



# 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  
Friday, February 23, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.

By

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

#### HB 2498 HD1 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII RESIDENT TUITION FEE

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill (HB) 2498 HD1 relating to the University of Hawai'i (UH) resident tuition fee.

HB 2498 HD 1 would allow graduates of a Hawai'i high school to be classified as residents for the purpose of in-state tuition at UH. An educated citizenry is a foundation for a vital state. As the sole provider of public higher education in the State of Hawai'i, UH supports this bill, to increase access to higher education and attempt to streamline the application process for residents, especially recent high school graduates.

The four-year duration of time that in-state tuition would be available to prospective qualifying students makes higher education accessible for an extended period after high school completion while using graduation from a high school in the State of Hawai'i as a determining factor simplifies the residency process and would reduce barriers to local students enrolling at UH to pursue additional education and training.

Hawai'i's "college-going rate" of high school graduates declined during the pandemic, dropping from 55% enrolling immediately after high school to 51%. The decline in college-going rates to UH disproportionately affected low-income, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander graduates. While some decline may be attributed to the uncertainties the pandemic created in the lives of our students, as UH moves forward, we must do so in ways that streamline the transition from high school to college as much as possible.

As written, for residents who may have left the State and decide to return for any variety of reasons within four years post-graduation from a Hawai'i high school, this bill would allow them a faster transition to higher education for up-skilling or change to a different career path without delaying pursuit of their educational and life goals. This extension could also serve as an incentive for residents who moved away to return to pursue higher education at an affordable cost, further contributing to Hawai'i's local economy

and addressing the brain drain that occurs when students leave for college and do not return.

Passing this measure would ensure the current statutory requirements on residency for tuition purposes are amended to alleviate the challenges faced by some Hawai'i graduating high school seniors and recent graduates, as it would align with the UH's amendments to administrative rules to streamline the enrollment process for all applicants for admission into the UH System.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR



KEITH T. HAYASHI  
SUPERINTENDENT

STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO  
P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

**Date:** 02/23/2024

**Time:** 10:00 AM

**Location:** 308 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

**Committee:** House Finance

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

**Title of Bill:** HB 2498, HD1 RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII  
RESIDENT TUITION FEE.

**Purpose of Bill:** Requires the tuition residency rules for the University of Hawaii to grant the resident tuition fee for enrollment at any University of Hawaii campus to individuals who have graduated from a Hawaii high school and are enrolling in an undergraduate degree program, under certain conditions. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports HB 2498, HD1 relating to the University of Hawaii resident tuition fee and defers to the University of Hawaii as to its implementation.

Investing in affordable college tuition is not just about individual opportunity, it's about our state's future. By making higher education accessible to all Hawaii residents who have graduated from a Hawaii high school, we empower individuals, foster social mobility, and drive economic growth. The Department is supportive of any effort to ease the pathway for our students to continue their education and to provide opportunities to learn and enter the workforce at home here in Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2498, HD1.



Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Finance  
Friday, February 23, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.

By  
Stephen Schatz, Executive Director  
Hawai'i P-20 Partnerships for Education

## HB2498 HDI – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I RESIDENT TUITION FEE

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB2498 HDI relating to expanding the criteria to qualify for resident tuition at the University of Hawai'i (UH).

Hawai'i P-20 Partnerships for Education (Hawai'i P-20) supports HB2498 HDI.

This bill would allow recent graduates of Hawai'i's high schools to be classified as residents for the purpose of in-state tuition at UH and would help to simplify the application process, thereby reducing barriers for local students pursuing post-high school education and training, especially those graduates who are homeless and/or have complex family circumstances.

Hawai'i P-20 works with education partners across the State to create smoother transitions for students – particularly those who are low-income and under-represented in higher education – along the education pipeline. This bill would complement Hawai'i P-20's larger effort of collaboration across the State in developing seamless pathways between secondary and postsecondary. It will further reduce barriers students may face when applying to UH and will streamline the admissions process, thereby allowing students to make their college decisions sooner and start their college onboarding earlier.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this measure.