottom pay steps in 2013, UH ranks third from the bottom when compared to all peer and benchmark institutions by current rates of compensation for graduate assistants in relation to cost of living. This is highly problematic for graduate students, as these positions are intended to serve as means through which students can earn a living wage while pursuing their education. Since current compensation does not meet those expectations, many graduate assistants must seek out supplementary employment opportunities, which ultimately increases time-to-completion towards degrees, decreases the overall quality of their teaching, research, and administrative work, and ultimately costs the university more.

Attempts by graduate assistants and the GSO to remedy this problem have been met with unwavering opposition from university administration. These circumstances no doubt deter potential students and are also likely involved with many students' decisions to leave UH and the state. Indeed, graduate student enrollment has significantly declined in recent years. Consequently, we have no option but to turn to the legislature in the hopes that governance will succeed where management is failing.

Finally, post graduates fill vital roles within local industries, businesses, and civil service. Their high levels of knowledge, expertise, and training contribute significantly to the competitiveness of the production and distribution of goods and services, as well as pushing the frontiers of scientific and technological innovation. It would be prudent to ensure that graduate education in Hawaii is perceived as desirable, attainable, and affordable. Based on these reasons, we strongly support HB 1801.

Respectfully,

Jonathan Dial  
UH Mānoa Graduate Student Organization, President

Email: [jdial@hawaii.edu](mailto:jdial@hawaii.edu)

Graduate Student Organization • University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Hemenway Hall 212 • 2445 Campus Road • Honolulu, HI 96822

## ichiyama2-Brandon

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, February 08, 2016 8:02 AM  
**To:** HEDtestimony  
**Cc:** bp32@hawaii.edu  
**Subject:** \*Submitted testimony for HB1801 on Feb 9, 2016 14:00PM\*

### **HB1801**

Submitted on: 2/8/2016

Testimony for HED on Feb 9, 2016 14:00PM in Conference Room 309

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Bret Polopolus-Meredith	Individual	Support	No

### Comments:

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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