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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. 2720

February 2, 2024
9:30 a.m.
Room 309 and Videoconference

RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

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

This measure allows graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i (UH) to collectively bargain by amending Chapter 89-6, HRS, to remove the exemption from collective bargaining (CB) for graduate student assistants employed by UH and to authorize a new Bargaining Unit (BU) 16.

The long-term cost implications of allowing graduate student assistants to collectively bargain is a concern for the State budget. Negotiation of pay increases for graduate students need to be weighed against the foregone revenue from tuition waivers and other fees that graduate students do not pay as part of their assistantships. Further, their work hours and work conditions would all need to be part of CB negotiations that might not fit the flexible schedules that graduate students require to complete their academic program.

The Legislature has created two new BUs in recent years and is considering creating others, in addition to this one, this session. There are concerns with the increasing administrative costs and complexities, negotiating, arbitrating, and managing of contracts for every increasing numbers of BUs.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Written Testimony for HB2720

Meagan Harden, PhD Candidate in Geography at UH Manoa

Aloha, and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2720 which would establish a collective bargaining unit for graduate students employed by UH.

During my first two years as a PhD student at UH Manoa, I worked as a Teaching Assistant. For four semesters, I provided TA support to a total of 400 students in World Regional Geography, 140 students in Geography of Japan, and 140 students in Geography of Hawaii. In this role, I was responsible for creating and evaluating assignments, providing personalized feedback and remediation plans, and even delivering lectures and creating course content to the nearly 700 undergraduates enrolled in these classes. These tasks are typical of the kind of work that graduate assistants provide at the University of Hawaii.

When my grandmother passed away from covid in 2020, I relied on the goodwill of my supervisor to attend her funeral. I was lucky to have a kind supervisor, not everyone does; I could have missed my only opportunity to say goodbye to my grandma alongside my family. a collective bargaining unit will make sure that situations like these, where TAs are dealing with very real and very personal problems, are navigated fairly and equitably.

When I changed health insurance coverage last year, it took three months for my employee health insurance paperwork to be properly processed. For three months, I had to put pressing health concerns on the backburner while I waited for reassurance that addressing my health wouldn't put me even further into debt. Again, a collective bargaining unit will help ensure that employees have avenues for support in situations like these.

I now work as a lecturer, which means that I have a TA assigned to me for support in my World Regional Geography class. As her supervisor, it's completely up to me to make sure that her work environment isn't hostile, unsupportive, or unsafe. My TA should have an entity that is not her supervisor looking out for her, and that avenue should be permitted and supported by the state that employs her.

It is already an exceptional privilege to pursue graduate studies, and the lack of basic worker's rights are making grad school even more financially exclusive. When my former students ask me to write them letters of recommendation for grad school applications, I feel obligated to warn them that it's precarious out here. The state of Hawai'i needs to support TAs, so that we can continue to support our students. Thank you.



UNITED PUBLIC WORKERS

AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES THE THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE REGULAR SESSION OF 2024

COMMITTEE ON LABOR & GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Rep. Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair
Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice Chair

Friday, February 2, 2024, 9:30 AM
Conference Room 309 & Videoconference

Re: Testimony on HB2720 – RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

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

The United Public Workers, AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO (“UPW”) is the exclusive bargaining representative for approximately 14,000 public employees, which includes blue collar, non-supervisory employees in Bargaining Unit 1 and institutional, health, and correctional employees in Bargaining Unit 10, in the State of Hawaii and various counties.

UPW supports HB2720, which establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawaii and community college system.

UPW supports the right of all employees to collectively bargain their wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment, including graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawaii System and its affiliated campuses. The various work-related issues that graduate assistants continue to encounter could fairly be addressed by the collective bargaining process. By eliminating the current exclusion of this group from collective bargaining, as proposed by the language of this bill, and creating a unique bargaining unit, graduate assistants will be provided the ability to resolve differences in contract negotiations with the employer.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kalani Werner", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Kalani Werner
State Director

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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
House Committee on Labor and Government Operations
Friday, February 2, 2024, at 9:30 a.m.

By

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

HB 2720 – RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on HB 2720, which establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawai'i and community college system.

The University of Hawai'i (UH) has had ongoing discussions with the graduate students regarding this issue and UH is deliberately not taking a position on this measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments on this measure.

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & GOVERNMENT
OPERATIONS

RE: HB 2720 - RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2024

ROSALEE AGAS-YUU, PRESIDENT
HAWAII NURSES ASSOCIATION, OPEIU LOCAL 50

Chair Matayoshi, and Members of the Committee:

Hawai'i Nurses' Association, OPEIU Local 50 **strongly supports HB2720**, relating to collective bargaining. Like all workers, graduate assistants (GAs) deserve the right to collectively bargain with their employer over wages and working conditions.

Article 13, Section 2 of the Hawaii State Constitution states "Persons in public employment shall have the right to organize for the purpose of collective bargaining as provided by law" (Hawaii. Const. art XIII, sec. 2). Recently, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board found that GAs at the University of Hawai'i and community college system (UH) are indeed public employees of the State of Hawai'i but did not assign them to any of the 15 existing public employee collective bargaining units. This decision leaves UH GAs in an unprecedented legal limbo of being declared public employees with a right to collectively bargain, but without an appropriate unit they are effectively denied this right. HB2720 resolves this issue by creating a new collective bargaining unit for UH GAs, including a dispute mechanism to resolve differences with the Employer in contract negotiations that is consistent with other bargaining units of public employees in education.

GAs are vital to the university community, performing instruction, research, and administrative work. GAs include highly skilled workers of all ages, at all points in their careers, and in all areas of expertise across UH, including nursing. Their labor, like all labor, should be publicly recognized by guaranteeing the right to bargain for fair wages and working conditions. Hawai'i Nurses' Association asks you to support and pass this bill.

Respectfully Submitted,


Rosalee Agas-Yuu

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 11:30:49 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Yen Tzu LIEW	Academic Labour Union	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support the HB2720!!!



