



# 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 Finance  
Wednesday, February 22, 2023, at 2:30 p.m.

By

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

#### HB 390 HD1 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII PROMISE PROGRAM

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 390 HD1, which expands the University of Hawai'i (UH) Promise program, currently only at the community colleges, to qualified undergraduate students enrolled at a four-year campus of the UH.

UH has two recommended revisions.

First, to align with the amount of credits that students can receive federal Pell grant awards for, we recommend amending page 5, lines 6-9:

“A student enrolled in an undergraduate program at a University of Hawaii campus, other than a community college campus, shall be eligible for scholarship consideration for a maximum of ~~eight~~ twelve semesters if the student:”

The goal is to align Hawai'i Promise with existing financial aid awards and practices at the four-year campuses.

Second, we believe the amendment included on page 6, lines 1-4, Section 2(c)(5), should be under page 5, line 5, Section 2 (b)(5), since the reference is for the community college certificates (and not the four-year campuses). The baccalaureate campuses, with only minor exceptions, do not offer certificates as a stand-alone degree.

It remains the case that a college degree is a critical method for increasing an individual's ability to enhance their earning potential over the course of their career. As the costs of higher education have been shifted to the individual, it has become essential to rethink how we ensure that college remains accessible to those in the lowest socioeconomic income brackets. Hawai'i Promise is an important tool directly benefiting Hawai'i's families otherwise least able to afford higher education.

Expanding the program will have multiple positive impacts. It will significantly enhance the ability for Hawai'i Promise community college students to transfer to a four-year program. Expanding the program to qualified students in four-year degree programs at the UH would greatly assist students pursuing their bachelor's degree. It will be a notable step forward in expanding access to economic opportunity for Hawai'i's students and preparing the educated workforce the state will need to grow in the coming decades.

The program has effectively proven its impact for students in the community colleges, where participation in Hawai'i Promise has increased student success in their chosen areas of study. In academic year 2021-2022, Hawai'i Promise recipients earned more credits, received better grades, and had higher persistence rates than their peers. Part-time students receiving a Hawai'i Promise scholarship also had higher graduation rates than their peers.

A survey to gather student feedback on Hawai'i Promise was emailed to all 2,139 students that received Hawai'i Promise in Academic Year 2021-2022. The large majority of survey respondents reported that the Hawai'i Promise Scholarship provided positive benefit and impact to their ability to afford, decision to enroll, and likelihood to persist in the University of Hawai'i Community College System.

- **91% of respondents** Strongly Agreed or Agreed that the Hawai'i Promise Scholarship helped them decide that college was affordable this year;
- **87% of respondents** Strongly Agreed or Agreed that the Hawai'i Promise Scholarship helped them to make the decision to enroll in college this year;
- **91% of respondents** Strongly Agreed or Agreed that returning to college next semester depends on continuation of their financial aid including Hawai'i Promise Scholarship.

Students transferring from the UH Community Colleges are often surprised to find that, due to the higher tuition rates at four-year universities, Pell grants and other scholarships may not completely cover their direct cost of attendance (tuition, fees, books, supplies, and transportation). A four-year version of Hawai'i Promise will help these transfer students afford the continuation of their education. Additionally, a four-year Hawai'i Promise can extend benefits to additional Hawai'i residents in need of support to pursue their higher educational goals. We would have the potential to impact 4,320 additional students at the baccalaureate level.

Additionally, the community colleges have found that more students qualify for Hawai'i Promise than the recurring General Fund appropriation is able to support. The community colleges have awarded \$4,884,829 in Hawai'i Promise scholarships to 2,139 students for the 2021-2022 academic year.

As a "last dollar" initiative, Hawai'i Promise ensures that the State of Hawai'i can maximize federal support in the form of Pell grants while at the same time ensuring that our most vulnerable students can pay for the cost of education. It is important to extend

Hawai'i Promise to the four-year campuses because currently Pell grants do not cover the full cost of tuition for these campuses, and as a result, Hawai'i Promise can play a critical role in meeting their higher education financial needs with a combination of federal and state funding.

The extension of Hawai'i Promise to students attending four-year campuses in the UH System will help the state achieve its statewide goal to increase educational attainment of Hawai'i residents to help them thrive in our communities. Additionally, we know that four-year college degrees are critical for many jobs across the state and for support of Hawai'i's innovation and entrepreneurial efforts.

Therefore, having the Hawai'i Promise program available to all eligible undergraduate students at the University of Hawai'i will provide a critical investment in Hawai'i's present and future.

Thank you for your consideration of these amendments and the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.



**Chair Kyle Yamashita**  
**Vice Chair Lisa Kitagawa**

**House Committee on Finance**

**Wednesday, February 22, 2023**  
**2:30PM**

**TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB390 HD1 RELATING TO THE  
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII PROMISE PROGRAM**

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, Members of the House Committee on Finance,

The Hawai‘i State Youth Commission (HiYC) was established to “advise the governor and legislature on the effects of legislative policies, needs, assessments, priorities, programs, and budgets concerning the youth of the state.” HiYC is in **STRONG SUPPORT** of **HB390 HD1**, Relating to the University of Hawaii Promise Program.

The existing Hawai‘i Community College Promise Program is an amazing program that opens the door to higher education for a lot more members in our community, especially members of working class and low-income families who are struggling to handle both the cost of higher education on top of paying the bills and trying to meet basic needs due to how unaffordable it is to live in Hawai‘i.

This program meets direct costs (books, tuition, school fees, and transportation) not covered by federal and state aid, grants, scholarships, and other funding sources that don’t need to be paid back by a student. This is as long as the student meets academic and residency requirements, with scholarships being given based on greatest need and availability of funding. It allows the student to focus a lot more attention toward their studies and other aspects of community college life like networking, career planning, and participating in recreational activities on campus. The legislature needs to put further funding toward the Hawai‘i Community College Promise Program so that ALL qualified students can receive much needed support, that is why the Hawai‘i State Youth Commission also hopes that this committee hears **House Bill 78 HD1** as well.

However, for those students who were thinking of going on to a 4 year university in Hawai'i after taking care of some general academic requirements at community college, students who are retaking courses, and/or whose careers goals will require or be greatly assisted by a 4 year degree, they or their families would not be eligible for further assistance from the Promise Program. It's a big issue to have that assistance cut off because a 4-year university/college is a lot more expensive than community college. As of right now, 1 credit in the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa would cost you around \$907<sup>1</sup> in tuition and fees as a resident and would cost around \$201<sup>2</sup> max at Kapiolani Community College in the Fall & Spring, and around \$318 max in the Summer.

That's a big difference in cost, and that's not even factoring in the other costs involved in going to a 4-year university. With there being a total of a 4% tuition increase at UH Mānoa coming in the 2025-2027 academic years, going to a 4 year university will become harder and harder for the children of working class families. If you want an educated and competitive workforce, if you want the youth of Hawai'i to seriously consider going to the University of Hawai'i then going to school on the continent, this is not a sustainable way of accomplishing those goals. This is why this measure, which would continue the Promise Program from community college to a 4-year university/college in the UH system is so important in helping current and future students to meet their dreams and goals with much of the financial burden lifted from their shoulders and the shoulders of their loved ones, hopefully leading to more thinkers, innovators, creators, and leaders who will carry our future.

The Hawai'i State Youth Commission requests that you **PASS House Bill 390 HD1** out of your committee. Please help to shape a better future for students and potential students, young and old here in Hawai'i, we now also have a \$1.9 billion budget surplus to do so.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Hawai'i State Youth Commission  
[hawaiistateyc@gmail.com](mailto:hawaiistateyc@gmail.com)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://manoa.hawaii.edu/registrar/tuition-fees/Undergraduate/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.kapiolani.hawaii.edu/paying-for-college/tuition-and-fees/>



AMERICANS FOR DEMOCRATIC ACTION

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February 21, 2023

TO: Chair Yamashita and Members of the Finance Committee

RE: HB 390 HD1 RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII PROMISE PROGRAM.

Support for a Hearing on February 23

Americans for Democratic Action is an organization founded in the 1950s by leading supporters of the New Deal and led by Patsy Mink in the 1970s. We are devoted to the promotion of progressive public policies.

Americans for Democratic Action Hawaii supports this bill as it would provide scholarships for the unmet direct cost needs of qualified students at any four-year University of Hawaii campus who meet certain eligibility criteria. For years we have argued for the expansion of the Hawaii Promise program to qualified students in four-year degree programs at the UH.

Strengthening access to college is essential to delivering the promise of a higher education to all Hawai'i residents. Too often, the cost of college tuition remains unattainable to working families, many of whom are experiencing financial hardship. Making community college free for our state's residents would likely cost less than \$20 million at a time when Hawai'i has a record \$1.9 billion budget surplus. At such a low price, this is an investment that our community cannot afford to miss.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Bickel, President

John Bickel, President



The House Committee on Finance  
2:30PM, February 22, 2023  
Room 308

RE: **HB 390, HD1, Relating to the University of Hawaii Promise Program**

Attention: Chair Kyle Yamashita, Vice Chair Lisa Kitagawa and members of the Committee

The University of Hawaii Professional Assembly (UHPA) appreciates the opportunity to **support the intent of HB 390, HD1**, Relating to the University of Hawaii Promise Program, and **offers amendments**.

UPHA supports increased access to education and closing the educational attainment gap, however requests that HB390, SD1 adopt the proposed language under section 304-506(b):

“(5) Has been determined by the campus to have unmet direct cost needs[.]; provided that a student who enrolls in a certificate program shall not be required to submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid each academic year.”

