

JOSH GREEN, M. D.
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SYLVIA LUKE
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BRENNA H. HASHIMOTO
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

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DEPUTY DIRECTOR
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STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT
KA 'OIHANA HO'OMŌHALA LIMAHANA
235 S. BERETANIA STREET
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-2437

Statement of
BRENNA H. HASHIMOTO
Director, Department of Human Resources Development

Before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
Thursday, February 1, 2024
9:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 309

In consideration of
HB 2196, RELATING TO PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Garrett, and the members of the committee.

The Department of Human Resources Development (DHRD) appreciates the intent of HB 2196, which seeks to remove college degree requirements for state positions, with certain exceptions. However, DHRD offers the following comments on this measure.

1. DHRD recently completed a review of classes of work in the professional and scientific bargaining unit 13 and excluded managerial compensation plan to confirm that there are no classes of work that require an absolute degree, unless prescribed by law. The minimum qualification requirements consistently allow for combinations of experience and education, as well as the ability to substitute relevant work experience for a degree as a standard.
2. The State of Hawai'i selects persons for employment based on merit, which is the selection of persons based on their fitness and ability for public employment.
3. The State of Hawai'i is an equal opportunity employer, providing equal opportunity for all in compliance with all laws prohibiting discrimination.
4. The minimum qualifications requirements for positions are the minimum experience, education, licensing, and other requirements that would provide the knowledge and abilities necessary to perform the duties and responsibilities for the position.
5. The minimum qualification requirements are prepared with input from program managers, subject matter experts and departmental human resources staff.

6. Existing DHRD policy provides for the following when preparing minimum qualification requirements:
 - a. Minimum qualification requirements must be bona fide occupation requirements, that is, they must be essential and job-related.
 - b. Minimum qualification requirements should reflect the knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies required to perform the work.
 - c. Minimum qualification requirements should not pose artificial barriers, such as absolute educational degree, certification, or other requirement, unless they are bona fide requirements (e.g., licensure required by law).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and comments on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
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RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
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DEAN D. UYENO
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AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
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MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Testimony of
DAWN N.S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
LABOR & GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Thursday, February 1, 2024
9:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 309

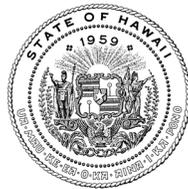
In consideration of
HB 2196, RELATING TO PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

House Bill 2196 proposes to remove college degree requirements for state positions, with certain exceptions. **While the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) appreciates the intent of this measure, the DLNR offers the following comments on this measure.**

1. The State of Hawai'i selects persons for employment based on merit, which is the selection of persons based on their fitness and ability for public employment.
2. Existing Department of Human Resources Development's (DHRD) policy provides for the following when preparing minimum qualification requirements:
 - a. Minimum qualification requirements must be bona fide occupation requirements; that is, they must be essential and job-related.
 - b. Minimum qualification requirements should reflect the knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies required to perform the work.
 - c. Minimum qualification requirements should not create artificial barriers, such as absolute educational degree, certification, or other requirement, unless they are bona fide requirements (e.g., licensure required by law).
3. The minimum qualification requirements are prepared with input from program managers, subject matter experts and departmental human resources staff.

4. The DLNR is already actively working with the DHRD on reviewing minimum qualification requirements for classes of work within the DLNR, and proposing changes to ensure that minimum qualification requirements are current and relevant.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.



JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

LUIS P. SALAVERIA
DIRECTOR

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EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT DIVISION
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT

WRITTEN ONLY

TESTIMONY BY LUIS P. SALAVERIA
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 2196

February 1, 2024
9:00 a.m.
Room 309 and Videoconference

RELATING TO PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

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

House Bill No. 2196 adds a new Section to Chapter 78, HRS, to prohibit any department or agency of the State from requiring a college degree as a requirement for employment of any State position, unless the degree is relevant to licensing or certification pertaining to the position.

Although B&F generally supports initiatives to enhance the State's recruitment efforts, it should be noted that the possession of a college degree continues to be one of the most important signifiers that a job candidate has the professional-level comprehension and writing skills needed to conduct State business. Furthermore, the proposed blanket prohibition on degree requirements may be impractical for certain job classifications and should be carefully considered with respect to each department's recruiting needs.

Finally, B&F defers to the Department of Human Resources Development on the merits and implementation of this bill as it pertains to State human resources policy.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Labor and Government Operations
Thursday, February 1, 2024, at 9:00 a.m.

By

Debora Halbert, Vice President for Academic Strategy
University of Hawai'i System

HB 2196 – RELATING TO PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Garrett, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed legislation relating to public employment, specifically the removal of the requirement of a college degree for any state position, unless the degree is relevant to licensing or certification as it relates to the duties and responsibilities of the position.

The University of Hawai'i (UH) appreciates our legislators' desire to reduce the number of vacant positions within state agencies, and UH acknowledges that there are undoubtedly certain government positions for which a college degree may not be an absolute necessity. At the same time, it is crucial to emphasize the importance of a college education in preparing individuals for the complex responsibilities associated with running state agencies. Fortunately, despite the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, the percentage of Hawai'i's working-age adults who possess a post-secondary degree has risen from 41% in 2005 to 48% in 2022, expanding the pool of college graduates available to pursue state employment. Our comments aim to highlight the broader value of a college degree in cultivating the skills and knowledge necessary for effective public service.

In the current landscape, the responsibilities of state agencies have become increasingly sophisticated and multifaceted. While some positions may not explicitly require a college degree, we believe that the majority of skills essential for effectively managing state agencies are acquired through higher education. The proposed legislation should consider the overarching role of education in shaping individuals who are equipped to handle the challenges inherent in public administration.

Examples from existing state agencies further underscore the significance of a college degree in performing job functions effectively. Consider the role of a program manager responsible for overseeing complex initiatives within a state agency. A college education provides individuals with critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills that are indispensable in strategizing and executing successful programs. Moreover, a comprehensive understanding of public policy, budgeting, and organizational behavior,

often acquired through college coursework, is instrumental in navigating the intricate landscape of state governance.

Similarly, while some positions may not necessitate a degree within law enforcement agencies, those with a college education often demonstrate more advanced communication skills, cultural competence, and the ability to comprehend and apply evolving legal frameworks. These attributes contribute significantly to the effectiveness and accountability of state law enforcement.

In the field of health services, professionals with a college degree are better equipped to comprehend the complexities of healthcare policy, epidemiology, and public health management. This understanding is vital for making informed decisions that impact the well-being of the community.

If this measure proceeds, we recommend that the proposed Hawai'i Revised Statute language found in Section 2 be amended to include the phrase "or when the position in question requires specialized knowledge, skills, or subject-matter expertise" at the end of the sentence. As written, the measure prohibits the State from requiring a degree, except under the limited circumstance in which a degree is relevant to a license or certification. This too narrowly restricts when a state agency requires a degree for specialized knowledge or skills that may not necessarily relate to a license or certificate.

At the University of Hawai'i, for example, certification or licensure is not required for most faculty, but UH must continue to require faculty to possess not only a college degree, but in most cases a degree at the Master's level or higher. A higher education degree is essential for this population of state employees. They are expected to be experts in their fields of study, with the intent to pass along critical knowledge, through teaching, research, and service, to future college-level learners, exposing them to the academic rigor of which they have first-hand knowledge.

Similarly, although a license or certification is not required for being a project manager or construction manager for the State, state agencies should be able to require architects to possess a degree in engineering or a related field. While a license or certification is not required for working as an auditor or fiscal specialist, state agencies should be able to require a degree in accounting, business, or a related field.

In conclusion, we urge the committee to carefully consider the broader implications of removing the college degree requirement for state positions. For example, one can foresee state agencies needing to invest more in training and development programs to ensure that employees without degrees possess the skills required to execute their job duties effectively. Removing degree requirements may also result in the loss of individuals with specialized expertise, potentially harming the operational effectiveness of the employing agency. While acknowledging the flexibility needed to fill particular vacancies, it is essential to recognize that education plays a pivotal role in developing the skill set required to navigate the intricate responsibilities of public service. Our office strongly supports the pursuit of policies that enhance the qualifications and capabilities

of individuals serving the state, ultimately contributing to the efficiency and effectiveness of our state agencies.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we are available to provide any additional information or clarification if needed.

Feb. 1, 2024, 9 a.m.
Hawaii State Capitol
Conference Room 309 and Videoconference

To: House Committee on Labor and Government Relations
Rep. Scot Matayoshi, Chair
Rep. Andrew Garrett, Vice-Chair

From: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii
Ted Kefalas, Director of Strategic Campaigns

RE: HB2196 — RELATING TO PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

Aloha Chair Matayoshi, Vice-Chair Garrett and members,

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii would like to offer its **support** for [HB2196](#), which would prohibit a state agency from requiring a college degree for any position unless the degree is relevant to licensing or certification relating to that position.

A bachelor's degree is not necessary for many state jobs, even though it is often required. A degree may indicate a certain set of skills, but it is by no means the only indicator.

A study from the Burning Glass Institute and Harvard University researchers noted that "when employers drop degrees, they become more specific about skills in job postings, spelling out the soft skills that may have been assumed to come with a college education, such as writing, communication and being detail-oriented."¹

Maryland, Utah, Pennsylvania, Alaska and many other states have all enacted policies aimed at removing arbitrary degree requirements for state jobs.² Hawaii should follow their lead.

¹ Joseph Fuller, Christina Langer, Julia Nitschke, Layla O'Kane, Matt Sigelman and Bledi Taska, "[The Emerging Degree Reset: How the Shift to Skills-Based Hiring Holds the Keys to Growing the U.S. Workforce at a Time of Talent Shortage](#)," Burning Glass Institute, 2022, p. 3.

² Kathryn Moody, "[Pennsylvania ends 4-year degree requirement for majority of state jobs](#)," HR Dive, Jan. 24, 2023; and Joey Klecka and Elena Symmes, "[4-year degree no longer required for some state jobs](#)," Alaska's New Source, Feb. 14, 2023.

For the record, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that only about a third of Hawaii residents age 25 or older have bachelor's degrees.³

Similarly, the nonprofit Opportunity@Work reports that individuals who do not possess four-year bachelor degrees but who are "skilled through alternative routes" made up 59% of Hawaii's workforce in 2019, compared to 53% of the workforce nationwide.⁴

Given this data, it is clear that HB2196 would broaden employment opportunities for local residents.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ted Kefalas
Director of Strategic Campaigns
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

³ "[QuickFacts: Hawaii](#)," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed March 20, 2023.

⁴ Communication with Ashley Edwards, Director for Data Services at Opportunity@Work, Aug. 17, 2022.

HB-2196

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 9:35:45 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cardenas Pintor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I support this bill.

Mahalo nui,

Cardenas Pintor