TESTIMONY FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

FEBRUARY 2, 2024

HB 2720, RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i **supports** HB 2720, relating to collective bargaining. Pursuant to the “Economic Justice and Labor” section of the official Democratic Party of Hawai'i platform, the party believes “that all workers have the right to form a union to collectively bargain with employers on their behalf. We support the efforts of unions to protect and advocate for workers. We support anti-discrimination protections in the workplace. We support policies that reduce racial, gender, and other disparities in pay.”

There is a power in a union.

Today, political pundits prognosticate about the possible onslaught of austerity facing our nation. Many of these same pundits believe that labor unions are an impediment to economic prosperity, arguing that collective bargaining sets wages above what the free market demands.

They couldn't be more wrong. **Collective bargaining is a human right.** Unionized employees' compensation and work protections, moreover, are essential to creating an upwardly mobile middle class and continually increasing economic prosperity. As economist Paula Voos of Rutgers University School of Management and Labor Relations notes, “It is no accident that the prosperity and consumer boom of the 1950s—a period of unprecedented middle-class expansion,

broad business growth, increased home ownership, rising consumer spending, and the shared expectation that a college education was within the reach of everyone and that the lives of our children would be better than our own—followed the greatest sustained expansion of unionization in American history.”

Unsurprisingly, decreasing American middle-class incomes and the rapidly widening wealth gap in our country parallel a significant decline in union membership. It is imperative, then, that we promote higher productivity by strengthening labor-management relations. Through a union, employees have a means to engage with management about workplace problems, inefficient processes, unfair work conditions, and unsupportive compensation. Unions also reduce employee turnover and increase the retention of highly experienced employees, creating circumstances that favor professional development and mutual trust in the workplace.

Graduate assistants are employees and, thus, guaranteed the right to collectively bargain with university management, a fact that both the Hawai'i Supreme Court and Hawai'i Labor Relations Board have upheld within the last year. In providing instruction to students and research that expands our society's knowledge base, graduate students tirelessly toil on behalf of the university community, often under fear of retaliation because of a lack of organizing power in resisting exploitation. Graduate student assistants are short-term positions. Yet, the duration of graduate positions only heightens the urgency of establishing collective bargaining protections, as temporary employees too often fall prey to employers who exploit the precarious nature of these positions and assume student workers will simply “deal with the pain and move on.”

Appallingly, UH graduate assistants currently earn approximately \$20,000 per year on average, a number that has not significantly increased in almost two decades. At the sunrise of 2019, that amount carried over \$6,000 less purchasing power than it did fourteen years ago *before* adjusting for Hawai'i's high cost of living. **It is not even half of what MIT's living wage calculator calculates as a living wage for a graduate assistant working in the islands.**

Mahalo nui loa,

Kris Coffield
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee
(808) 679-7454
kriscoffield@gmail.com

Abby Simmons
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee
(808) 352-6818
abbyalana808@gmail.com



HOUSE BILL 2720, RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

FEBRUARY 2, 2024 · LGO HEARING

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 2720, relating to collective bargaining, which establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawai'i and community college system.

There is a power in a union.

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Unsurprisingly, decreasing American middle-class incomes and the rapidly widening wealth gap in our country parallel a significant decline in union membership. It is imperative, then, that we promote higher productivity by strengthening labor-management relations. Through a union, employees have a means to engage with management about workplace problems, inefficient processes, unfair work conditions, and unsupportive compensation. Unions also reduce employee turnover and increase the retention of highly experienced employees, creating circumstances that favor professional development and mutual trust in the workplace.

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Thomas Jefferson wrote, “Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.” The same is true with basic civil rights, including the rights to freely associate and bargain for fair pay and work conditions, which are constantly under assault by a corporate mindset that puts dollars before democracy.

Kris Coffield · Chairperson, DPH Education Caucus · (808) 679-7454 · kriscoffield@gmail.com



TESTIMONY FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAI'I LABOR CAUCUS

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND GOVERNMENT
OPERATIONS · FEBRUARY 2, 2024

HB 2720, RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Labor Caucus **supports** HB 2720, which establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawai'i and community college system.

There is a power in a union.

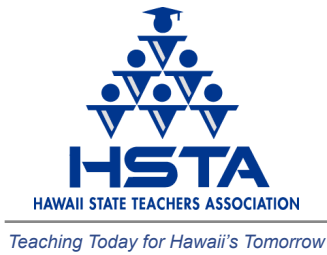
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TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAII HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Item: **HB2720 - Relating to collective bargaining**

Position: **Support**

Hearing: **February 2, 2024, 9:30 a.m., Conference Room 309**

Submitter: **Osa Tui, Jr. – President, Hawai'i State Teachers Association**

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

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association **supports** HB2720 which establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawai'i and community college system.

In a state like Hawai'i where collective bargaining rights are enshrined in our state constitution, Academic Labor United has been diligently jumping over each obstacle and hurdle put in their way as they fight tooth-and-nail for the recognition and respect they should be afforded for the valuable work they perform as government workers. It shouldn't have to be such a struggle in a collective bargaining state like Hawai'i.

Their plight is like many others throughout history as they organize to push back on being overworked, underpaid, and often exploited.

In January of this year, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board unanimously ruled that the graduate assistants of the University of Hawai'i are public employees. Hawai'i Revised Statutes Chapter 89 gives public employees "the right of self-organization and the right to form, join, or assist any employee organization for the purpose of bargaining collectively through representatives of their own choosing on questions of wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment, and to engage in lawful, concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection, free from interference, restraint, or coercion."

Sweeping arguments that they are not large enough in numbers or that they don't remain in those positions long enough ignore the fact that they are nonetheless Hawai'i public employees who should be afforded collective bargaining protections. Similar arguments that they are passionate now, but future generations of ALU might not be as passionate could have been levied at any Hawai'i public sector union in their infancies. Arguments that this would embolden other public sector employees to seek breaking

away from their current bargaining units to pursue their own bargaining units dismisses the fact that ALU doesn't currently have union representation whereas those others do. Finally, arguments that granting ALU a bargaining unit will lead to feelings of entitlement is another way to say that these public employees are not entitled to collective bargaining rights and that their exploitation is acceptable.

Late last year, ALU held a non-binding vote regarding national affiliation and the vote was in favor of joining the National Education Association (of which the Hawai'i State Teachers Association is an affiliate). The NEA and HSTA has been providing a lot of the support that ALU has asked for and will continue to do so. ALU would not be the only graduate assistant union in the country – it most certainly can be done and the NEA works with a number of them.

There have been many struggles along the way and there will continue to be struggles as ALU works with passion and drive to organize and improve their conditions as public workers. Please remove the final obstacle that remains in their path for the University of Hawai'i graduate assistants to become their own bargaining unit with a legitimate seat at the bargaining table to advocate for themselves.

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 5:38:37 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Katharine Hull	University of South Florida Graduate Assistants Union	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am Katharine Hull, a unionized graduate student worker from University of South Florida, and I support HB 2720 in its current form. The graduate assistant union at my university provides a voice at the table when it comes to contract negotiations with our Board of Trustees. The union has won graduate assistants minimum stipends, tuition waivers, and subsidized health care. These benefits allow graduate assistants to better focus on their studies, teaching, and research, which in turn benefits the university. I believe the graduate assistants in Hawaii deserve these same benefits.



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

RANDY PERREIRA, Executive Director • Tel: 808.543.0011 • Fax: 808.528.0922

The Thirty-Second Legislature, State of Hawaii
House of Representatives
Committee on Labor and Government Operations

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 2, 2024

H.B. 2720 — RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO supports the purpose and intent of H.B. 2720 which establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawai'i and community college system.

In-light of the recent Hawaii Labor Relations Board decision, we find it necessary and appropriate for this group of employees to establish their own bargaining unit so that they can bargain collectively, just like many other public employee groups.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on H.B. 2720.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director



Academic Labor United

Testimony from Academic Labor United (ALU)

Attention: House Committee on Labor and Government Operations
Representative Scot Matayoshi, Chair
Representative Andrew Garrett, Vice Chair

Re: Strong Support of HB 2720 Relating to Collective Bargaining

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Academic Labor United (ALU) stands in strong support of this bill. ALU is working to improve the lives of the 1400 plus Graduate Assistants employed at the University of Hawai‘i (UH) and gain recognition for our labor. ALU is our stopgap measure to advocate for our union rights until we can legally exercise them.

Honorable representatives, before you, is a chance for Hawai‘i to catch up to the rest of the states and correct decades-long denial of rights ([University of Hawaii at Mānoa Graduate Division](#), [University of Hawaii at Hilo](#)). HB 2720 will amend HRS 89-6 to create bargaining unit 16 for Graduate Assistants and provide a conflict resolution mechanism for said bargaining unit that is consistent with other units representing workers employed at the University of Hawai‘i and in education in Hawai‘i. This will enable Graduate Assistants to organize for the purposes of collective bargaining. **As such, the bill does not seek or require any additional appropriations; it offers public employees the opportunity to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement.**

Graduate Assistants manage diverse roles in the university. They constitute a committed learning community, conduct important research, and perform a substantial proportion of teaching and administrative duties. Graduate Teaching Assistants provide education to undergraduates by teaching our own classes and leading discussion sections, lectures, and labs. We also meet with undergraduate students during office hours to offer guidance and tutoring that greatly benefits students with an instructor’s personal attention. We do all the grading and lecturing, design syllabi, manage the classroom, and often teach more classes than the faculty of our departments. Graduate Research Assistants often manage multiple independent projects, and perform the cutting-edge research that has recently seen UH named in the top 1% of research institutions worldwide. Graduate Research Assistants are responsible for the groundbreaking research done by the UH Cancer Research Center. Our research brings in millions of dollars in grants for the university, money and recognition these workers rarely receive. Other Graduate Assistants work in administrative offices and run key facilities, including the Athletics department, Deans’ offices, and student support services such as Native Hawaiian Student Services and the Center on Disability Studies. These services make our university more accessible and better serve our community. Without the 1400 plus Graduate Assistants at the University of Hawai‘i at both Mānoa and Hilo campuses, the university could not open its doors, could not teach the next generation of leaders in Hawai‘i, nor could it do anything.



Academic Labor United

Article 13 Section 2 of the Hawaii State Constitution states “Persons in public employment shall have the right to organize for the purpose of collective bargaining as provided by law” (Hawaii. Const. art XIII, sec. 2). We have come a long way to fight for our status as public employees and the right to unionize. Since the 1970s, graduate students in Hawai‘i have sought to collectively bargain, which was one of the founding missions of UH’s Graduate Student Organization (GSO), following the 60s-70s wave of graduate workers bargaining units and unions on the continent. Graduate Assistants from UH have been working to pass this specific bill for almost a decade. In 2015, the bill arrived at the governor’s desk, but was vetoed. Exhausting all possible venues, graduate workers, including some members from GSO, founded ALU in 2016, with a focus of gaining legal recognition. In April 2023, the Supreme Court decision (*Academic Labor United v. Board of Regents of the University of Hawai‘i*) requested declaratory judgment from the Hawai‘i Labor Relations Board (HLRB) to determine UH Graduate Assistants’ status. After ALU filed a declaratory petition in July 2023, on January 4, 2024, HLRB determined that Graduate Assistants are public employees with the right to collectively bargain (see attached letter at the end of this document for more context). These recent decisions in the past years put graduate workers at a different place from the last legislative session. We are closer than ever to getting our own union. And we are excited to join our fellow graduate student unions— a collective of workers that have existed for over 50 years— on the continent.

To effectively move forward and unionize, graduate student workers need our own bargaining unit. Our unique position as students and workers makes us vulnerable in the face of the university and our supervisors. While the recent HLRB decision ruled out the possibility of putting graduate students into any existing bargaining unit except for Units 7, 8, or 13, these three CBUs do not fit graduate workers’ needs and working conditions. Unit 7 would create conflict of interest and put us in the position of belonging to the same unit as our direct supervisors, the UH faculty, some of whom graduate student workers would have grievances against. Unit 8 similarly includes UH staff who directly process our employment papers. Unit 13 does not cover teaching positions in any capacity. We also have markedly different working conditions from all 3 units, including specified working hours and retirement and pension plan benefits. Since these conditions differ or do not apply to graduate workers, negotiating contracts together would create conflicts. Such a process would not address graduate student workers’ unique needs and positions and would be costly and inconvenient for existing bargaining units. As stated above, Graduate Assistant unions have existed for 50 years across the United States. Over 100,000 graduate workers in the United States belong to graduate unions at over 80 public and private institutions in states such as California, Oregon, Washington, New York, Illinois, Montana, Massachusetts, Iowa, and many more. Just last year, in 2023, graduate workers from the University of Minnesota and Rutgers University voted to unionize; Private universities— including Duke, Cornell, Northeastern, Yale, UChicago, Dartmouth, Stanford, and Johns Hopkins — won union elections. We are not seeking to depart from the norm. Collective bargaining for Graduate Assistants has become the norm.



Academic Labor United

Graduate Assistants are an integral part of the UH system and the local economy. Over the course of the pandemic, the number of Graduate Assistants has grown from just below 1250 to over 1400, indicating an increasing reliance on our labor to make the university run. In our experience talking to other GAs, more GAs are employed in support offices that attend to an increasingly diverse array of duties. While our labor is increasingly indispensable to the university, as graduate workers, we face particular challenges and disadvantages and lack recourse when faced with administrative decisions that jeopardize our well-being and safety in the workplace. Graduate Assistants have no formal protection guaranteeing their right to free inquiry and expression. Unions can successfully resolve these dire issues. The combination of stagnant wages well below the minimum cost of living, zero job security, and the absence of basic benefits like sick, medical, and parental puts UH at a disadvantage when recruiting and retaining graduate students. This has led to an ongoing TA crisis, which sees the university canceling classes due to a dearth of Graduate Assistants who can lead the courses. As individuals, we stand little chance of success in demanding better treatment and compensation and addressing issues such as sexual harassment and workplace discrimination. The long history of failed attempts at improvements proves this to be true. We cannot rely on our employers to act in good faith nor in our best interest; they must be contractually obligated to do so. Our best hope for improving our own situations is to come together and collectively bargain for better working conditions and, more importantly, for a better university. In turn, we can make the university a more attractive workplace for prospective workers and increase the amount of filled positions needed by the university.

Our union is ready to finally receive recognition and we are prepared to manage our own bargaining unit. Members of ALU have fought tirelessly over the past few decades to unionize. ALU is a structured, organized, and flexible union with our own by-laws as well as active Finance, Communications, Political Education, International Students, Gender Equity, and General Grievance Committees. This year, we also formed a Constitutional Revision Coalition to update our by-laws that were last revised in 2017. Our Organizing Committee has a structure similar to a typical union and liaison roles resembling the stewards in different colleges and departments, including the College of Arts, Languages & Letters, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, School of Engineering, School of Ocean & Earth Science & Technology, and more. Together, we have been able to put pressure on the university, gain salary increases and continually work to address issues such as sexual harassment and international student concerns.

In 2020, when COVID-19 reached Hawai'i, ALU started a hardship fund before UH, organizing a campaign for a sick leave policy; later that year, ALU established the ShaveICE coalition to push back against ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) and government policies regarding international students. Most recently, in 2022, we successfully mobilized hundreds of GAs to demand a 3-year annual step pay raise after not receiving one since 2016 and paid sick leave policy with the support from GSO. Even without legal recognition, we have been organizing graduate student workers and fighting for better living and working conditions.



Academic Labor United

Currently, ALU membership is at ~50% of ~1,400 Graduate Assistants of UH Mānoa, and we are continually working to increase this percentage and to organize other UH campuses such as UH Hilo. In November 2023, our membership voted on union affiliation to better support our ongoing effort to unionize and collectively bargain. After meeting with different unions, 70% of the voters voted for the National Education Association (NEA), thus establishing a non-legally-binding yet committed affiliation. With NEA's expertise in higher education and network of graduate worker unions, we have established substantial support and experience to run our own graduate union. In the past few decades, many local Hawai'i unions have also nurtured and mentored our union. With our commitment and other unions' support, Graduate Assistants are ready and are in urgent need of unionization and our own bargaining unit. We strongly urge that HB 2720 be passed. The time is now.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kaiqing Su,
Political Education Chair
Academic Labor United

LAW OFFICE OF
LANCE D COLLINS

A LAW CORPORATION

Post Office Box 782, Makawao, Hawai'i 96768
(808) 243 - 9292 • lawyer@maui.net

January 30, 2024

Academic Labor United
<alu@aluhawaii.org>

Dear Academic Labor United,

You requested that I provide background on the circuit court lawsuit, the Supreme Court decision, the HLRB decision as well as whether the legislature has the power to deprive graduate assistants of their constitutional right to organize for purposes of collective bargaining.

I

Graduate assistants have been excluded from collective bargaining in Hawai'i based upon two 1972 Hawai'i Public Employment Relations Board decisions, Decision No. 21 and Decision No. 25. Decision No. 21 excluded graduate assistants from Unit 7. Decision No. 25 excluded graduate assistants from Unit 8 by determining that they were not public employees as defined by Chapter 89, HRS.

Under Hawai'i Labor Relations Board's former administrative rules and caselaw, there was no available procedure by which to challenge those 1972 decisions.

Academic Labor United filed suit in the First Circuit Court alleging three claims. The first claim sought to obtain a judicial declaration that graduate assistants are persons in public employment within the meaning of Article XIII, Section 2 of the Hawai'i State Constitution, have a right to organize for the purposes of collective bargaining and that neither state law nor agency interpretations of state law may abrogate altogether that right.

The second claim sought a judicial declaration that graduate assistants are "public employees" within the meaning of HRS 89-2 and to the extent that they are excluded from that definition, that exclusion unlawfully abrogates their right to organize for purposes of collective bargaining.

The third claim sought a judicial declaration that the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board's former administrative rules violate the right of persons in public employment to organize for purposes of collective bargaining insofar as previous decisions are binding on public employees but they have no administrative process to review or seek relief from those decisions.

The Circuit Court dismissed the complaint on the ground that jurisdiction under the declaratory judgment statute had not been met. ALU appealed

II

On April 5, 2023, the Hawai'i Supreme Court held that the 1972 decisions "are not a binding, final adjudication that graduate assistants are not 'employees' within the meaning of HRS 89-2" and distinguishing caselaw to the contrary, ALU could petition the HLRB for a declaratory order.

III

On July 28, 2023, ALU petitioned the HLRB for a declaratory ruling seeking a determination, among other things, that graduate assistants are persons in public employment and "public employees" within the meaning of HRS 89-2 and that they were not appropriately placed in

Units 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14 or 15.

On January 4, 2024, the HLRB issued declaratory orders ruling that graduate assistants are public employees within the meaning of HRS 89-2 and that they are appropriately placed in Units 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14 or 15.

IV

The Hawai'i Supreme Court ruled in 2002 in United Public Workers v. Yogi, 101 Hawai'i 46, 62 P.3d 189 (2002) that the phrase "as provided by law" in Article XIII, Section 2 of the Hawai'i Constitution was intended to confer on the legislature the power to regulate the scope of collective bargaining not to confer on the legislature the power to grant and deny the right of public employees to organize for the purpose of collective bargaining.

In United Public Worker v. Yogi, the Hawai'i Supreme Court unanimously agreed in the three opinions of the Court: "[w]hile the legislature is given broad discretion pursuant to article XIII, section 2, the language 'as provided by law' does not give the legislature unfettered discretion to infringe upon the core principles of collective bargaining." Yogi, 101 Hawai'i at 54, 62 P.3d at 198 (Nakayama, J, concurring majority opinion). "The legislature did not have the constitutional authority to enact a law that in effect completely abrogated the right granted under article XIII, section 2 of the Hawai'i Constitution." Id., 101 Hawai'i at 55, 62 P.3d at 199 (Nakayama, J., "concurring" majority opinion).

Yogi reiterated this constitutional interpretation throughout the opinions. "[T]he core of Article XIII, Section 2 of the Hawai'i Constitution, inasmuch as relevant history confirms that the right to organize and bargain collectively was to remain inviolate[.]" Id., 101 Hawai'i at 55, 62 P.3d at 199 (Acoba, J., concurring). "[T]he framers were not in favor of granting the legislature the ultimate power to deny the right to organize for the purpose of collectively bargaining[.]" Id., 101 Hawai'i at 51, 62 P.3d at 195 (Ramil, J., decision of the court). "[T]he framers did not intend to grant the legislature absolute discretion to take away the right to collectively bargain altogether[.]" Id. (Ramil, J.). "Granting the lawmakers absolute discretion to define the scope of collective bargaining would also produce the absurd result of nullifying the 'right to organize for the purpose of collective bargaining.'" Id., 101 Hawai'i at 52, 62 P.3d at 196 (Ramil, J.) "[T]he intent and object of the framers who adopted article XII, section 2 was to extend to public employees similar rights to collective bargaining previously adopted for private employees under article XII, section 1." Id., 101 Hawai'i at 53, 62 P.3d at 197 (Ramil, J.). As stated in all opinions of the Yogi court, the legislature lacks the power to completely abrogate the right granted under Article XIII, § 2 whether it does it to all public employees or only certain classes.

In short, the legislature cannot deprive graduate assistants of their constitutional right to organize for purposes of collective bargaining.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me should you have any other questions.

Very truly yours,
LAW OFFICE OF LANCE D COLLINS



LANCE D COLLINS

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:43:03 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Richard Randall Frohock IV	National Education Association Graduate Committee	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Matayoshi,

We are writing you today on behalf of the National Education Association's Graduate Committee. to bring to your attention a matter of utmost importance regarding the collective bargaining rights of University of Hawai'i graduate workers. The landmark decision by the Hawai'i Supreme Court in 2023 recognized these individuals as public employees, thereby affirming their entitlement to the fundamental right of collective bargaining.

The NEA grad committee represents unionized grad workers across the nation. It is our position that in order for graduate workers to maintain a workplace that is safe, enriching, efficient, profitable, and supportive of their further educational pursuits, their right to organize into a collective bargaining unit must not be infringed. The graduate workers in the University of Hawai'i system have been prevented from doing this for far too long.

However, a critical hurdle has emerged with the determination by the Hawaii Labor Relations Board that existing bargaining units do not fit into an appropriate community of interest for graduate workers, necessitating immediate legislative action. H.B.2720 has been introduced with the specific purpose of establishing an appropriate bargaining unit for University of Hawai'i graduate workers.

The challenges that face graduate workers are marketably different from those facing other university workers such as faculty and staff. As such, it is critical that graduate workers have the ability to form their own collective bargaining unit that is independent of those that cover other university workers. Forming this independent bargaining unit allows graduate workers to better secure their interests while promoting their autonomy as workers. We support legislation that is in line with such as HB 2720. We trust that you will do right by graduate workers in your state by joining us in support of this legislation. If you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

In Solidarity,

Richard & Tim

NEA Graduate Committee Co-Chairs

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:46:08 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tom Israel	National Education Association	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

The Honorable Scot Matayoshi, Chair

Committee on Labor and Government Operations

House of Representatives

State Capitol, Room 27

Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Matayoshi,

SUBJECT: HOUSE BILL (HB) 2720 RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The recognition of graduate workers as public employees by the Hawai'i Supreme Court in 2023 was a significant milestone, affirming that University of Hawai'i graduate workers are entitled to the fundamental right of collective bargaining. The Hawai'i Labor Relations Board's determination that existing bargaining units are not suitable for graduate workers necessitates legislative action. H.B.2720 aims to establish an appropriate bargaining unit for the University of Hawai'i graduate workers. The National Education Association strongly supports this bill and urges the Labor and Government Operations Committee to do the same.

Graduate teaching and research assistants have been unionizing at public institutions for over 50 years, including graduate workers in California, Connecticut, Michigan, Florida, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Washington, Oregon, New York, and many more. The precedent set by public institutions was further codified in the National Labor Relations Board's [2016 Columbia University decision](#), which unequivocally recognized the right of teaching and research assistants to also collectively bargain at private universities. Indeed, as of 2019, [more than 100,000 graduate workers at over 80 institutions are unionized](#). The number of graduate worker unions [continues to grow](#) in both the public and private sector at an astonishing pace.