The Hawai`i Promise Scholarship Program is a “last dollar” scholarship, meaning that it covers financial needs not met by other forms of financial aid, such as federal grants and scholarships from UH, employers and other private sources. One qualification of eligibility for students pursuing certificate programs is completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Assistance (FAFSA). Exclusion of the FAFSA submission requirement for students in certificate programs will enable more families the opportunity to enroll in community college and acquire the skills necessary to enter the workforce.

Certificate programs assist individuals to attain practical experience focused on the skills and knowledge needed for a specific job, opening the door to gainful employment. The absence of general education courses required in degree programs mean it takes less time and money to complete certificate programs. This impactful movement enables families to enter the workforce with practicable training that can be built on to advance in the workplace and further educational opportunities.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Fern'.

Christian L. Fern  
Executive Director  
University of Hawaii Professional Assembly

University of Hawaii  
Professional Assembly

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**HB-390-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/21/2023 11:33:40 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2023 2:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
wilfredo tungol	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and members of the finance committee,

My name is Wilfredo Tungol and I am submitting my testimony **in strong support of this bill.**

As an alumnus of UH Manoa and a grateful alumnus for being given the opportunity to attend the institution for 7 years, I understand and support the importance of this bill.

I was a working student during my whole time at the UH Manoa, receiving my undergraduate and law degrees from the Shidler College of Business and Richardson School of Law. Had it not for affordable tuition and later tuition waivers I would not have been able to pursue my degrees at those institution.

This bill will help those who are deserving of continuing the pursuit of their education. It is an investment to our younger generation who wants to upgrade themselves in order to be able to afford to remain in our state.

Mahalo for your kind consideration to pass this bill.

Wilfredo Tungol

BBA 1976, JD 1979



February 21, 2023

House Committee on Finance

**In strong support of HB 390 HD1**

Feb. 22, 2023, House Conference Room 308, Hawai'i State Capitol

To: Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair  
Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Members: Rep. Micah P.K. Aiu, Rep. Cory M. Chun, Rep. Elle Cochran, Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa, Rep. Darius K. Kila, Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi, Rep. Rachele F. Lamosao, Rep. Dee Morikawa, Rep. Scott Y. Nishimoto, Rep. Mahina Poepoe, Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Rep. David Alcos III, Rep. Gene Ward.

Dear Chair Kyle T. Yamashita, Vice Chair Lisa Kitagawa and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

Kumustakayo amin (greetings everyone)! My name is Rouel Velasco and **I submit this testimony in strong support of HB 390 HD1**, a bill to appropriate funds to provide scholarships for underrepresented students to afford higher education. **I am urging you to support this measure.**

I provide this testimony on behalf of myself as a Hawai'i-Born Filipino private citizen from Kapolei, O'ahu. I am a proud graduate of the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, twice (with a bachelor and master's degrees). I am honored to share my thoughts with you.

The Hawai'i Promise program is a success for students attending Hawai'i's community colleges. Specifically, this program provides students from underrepresented and disenfranchised communities to afford higher education. Over the past four years, the program has yielded impressive results. These results includes:

- Hawai'i Promise recipients attempted and earned more credits than non-awardees (16 credits earned by Hawai'i Promise recipients vs. 12 credits earned for all other degree-seeking students).
- Hawai'i Promise recipients had higher passing rates than their peers and earned higher grades (3.0 average GPA for Hawai'i Promise recipients vs. 2.8 average GPA for all others).
- Full-time Hawai'i Promise recipients were more likely to continue to be enrolled at UH than non-awardees. In fall 2022, 69% of recipients were still enrolled, compared to 61% of non-awardees.
- For part-time students who were scholarship recipients returned at a higher rate than their peers—56% compared to 47%.

These results can also show potential promise and hope for students attending four-year universities - Mānoa, Hilo and West O'ahu. Expanding the Hawai'i Promise program to the four-year institutions would advance Hawai'i's workforce, significantly. Retaining local and homegrown talent and their aloha spirit is vital for the longevity and sustaining of Hawai'i for generations to come, to keep Hawai'i for Hawai'i.

As a student affairs professional at one of the University of Hawai'i campuses, I see the potential of the impact the Hawai'i Promise program may have on students, specifically for adult learners. Adult learners have families of their own, caretaking responsibilities and so much more. The Hawai'i Promise program will ease their burden of financing college while having to provide for their family - a home, food and all necessities. This would allow the student to be focused on their studies towards excellence. The cost of living in Hawai'i is high and many are considering moving away and relocating their families just to make ends meet. The promises of this bill would allow local residents to remain home, grow and cultivate their excellence, prepare them for success in the workforce and to contribute to Hawai'i's economy. Hawai'i's greatest asset are its people. This bill will mālama Hawai'i for generations to come.

I thank the House for introducing HB 390 HD1 to provide aid to underserved regions and populations to afford higher education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rouel Velasco