UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM
Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education
March 20, 2018 at 2:10 p.m.
By
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HR 137 / HCR 156 – URGING THE CREATION OF A VIRTUAL CENTER FOR WOMEN AND TECHNOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Chair McKelvey, Vice Chair Hashem, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments on HR 137 / HCR 156.

The University has a strategic goal of increasing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) degrees, and recognizes that targeted outreach, learning, mentoring and other programs help to increase the number of women in such programs.

We provide these examples of initiatives to increase women in STEM, including computer science, but must clarify that these efforts are undertaken across the UH System, within campuses or existing programs:

- The University of Hawai'i Community College system office was awarded a National Science Foundation ADVANCE grant for its project, "Building Relationships to Increase Diversity and Gender Equity" (BRIDGE). The five-year, $1.1 million project will work with the seven community colleges to improve recruitment, retention, promotion, and success of women faculty in all STEM fields. The BRIDGE grant supports women in all STEM fields, including, but not limited to, computer science.

  The project also has a partnership element between the UH CCs and UH Hilo, using virtual tools to connect remote island campus locations in mentoring and coaching trainings for administrators and senior faculty.

  The UH President's Commission on the Status of Women, with commissioners appointed from all campuses and the system, has agreed to be a member of the Advisory Board for the BRIDGE program, and discusses issues such as disparities of women employees or students in the STEM fields.

- Maui College's NSF grant awarded for "Capacity Building: Cyber-Security Education across Disciplines with Focus on Minorities and Women," which includes working with high schools.

- Society of Women Engineers at UH Mānoa, established to build community, network with local professional women engineers, and demonstrate the value of diversity in this career field.

- "Girls Who Code" free workshops hosted by Hawaiʻi Community College for girls in grades 6-12, affiliated with a national nonprofit association Girls Who Code.

- The "Exploring Diversity and Gender Equity" (EDGE) project which had been awarded to UH Hilo, and aligned with the NSF-ADVANCE goal to increase representation and advancement of female faculty in STEM and in academic leadership positions.

The University continues to explore avenues for increasing our outreach to women to pursue careers in STEM, and we can explore the interesting concept of a virtual center to advance this work.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

March 20, 2018

Re: HR 137; Support

Dear Committee Members,

Code.org supports HR 137 -- Urging the creation of a virtual center for women and technology at the University of Hawaii. This bill would help to build interest in computer science among women and female K-12 students.

Computing is a foundational skill for K-12 students. It develops students' computational and critical thinking skills and teaches them how to create—not just use—new technologies. And yet only a quarter of software professionals in the United States are women.

In Hawaii last year, only 32% of AP Computer Science exams were taken by female students, and only 17% of the state's computer science college graduates were women.

Research from Google and Gallup shows that girls who have been told by parents or teachers that they would be good at computer science are 3 times more likely to be interested in learning it in the future. And yet, girls are less likely than boys to receive this encouragement, and girls' interest in learning computer science decreases between ages 12 and 14. We need to ensure that female students have mentorship and experiences in computer science.

Thank you for your efforts in providing young women in Hawaii with resources and encouragement to pursue computer science education. If you have any questions, please contact Katie Hendrickson at Katie@code.org or Cameron Wilson at Cameron@code.org. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Cameron Wilson
VP for Government Affairs
Code.org
www.code.org

HR-137
Submitted on: 3/19/2018 2:10:02 PM
Testimony for HED on 3/20/2018 2:10:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Melodie Aduja	Oahu County Committee on Legislative Priorities of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i	Support	No

Comments: