



*The Judiciary, State of Hawai'i*

**Testimony to the Thirty-Second Legislature, 2023 Regular Session**

**Committee on Health and Human Services**

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

**Committee on Higher Education**

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair  
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 16, 2023 at 3:00 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

by:

Brandon M. Kimura  
Deputy Administrative Director of the Courts

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY**

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**Bill No. and Title:** Senate Bill No. 436, Relating to Mental Health

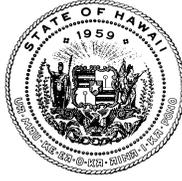
**Description:** Appropriates funds to support and expand the mental health technician certificate of competence program through the hiring of a mental health technician certificate program coordinator, establishment of a scholarship program, and any other necessary administrative costs.

**Judiciary's Position:**

The Judiciary supports the intent of this measure—to enhance the workforce across the state in the field of behavioral health care. This is a type of work critical to the efficiency and effectiveness of the justice system and to the larger community.

The Judiciary supports appropriate efforts to assist those suffering from mental health challenges before interaction with and/or outside the justice system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
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**WRITTEN  
TESTIMONY ONLY**

**Testimony COMMENTING on S.B. 436  
RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH**

SENATOR JOY SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

SENATOR DONNA MERCADO KIM, CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Hearing Date, Time and Room Number: February 16, 2023, at 3:00 p.m.in Room 229/VIDEO

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The Department of Health (“Department”) requests that this measure be  
2 considered as a vehicle to provide this needed funding so long as it does not supplant the  
3 priorities and requests outlined in the Governors executive budget request.

4 **Department Position:** The Department strongly supports this measure and offers comments.

5 **Department Testimony:** The Adult Mental Health Division (AMHD) provides the following  
6 testimony on behalf of the Department.

7 The Department strongly supports this measure which appropriates funds to support  
8 and expand the Windward Community College (WCC) mental health technician (MHT)  
9 certificate program through the hiring of a mental health technician certificate program  
10 coordinator, establishment of a scholarship program, and any other necessary administrative  
11 costs.

12 The Department recognizes that education and training and important parts of building  
13 the mental health care workforce. We understand that education and training should not stop  
14 when someone is hired for employment. Ongoing opportunities to provide training and

1 professional development can help to address staff retention concerns while also supporting  
2 employees who want to learn additional skills through convenient learning modes that provide  
3 work-life balance (e.g., online distance learning).

4 The WCC MHT certificate program began in Spring 2022. This program provides  
5 introductory training to those entering the mental health service field. Courses in psychology,  
6 communication, and conflict resolution and mediation offer a range of academic study and skill-  
7 based activities to strengthen knowledge about working through difficult situations in the  
8 workplace. Of these 25 graduates thus far, 11 are employed at the Hawaii State Hospital.

9 We are pleased with the interest that this program has received thus far and look  
10 forward to partnering with WCC to welcome prospective students as well as to congratulate  
11 future MHT certificate program graduates, including those who are currently employed or  
12 aspiring to be employed by the Hawaii State Hospital.

13 We believe appropriating funds to establish a program coordinator position will allow  
14 this program to expand and be offered at other community colleges, thereby helping to address  
15 the need for health care workforce training throughout our state. We respectfully ask for the  
16 Legislature's support of this measure.

17 **Offered Amendments:** None.

18 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



The Committee on Health and Human Services  
&  
The Committee on Higher Education and Technology  
Thursday, February 16, 2023  
3:00 pm  
Room 229, Videoconference

RE: **SB 436, Relating Mental Health**

Attention: Chairs Joy San Buenaventura and Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chairs Henry Aquino and Michelle Kidani, and Members of the Committees

The University of Hawaii Professional Assembly (UHPA) appreciates the opportunity to testify **supporting the intent of SB 436**, Relating to Mental Health.

SB 436 expands the mental health technician certificate program by providing funding not only for the hiring of one full-time mental health technician certificate program coordinator, but also establishing a scholarship program and granting scholarship, as well as other administrative costs. Expansion of this certificate program statewide will afford greater opportunities to enter into the field.

The mental health technician certificate program provides practicable training that can be built upon to advance in the workplace and further educational opportunities. To ensure the recruitment and retention of the program coordinator position, it is essential for the FTE appropriation to have a recurring, general funded designation.

Respectfully submitted,

Christian L. Fern  
Executive Director  
University of Hawaii Professional Assembly

University of Hawaii  
Professional Assembly

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# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

### Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Senate Committee on Higher Education  
Thursday, February 16, 2023 at 3:00 p.m.

By  
Della Teraoka  
Interim Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Community Colleges  
University of Hawai'i System/Campus

#### SB 436 – RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

Chairs San Buenaventura and Kim, Vice Chairs Aquino and Kidani, and Members of the Committees:

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of SB 436, which supports and expands the mental health technician certificate of competence at Windward Community College (WCC) through the hiring of a Mental Health Technician (MHT) certificate coordinator, establishment of a scholarship program, and any other necessary administrative costs.

WCC developed the MHT certificate in collaboration with the Hawai'i State Hospital (HSH) in order to provide a foundation of knowledge and increase skills for those serving the mentally ill on our islands. The program consists of three focused courses, available in person and online. Students learn fundamentals of psychology and psychological functioning, as well as conflict resolution and communications. This allows them to understand situations that arise at work, to more effectively deal with patients and to prevent escalation of conflict in tense situations. This leads to a safer workplace and a more supportive therapeutic environment.

This addresses the severe shortage of mental health workers during a time when our State has dire needs for mental health support due to the impacts of the pandemic, socio-economic stressors, high job turnover, and a lack of workforce skilled in this area. It serves not only HSH, the second largest employer in Windward O'ahu, but also other mental health related employers such as Windward District Health, Hina Mauka, and others. Our online asynchronous offerings allow current workers to grow their skills through course offerings maximally adaptable to their schedules and further allow for this program to be expanded statewide.

The program was first implemented in Spring 2022, which resulted in two (2) graduates in the first semester; both continued their employment at the HSH with their improved skills and knowledge. In Fall of 2022, twenty-three (23) more students graduated with the MHT certificate; nine (9) of these graduates were employed at HSH. Already in its first year, this program has had a large impact on the capacity of Windward O'ahu to

care for those suffering from mental health issues and to increase workplace satisfaction and safety in the workplace.

The MHT certificate creates a pathway to further training and higher education. A one-year certificate currently under development will build on the certificate by adding clinical skills and knowledge necessary to perform higher job requirements in more advanced clinical settings. These certificates are specifically designed to advance students to increasingly higher qualifications, such as degrees in psychology, social work, and mental health counseling. This grows the overall capacity of our state to address mental health challenges and needs.

The MHT certificate coordinator position would allow this program to be made available statewide through our sister community college and partnerships with mental health related agencies and workplaces. The coordinator position can further oversee the implementation of a scholarship program, ensuring access for unemployed, underemployed and low wage earners, creating a pathway out of poverty.

This bill supports the MHT certificate program at WCC to address an immediate, critical workforce need for preparing potential employees and upskilling existing employees. It builds the capacity of our state to implement effective, supportive care for those suffering from mental illness.

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of SB 436, 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 testify in support of SB 436.

**SB-436**

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 10:28:44 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/16/2023 3:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Windward Community College (WCC) has developed a Mental Health Technician certification program in collaboration with the State Hospital in order to train mental health workers. SB436 would help to insure that there will be more mental health workers to service the needs of our residents.

Thank you for considering my strong belief that SB436 is worthy of your support in order to meet the growing mental health needs of Hawaii which have grown exponentially in part due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

**SB-436**

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 12:01:56 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/16/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Michael EKM Olderr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We are in a mental health epidemic that affects everyone of every age. We have been in it long before covid hit us. Students in college tend to exhibit symptoms of mental health deficiency more than others, and since it's a critical time in their life, they should be cared for and treated. I support this bill.

**SB-436**

Submitted on: 2/15/2023 11:58:01 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/16/2023 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Cards Pintor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I support SB436. We are currently in a mental health pandemic and there is a need for more mental health services and professionals. With this bill, more people will be willing to take up becoming mental health professionals which will help alleviate costs for them.

Mahalo nui,

Cards Pintor

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
House Committee on Higher Education and Technology

**LATE**

Support for SB436- Relating to Mental Health

Thursday February, 16 2023  
3:00 PM CR 229

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Chair Perruso and all committee members,

My name is Holly-Jill Zablan, and I am an emergency services health care worker, and social work student at The University of Hawaii at Manoa. These opinions are my own and do not represent any of these organizations. I am grateful for this opportunity to testify in immense support of SB436 which would appropriate funds that supports and expands the mental health technician certificate of competence program through the hiring of a mental health technician certificate coordinator, establishment of a scholarship program, and any other necessary administrative costs.

Throughout twelve years of working in an emergency department in downtown Honolulu, I have noticed a substantial increase of individuals in need of mental health services. Many of these individuals seek help at emergency rooms because they have already reached a point of crisis. I believe that this is in part due to the lack of resources on island. Many of the patients that I have served have mentioned that they are unable to get access to services and often have to wait months before getting seen for an intake appointment. This speaks that the demand for mental health professionals is critical.

This bill has great potential to increase the accessibility and caliber of mental health services for residents of our state as well as to offer promising mental health technicians beneficial educational opportunities. Establishing a scholarship program will help many who desire to work in the field, but may not have the financial means for education.

By supporting and expanding this program, our state will not only gain an increase in qualified mental health professionals, but it will also improve access to mental health services.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify.