



**TESTIMONY OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA  
THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE, 2024**

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**ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**

H.B. NO. 2633, RELATING TO ACCESS TO EDUCATION.

**BEFORE THE:**

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY

**DATE:** Wednesday, February 7, 2024      **TIME:** 2:00 p.m.

**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 309 and Videoconference

**TESTIFIER(S):** Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or  
Candace J. Park, Deputy Attorney General

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Chair Perruso and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments.

This bill: (1) requires the Leeward Community College Waianae Moku to establish and report to the Legislature on a program to support and assist students who are twenty-four years old or younger and ineligible to apply for federal financial assistance through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid application because they are unable to access their parents' tax information; and (2) makes an appropriation for the purpose of this bill.

Article X, section 6, of the Hawai'i Constitution gives the Board of Regents of the University of Hawai'i "exclusive jurisdiction over the internal structure, management, and operation of the university." Section 6 further provides: "This section shall not limit the power of the legislature to enact laws of statewide concern. The legislature shall have the exclusive jurisdiction to identify laws of statewide concern." If the Committee decides to pass this bill, we recommend an amendment that adds a statement identifying this bill as a law of statewide concern.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these 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 Higher Education & Technology  
Wednesday, February 7, 2024 at 2:00 p.m.

By

Erika Lacro

Vice President for Community Colleges  
University of Hawai'i System

### HB 2633 – RELATING TO ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Chair Perruso, Vice Chair Kapela, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of HB 2633, which provides support and resources to assist the University of Hawai'i – Leeward Community College (LCC), Wai'anae Moku Education Center (WM) students, that are under twenty-four years old and that are unable to submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid application due to their inability to retrieve parents' tax information.

This assistance program would provide qualified students with funding to cover direct education costs. Currently, tuition for full-time (12 credits) Hawai'i residents is \$3,144 for tuition and \$70 in student fees per year. Cost of attendance typically includes costs related to books, supplies, housing, and food among other expenses to provide a basis for financial planning. For students living with parents or relatives, the estimated cost of attendance is \$15,184 per year; whereas, for those living independently, the estimated cost of attendance is \$25,180. For reference, the Pell Grant, Federal Financial Aid for 2023-24 is capped at \$7,395.

At present, 31% of WM students are recipients of the Pell Grant, while 70% of the student body is aged 24 years and under. Given the WM enrollment, about 50 students would be potentially eligible under this program. It is important to note, that for eligibility, LCC students enroll at the College and not at WM, and therefore defining a WM student will be based on residence zip code OR course section enrollment at WM.

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of HB 2633, as long as its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2633.

University of Hawai'i

**LEeward COMMUNITY COLLEGE WAI'ANAe MOKU**

Testimony of Rick Kang, ATE Program Coordinator at Leeward Community College Waianae Moku

My name is Rick Kang, and I am the ATE Program Coordinator at Leeward Community College Waianae Moku. In 2015, I founded the Access To Education (ATE) program in response to the challenges students shared with me regarding their struggles in college classes. ATE is dedicated to providing resources and support to a diverse group of students, including those who were previously incarcerated, children of incarcerated parents, in recovery from drug and alcohol abuse, victims of sex trafficking, survivors of domestic violence, and those who were in foster care or adoption.

The majority of our students come from single-family homes, and many live with someone other than their parents or are houseless. The brokenness in their homes often results in students below 24 years old not having access to their parents' tax information, making them ineligible for financial aid such as the Pell Grant and other need-based scholarships that require a FAFSA application.

Currently, the ATE program has 70 students, and every semester, there are several prospective students unable to enroll or continue their education due to financial constraints. These students often resort to taking out loans or accumulate outstanding financial balances that prevent them from returning to school. In the Spring 2024 semester, I took the initiative to provide financial assistance to four students, covering their Fall 2023 tuition, despite their ineligibility for financial aid.

All four of these students are not financial aid eligible, highlighting the urgent need for additional support. I wholeheartedly endorse this bill, as it will empower students who, through no fault of their own, face barriers to attending college. The ATE program is well-prepared to implement this bill, as we already assist every student in applying for financial aid and scholarships. For those unable to access their parents' information or deemed ineligible for financial aid, we collaborate with our students to explore alternative options and establish sustainable financial plans.

This bill is not just about education; it is about breaking down financial barriers and providing opportunities for a brighter future. I urge you to support this legislation, which aligns with the mission of the ATE program to empower and uplift students facing unique challenges in their pursuit of higher education. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely

Rick Kang  
ATE Program Coordinator  
Leeward Community College Waianae Moku  
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02/06/24

Hawaii State Capitol  
Committee on Higher Education and Technology  
Chair, Vice Chair, and Members  
415 S Beretania St. Honolulu, HI 96813

Subject: Testimony in Support of HB2633 - Access to Education Leeward Community College Waianae Moku

Dear Representative Perusso and Members of the Higher Education and Technology Committee,

My name is Alaysia Kyle and I am a Peer Facilitator III for the Going to Finish On-Time (G2FO) and Access to Education (ATE) programs offered at Leeward Community College Waianae Moku.

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 2633, which aims to appropriate funds to Leeward Community College Waianae Moku. This bill is crucial in providing much-needed financial assistance to students who are twenty-four years old or younger and are ineligible to apply for federal financial aid through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) due to their inability to access their parents' tax information.

Leeward Community College Waianae Moku plays a vital role in our community by offering educational opportunities to students who may face unique challenges in their pursuit of higher education. The students affected by the limitations in accessing their parents' tax information should not be hindered in their educational journey due to circumstances beyond their control.

The appropriation of funds outlined in HB 2633 will enable Leeward Community College Waianae Moku to establish and maintain programs that specifically address the financial needs of these students. By doing so, the college can ensure that a broader spectrum of individuals has access to quality education, empowering them to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to our community.

Investing in the education of these students is an investment in the future of our state. By supporting HB 2633, we are fostering an environment where all young individuals, regardless of their family circumstances, can access the educational resources necessary for personal and professional growth. This not only benefits the students directly involved but also contributes to the overall well-being and prosperity of our community.

I urge you to consider the long-term impact of supporting HB 2633 and the positive impacts it will have on the lives of many young individuals striving for a better future. Your commitment to providing equal educational opportunities will undoubtedly contribute to the continued success and vibrancy of our community.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I sincerely hope you will support HB 2633 for the betterment of our community and the future success of its youth.

Sincerely,  
Alaysia Kyle  
G2FO/ATE Peer Facilitator III

February 5, 2024

Hawaii State Capitol  
Committee on Higher Education  
and Technology  
451 So. Beretania Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Subject: Testimony Supporting HB 2633 - regarding Access to Education

Dear Representative Perusso and Members of the Higher Education and Technology Committee:

My name is Tammy Aiwohi, I am a peer facilitator at the Leeward Community College- Waianae Moku. I service students who come disadvantaged backgrounds.

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for HB 2633, which seeks to allocate funds to Leeward Community College Waianae Moku. This legislative initiative is crucial for providing financial assistance to students aged twenty-four and under who face challenges applying for federal financial aid through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) due to their inability to access their parents' tax information.

Leeward Community College Waianae Moku plays a pivotal role in our community by offering educational opportunities to students who may encounter unique obstacles in their pursuit of higher education. Those students who are hindered by the inability to access their parents' tax information should not face barriers to their educational aspirations due to circumstances beyond their control.

The appropriation of funds outlined in HB 2633 will empower Leeward Community College Waianae Moku to establish and sustain programs specifically designed to address the financial needs of these students. By doing so, the college can ensure that a broader range of individuals has access to quality education, enabling them to realize their full potential and make meaningful contributions to our community.

Investing in the education of these students represents an investment in the future of our state. By endorsing HB 2633, we are creating an environment where all young individuals, regardless of family circumstances, can access the educational resources essential for personal and professional growth. This not only benefits the students directly involved but also enhances the overall well-being and prosperity of our community.

I respectfully urge you to consider the lasting impact of supporting HB 2633 and the positive outcomes it can bring to the lives of many young individuals striving for a better future. Your commitment to providing equal educational opportunities will undoubtedly contribute to the continued success and vibrancy of our community.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this matter. I sincerely hope you will lend your support to HB 2633 for the improvement of our community and the future success of its youth.

Sincerely,

Tammy A. Aiwohi  
ATE/G2FO Peer Facilitator

Cady Gaspar

**House Bill 2633: Relating to Access to Education**

**In Support**

Aloha, my name is Cady Gaspar and I am a peer mentor at Leeward Community College Waianae Moku for the G2FO and ATE programs. I am writing this testimony in support of House Bill HB2633. From my understanding, this Bill dedicates funding for the LCC Waianae Moku campus to support individuals 24 or younger that are ineligible for Financial Aid due to lack of access to their parents tax information. As a peer mentor I have witnessed many enthusiastic students who are dedicated in the pursuit of their education become discouraged. When they are unable to receive financial support from FAFSA due to lack parental information or support it makes it hard for them to persevere.

This Bill will allow students in this situation to receive financial support towards achieving their academic goals. I believe that this is important especially for students in the Waianae community because there are limited resources and opportunities without receiving a higher education. Most individuals find minimum wage jobs or fall into the life of crime and drugs. By enacting this Bill we are creating an opportunity for success in our community. It is my belief that everyone should have access to equal opportunities when it comes to their education. Not having access to their parental records should not hold them back from achieving their goals.

With that being said, I offer my full support in regards to House Bill HB2633. It will be an incredible resource for students at Leeward Community College Waianae Moku. With this Bill we will be able to change the lives of students in our Waianae community in pursuit of a college degree.

Cady Gaspar

Leeward Community College Waianae Moku

G2FO and ATE Peer Facilitator

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**HB-2633**

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 1:06:28 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/7/2024 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Emi Kaneshiro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

If the University of Hawaii and legislators for the State of Hawaii truly want to show commitment to Native Hawaiians, they will support this bill, which will genuinely benefit the campus with the largest number of Native Hawaiians in the state, which is the Leeward Community College Waianae Moku Education Center, located in Maili on the Leeward Coast of Oahu. So many of our students have parents who have never supported them, due to use of drugs and alcohol, houselessness, and basic instability in life. In the nearly 20 years that I have worked at this amazing campus, the Access to Education program, which provides support to these students through monetary, counseling, and peer mentor support throughout their academic journey, has been the most successful and life-changing programs that I have seen in the University system, and definitely in Leeward Community College. It helps the students to persist, gain confidence, perpetuate the value of education to their family and friends, and ultimately help to uplift the community at large. Each of these students' life stories is truly an inspiration. Please show your dedication to Native Hawaiian education, and the quality of life of our kaiāulu, by supporting this bill.

Sara Gaspar

**HB 2633: Relating to Access to Education**

**State Capitol: 415 South Beretania Street**

**In Support**

Aloha, My name is Sara Gaspar and I am a Peer Facilitator for the Access to Education and Going to Finish on Time Programs at Leeward Community College Wai‘anae Moku. I am writing in support of House Bill 2633 which will support appropriating funds to Leeward Community College Wai‘anae Moku to assist students who are twenty-four years old or younger that are ineligible for financial aid due to lack of access to their parental information.

In my position here at Leeward Community College Wai‘anae Moku, I have come across several students that I have mentored who faced this challenge in their academic journey. This has prevented them from continuing on their education journey. This is a very discouraging situation and has kept students from coming to college. At the present, I have one student who is in this exact situation since the Fall 2023 semester of college. This bill would allow for said students to be able to pursue their academic goals without any barriers. It gives individuals in the Waianae community the ability to access higher education and better opportunities. It is my belief that these opportunities will better our community as access to education allows students to stay away from other socioeconomic issues including drug use and crime.

With that being said, I am in full support of Bill 2633. I know that it will do wonders for our community when it is approved. This will be an incredible resource for Leeward Community College Waianae Moku students.

Sara Gaspar

Leeward Community College Waianae Moku

G2FO and ATE Peer Facilitator

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**HB-2633**

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 2:18:36 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/7/2024 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
cheryl burghardt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I SUPPORT this bill HB 2633 which appropriates funds to Leeward community college Waianae Moku to support and assist students who are twenty-four years old or younger and ineligible to apply for federal financial assistance through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid application because they are unable to access their parents' tax information.

If we can assist folks in any way to start or continue their educational path, we should do it. It is important that not all individuals have equal access to information and deserve assistance.

**HB-2633**

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 2:21:10 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/7/2024 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Annemarie Paikai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this measure to ensure more equitable access to education for students who do not have access to their parents financial information.

**HB-2633**

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 4:24:25 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/7/2024 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Bronson-Lee Kekoa Bailey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill!

**HB-2633**

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 5:10:53 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/7/2024 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nancy Jones	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Perruso, Vice-Chair Kapela, and Honorable Committee Members:

I respectfully present this testimony to SUPPORT HB 2633 (SB 2970), which provides needed funding to the Wai`anae Moku of Leeward Community College to support and assist students – aged 24 and younger -- who are prevented from accessing federal financial educational assistance because of their inability to access their parents' tax information. So many college-age students in the Wai`anae Moku live with someone other than their parents, originate from single-family homes, or are houseless. These living situations generally cause students who are aged 24 or younger to lack access to their parents' tax information – thus making them ineligible for financial aid programs like the Pell Grant and other need-based scholarships that require a FAFSA application.

For all of the above reasons, and in the interest of allowing otherwise disadvantaged students a pathway to higher education, I urge your Committee to please pass HB 2633 out of your Committee and allow it to move forward during this Legislative Session. Mahalo for this opportunity to present this testimony supporting HB2633.

Nancy A. Jones

PO Box 1462, Wai`anae, HI 96792 / Email: [nancyhydroalt@gmail.com](mailto:nancyhydroalt@gmail.com)

**HB-2633**

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 5:30:05 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/7/2024 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Zeb Jones	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Perruso, Vice-Chair Kapela, and Honorable Committee Members:

I respectfully present this testimony in SUPPORT of HB 2633 (SB 2970), which provides critical funding to Leeward Community College’s Wai`anae Moku to assist and support students – aged 24 and younger -- who cannot access federal financial educational assistance because of their inability to access their parents’ tax information. So many college-age students in the Wai`anae Moku live with someone other than their parents, originate from single-family homes, or are houseless. These living situations generally cause students who are aged 24 or younger to lack access to their parents' tax information – thus making them ineligible for financial aid programs like the Pell Grant and other need-based scholarships that require a FAFSA application.

For these key reasons, and in the interest of creating a pathway to higher education for otherwise disadvantaged students, I urge your Committee to please pass HB2633 out of your Committee and allow it to move forward during this Legislative Session. Mahalo for this opportunity to present this testimony supporting HB2633.

Zebuel “Zeb” C. Jones

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