In light of these established norms and legal precedents, it is imperative to recognize and affirm the right of graduate workers at the University of Hawai'i to collectively bargain. H.B.2720

represents a crucial step towards ensuring fair and equitable labor practices for this essential segment of the academic workforce.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Israel, Senior Director

Center for Organizing and Affiliate Support

National Education Association

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:49:39 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Matthew Jung	University of Hawaii at Manoa	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Matthew Jung. I'm a graduate student worker, & I support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:55:32 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lane Demaske	Graduate Assistants United	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm Lane Demaske, a unionized graduate student worker from the University of Rhode Island, writing on behalf of Graduate Assistants United, from my position as Grievance Chair. We at Graduate Assistants United support HB 2720 in its current form.

The opportunity to be part of a collective bargaining unit ensures we, as graduate employees, are able to fulfill our roles as graduate assistants while also ensuring our conditions for our studies. We provide our universities with invaluable support in our classrooms, offices, and labs; our universities could not function without our work. Approval for collective bargaining will give employees at the University of Hawaii and the community college system the opportunities and protections Graduate Assistants United secures for our members.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:29:23 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alexander Prosi	Academic Labor United	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for taking the time and energy to listen to Academic Labor United (ALU) this session. As we approach the legislature with the hopes to create a new bargaining unit for our distinct labor, I want to recognize the ongoing labor organizing ALU has provided during these long years as we strive for recognition. ALU has garnered approximately 50% of the ~1400 graduate students at UH Mānoa and also organized at our sister campus UH Hilo. Among the many events filling the Fall 2023 semester, (Aug. - Dec.), we held a successful affiliation vote for better resources to collectively bargain. Through extensive meetings and the distribution of extensive information, we were able to hold a successful vote to affiliate with the National Education Association (NEA).

ALU is well recognized on the campuses of the University of Hawai'i and I write to you with the hopes that you will recognize not just our efforts but our distinct successes as a labor organizing group. Even without the resources we deserve, we have been able to accomplish much: nurturing healthy relationships with other unions (local and abroad), becoming well-recognized among the student body (graduates and undergraduates), and providing resources and information for any and all students in need. ALU is the place students go to when they have no where else to air their unique grievances.

Respectfully,

Alexander Prosi



TESTIMONY FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

FEBRUARY 2, 2024

HB 2720, RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i **supports** HB 2720, relating to collective bargaining. Pursuant to the “Economic Justice and Labor” section of the official Democratic Party of Hawai'i platform, the party believes “that all workers have the right to form a union to collectively bargain with employers on their behalf. We support the efforts of unions to protect and advocate for workers. We support anti-discrimination protections in the workplace. We support policies that reduce racial, gender, and other disparities in pay.”

There is a power in a union.

Today, political pundits prognosticate about the possible onslaught of austerity facing our nation. Many of these same pundits believe that labor unions are an impediment to economic prosperity, arguing that collective bargaining sets wages above what the free market demands.

They couldn't be more wrong. **Collective bargaining is a human right.** Unionized employees' compensation and work protections, moreover, are essential to creating an upwardly mobile middle class and continually increasing economic prosperity. As economist Paula Voos of Rutgers University School of Management and Labor Relations notes, “It is no accident that the prosperity and consumer boom of the 1950s—a period of unprecedented middle-class expansion,

broad business growth, increased home ownership, rising consumer spending, and the shared expectation that a college education was within the reach of everyone and that the lives of our children would be better than our own—followed the greatest sustained expansion of unionization in American history.”

Unsurprisingly, decreasing American middle-class incomes and the rapidly widening wealth gap in our country parallel a significant decline in union membership. It is imperative, then, that we promote higher productivity by strengthening labor-management relations. Through a union, employees have a means to engage with management about workplace problems, inefficient processes, unfair work conditions, and unsupportive compensation. Unions also reduce employee turnover and increase the retention of highly experienced employees, creating circumstances that favor professional development and mutual trust in the workplace.

Graduate assistants are employees and, thus, guaranteed the right to collectively bargain with university management, a fact that both the Hawai'i Supreme Court and Hawai'i Labor Relations Board have upheld within the last year. In providing instruction to students and research that expands our society's knowledge base, graduate students tirelessly toil on behalf of the university community, often under fear of retaliation because of a lack of organizing power in resisting exploitation. Graduate student assistants are short-term positions. Yet, the duration of graduate positions only heightens the urgency of establishing collective bargaining protections, as temporary employees too often fall prey to employers who exploit the precarious nature of these positions and assume student workers will simply “deal with the pain and move on.”

Appallingly, UH graduate assistants currently earn approximately \$20,000 per year on average, a number that has not significantly increased in almost two decades. At the sunrise of 2019, that amount carried over \$6,000 less purchasing power than it did fourteen years ago *before* adjusting for Hawai'i's high cost of living. **It is not even half of what MIT's living wage calculator calculates as a living wage for a graduate assistant working in the islands.**

Mahalo nui loa,

Kris Coffield
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee
(808) 679-7454
kriscoffield@gmail.com

Abby Simmons
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee
(808) 352-6818
abbyalana808@gmail.com



Cade Watanabe, Financial Secretary-Treasurer

Gemma G. Weinstein, President

Eric W. Gill, Senior Vice-President

February 1, 2024

House Committee on Labor & Government Operations
Representative Matayoshi, Chair
Representative Garrett, Vice Chair

Re: **Bill HB 2720 RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

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

UNITE HERE Local 5 represents working people throughout Hawaii's hotel, food service and healthcare industries. We are in SUPPORT of HB 2720. As a Union established in 1938, we are acutely aware of the benefits unionism will have on UH Graduate Student workers' lives.

We believe unions through collective bargaining, provide safer, better working conditions, good wages, affordable healthcare, job security, dignity, and respect and many other benefits for its members as well as the community.

Graduate Student workers are a vital part of Hawaii's educational system and they deserve the right to unionize in the way they see fit.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



INTERNATIONAL LONGSHORE & WAREHOUSE UNION
LOCAL OFFICE • 451 ATKINSON DRIVE • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96814 • PHONE 949-4161

HAWAII DIVISION: 100 West Lanikaula Street, Hilo, Hawaii 96720 • **OAHU DIVISION:** 451 Atkinson Drive, Honolulu, Hawaii 96814
MAUI COUNTY DIVISION: 896 Lower Main Street, Wailuku, Hawaii 96793 • **KAUAI DIVISION:** 4154 Hardy Street, Lihua, Hawaii 96766
HAWAII LONGSHORE DIVISION: 451 Atkinson Drive, Honolulu, Hawaii 96814

LOCAL 142

February 1, 2024

The Thirty-Second Legislature
Regular Session of 2024

LATE

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Committee on Labor and Government Operations

Rep. Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair
Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice Chair
State Capitol, Conference Room 309 & Videoconference
Friday, February 2, 2024; 9:30 a.m.

**STATEMENT OF THE ILWU LOCAL 142 ON HB 2720 RELATING TO
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 142 stands in **Strong Support of HB2720**, relating to collective bargaining. The graduate assistants of the University of Hawai'i provide instructional and research that are vital to university operations.

We are pleased with the Hawai'i State Supreme Court's 2023 ruling, which acknowledged the significant change in the nature of UH Graduate Assistant work over the past 50 years. The Supreme Court determined that the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board must revisit the question of graduate assistants as public employees. The HLRB rightfully ruled this January that graduate assistants are public employees, and therefore entitled by the State Constitution to collective bargaining. The ILWU Local 142 has long supported the unionization of graduate assistants and we are pleased with the Supreme Court and HLRB decisions. We believe strongly in the right of graduate assistants to collective bargaining.

Because the Board did not place the graduate assistants into an existing collective bargaining unit, it is appropriate to create one that fits their unique status as workers. HB2720 does so by creating a new bargaining unit for the UH graduate assistants as is consistent with the legal norms for other public employees in education.

The ILWU believes that every worker has the right to unionize. With the recent HLRB ruling, we look forward to the support of lawmakers in facilitating a close to this chapter by establishing a bargaining unit for graduate assistants. The ILWU Local 142 urges you to support HB2720.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of **HB 2720**.

Christian West
President, ILWU Local 142



HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 11:14:13 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Josiah Rodriguez	Academic Labor United	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Keoni Rodriguez and I am a graduate assistant at the University of Hawai'i. The guarantee of a quality public education in Hawai'i absolutely relies on the ability for graduate students to live adequately on the compensation for our work - we are part of the reason students at UH can expect a world-class education. That being said, I wholeheartedly support the ability for my peers and I to pursue these conditions through unionization and collective bargaining. Without the people and our labor, UH would cease to run smoothly. As such, we expect to be able to advocate for ourselves and our dignity. Don't underestimate the resolve of the students - relentlessly we will pursue our right to collective bargaining for the sake of a better future for all.

LATE



HAWAII WORKERS CENTER

(503) WORKERS

LATE *Testimony submitted late may not be considered by the Committee for decision making purposes.

Defending and Respecting the workers of
Hawaii'i

hawaiiworkerscenter@gmail.com
Mail: 2252 Puna St., Honolulu, HI 96817
hawaiiworkerscenter.org

February 1, 2024

LATE

Hawaii'i State House of Representatives
Committee on Labor and Government Relations

Rep. Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair

Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice Chair

Executive Board
Committee

Rev. Sam Domingo
Board Chair

Mary Ochs
Vice Chair

Dr. Arcelita Imasa
Secretary

John Witeck
Treasurer

Board Members

Yoko Liriano

Nanea Lo

Innocenta
Sound-Kikku

Ray Catania

Justin Jansen

Leyton Torda

RE: SUPPORT for H.B. 2720 RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING.

Dear Chair Rep. Matayoshi, Vice-Chair Rep. Garrett, and Members of the Committee on Labor and Government Relations:

The Hawaii'i Workers Center (HWC) envisions a Hawaii'i in which all workers are empowered to exercise their right to organize for their social, economic and political well-being.

It is a resource of information, education, training and organizing for Hawaii's workers.

The HWC stands in strong support of H.B. 2720 which establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawaii'i and community college system.

"I wasn't able to push for Title IX action almost entirely because as a graduate worker, I wasn't protected by a union but the faculty member was." - UH graduate worker

Graduate assistants deserve to be protected from exploitative labor practices just as much as any other worker. The days of overworking graduate assistants, not paying them for hours worked, and leaving them in precarious positions as it comes to healthcare and workplace protections belong in the past, not in 2024. The Hawaii'i Labor Relations board recently determined that graduate assistants are indeed public employees. H.B. 2720 is needed to get graduate assistants to the finish line and finally be recognized for the important contributions they continue to make to the University of Hawaii'i system. All workers should be entitled to the most basic protections against the exploitation of labor, including our graduate assistants.

We ask that you please pass and support H.B. 2720.

Sincerely,

Sergio Alcubilla
Executive Director

Executive Director
Sergio Alcubilla III, Esq.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 10:49:22 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victoria Assad	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Victoria Assad, I live in Palolo Valley and am a Ph.D. candidate in Oceanography at University of Hawai'i at Manoa. I'm writing in support of HB 2720, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

For the past four years I have been a Graduate Assistant at UH, first as a Research Assistant and as of Fall 2023 am a Teaching Assistant for OCN 201 "Science of the Sea". As a TA I run a 3-hour lab every week. During which I prepare a short lecture, demonstrate the lab activities, assist students through the lab itself, and then grade lab workbooks as well as weekly quizzes. Additionally, I lead discussion sections for the lecture course, this includes grading pre- and post-discussion assignments, and a short lecture at the beginning of class. I am also often the point of contact between the students and the lecturers. My TA position is paid for 20 hours of work per week, but I often work beyond these set hours, and yet I am ineligible for any overtime pay. I love my students, and I love my job, but it does not support a stable life on the island.

Additionally, to fulfill my degree requirements I am working on research that is focused on establishing a community baseline in an area that is currently allocated for deep-sea mining in the Eastern Tropical Pacific ocean. My work provides crucial community information that will influence regulations on the **international** level as it is the **first** study of its kind and regulations regarding deep-sea mining have yet to be completed.

Despite all my hard work and labor that I provide the University as both a TA and researcher, I often find it difficult to manage living in Hawai'i on the salary provided by UH, where I spend ~60% of my monthly salary on bills alone, and after gas and grocery expenses, often have less than 10% leftover at the end of the month. This is impossible to live on if any emergencies come up. Between 2021-2022 I had three ER visits that amounted to thousands of dollars worth of medical bills, if not for the hospital's financial relief application, I would have been unable to pay those bills off of my current salary.

Additionally, in summer 2022 my father passed away, as my younger sister was only 12 days away from graduating college, my older sister estranged from him, and my parents divorced, I was responsible for the majority of memorial and burial expenses. Additionally, I had to navigate healthcare changes, phone bill changes, etc. and support my younger sister with that along the way. My research assistant salary at the time did not support me enough to pay any of these bills.

This experience cost a large portion of my savings, and has left me with little left to support myself in case of other emergencies, as my current TA salary does not allow me to put much of anything away for a 'rainy day'. This should not continue happening. No person, graduate student or not, should have to drain their savings to bury their parent, especially when working 40+ hours a week. I have found myself having to sign up to pet-sit as a way to make ends meet, however as this is a 'gig' job it is not consistent and due to my degree and teaching commitments, I can only take so many jobs a month. For reference, my TA salary is \$17,000 below the annual recommended living wage in Hawai'i for a single person with no dependents.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

Victoria Assad

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 11:44:47 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tim Kinzler	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720!

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 11:50:37 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kevin Faccenda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB2720 creating a new collective bargaining unit for Graduate Assistants (GAs) at the University of Hawai'i system (UH). Now that the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board has declared the GAs are UH public employees under Chapter 89 of HRS, we must be placed in a collective bargaining unit. Unfortunately, none of the existing collective bargaining units meet the needs of GAs. For example we do not want our paycheck to go towards retirement, nor do our grievances with UH have much overlap with other existing units.

I am a GA at UH where I have been working for the past 4 years. This position is far more work than it is to study and we would do best to negotiate with UH directly, without the needs of other bargaining units interfering.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kevin Faccenda

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 12:08:59 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amanda Laughlin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 12:20:08 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rayna McClintock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and I strongly support this bill.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 12:25:44 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Makoa Elgin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and I support HB2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 12:39:30 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Julianna Davis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In full support!

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 1:14:55 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Will Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Hawai'i Labor Relation Board has ruled that graduate students are employees. There should be no further discussion needed. Graduate students have the same right to collectively bargain that any other group of workers has. It is time for the UH Administration to stop blocking the legitimate right of its workers—who happen to also be students—from unionizing. Please support this bill.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 1:16:00 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Belle Nichols	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720!

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 1:17:13 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Reiana Apacible	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 1:17:28 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Jones	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Garb students are our future, please let them thrive, thank you

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 1:17:29 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jozlin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 1:17:52 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rive Fredericks	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 1:17:53 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ylva Kvig Saether	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support hb2720

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 1:18:54 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noelani Ramon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 1:19:26 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amira Makhoulf	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 1:25:43 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cienna Sharbonow	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I SUPPORT HB2720

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 1:28:55 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rebecca Purviance	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 1:30:11 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aaron Judah	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720 in its completeness. This bill is essential for supporting workers.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 1:31:36 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Maggie Bradley	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 1:35:29 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Paige Dillen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a graduate student at the University of Hawaii I believe it is essential to the wellbeing of those working towards a brighter future for themselves and others to be fairly compensated for their hard work given the cost of living in the state of Hawaii.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 1:37:31 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sean Swift	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support collective bargaining for graduate students.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 1:55:37 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daniela Escontrela	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm Daniela Escontrela Diegiez, a graduate student worker, and I support HB 2720 in its current form.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 1:56:58 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jack McKee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Jack McKee, I'm a research assistant at the mathematics department at the University of Hawai'i writing in support of HB2720.

I live on Dole street, less than a block from the university. Like many of my peers, I live in substandard housing that is not up to building codes, with roommates. Before my girlfriend moved in, even my small hotbox of a room was eating up almost half of my monthly pay. Many of us are on food stamps. I manage food costs by making big pots of stew for the week.

Especially when adjusted for cost of living, UH has some of the worst pay for graduate assistants in the country, and there is almost no uniformity in the amount of work -- usually grading, teaching, programming, and other tasks unrelated to our studies -- that different assistants do. We are supposed to all do 20 hours per week but many people put in nights and weekends to get their work done. This is work that brings grant money and high reputation to the university and benefits the people of Hawai'i at large through education. I, for instance, have done much of the programming work on PISALE for the past few years, a project that has attracted millions in grant funding. This is all on top of being a PhD student, which is practically a full-time job in itself and is extremely stressful.

I came to grad school because I want to do something with my life. I want to contribute somehow to society as a scientist and as an educator. I moved here with the intent of staying and using my expertise locally. When we are paid like this, and can't meaningfully negotiate with the university to change it, we are basically being told that this dream is not valuable. I support this bill because it would give us a chance to change that.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 1:58:07 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nicolas Vanderzyl	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 1:59:13 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brandon Brenes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 2:01:21 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alia Jeraj	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha kākou,

My name is Alia Jeraj and I'm a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. In addition to being a student, I am also a Graduate Assistant, managing my department's online presence and working as a Teaching Assistant for one class every semester. This year, I worked with over 140 students in those two classes alone.

The university runs on graduate student labor—based on numbers of Teaching Assistants and the students in their classes, we estimate that around 75% of undergraduate students at UH have been directly supervised by a graduate student worker.

I am asking that you support HB2720 and recognize the importance of graduate student workers, and our rights as public employees.

Mahalo,
Alia

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 2:13:37 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lilly Fisher	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

My name is Lilly Fisher, I am a PhD candidate in the American Studies Department at UH Manoa. I live in Saint Louis Heights and am represented in the House by Representative Jackson D. Sayama and in the senate by Senator Les Ihara, Jr. (D), and I'm writing in support of HB 2720, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

Besides attending classes at UH, I also serve as managing editor of *American Quarterly*, the official journal of the national American Studies association, and the leading academic journal in the field of American Studies. In capacity as managing editor, I've processed hundreds of manuscript submissions and produced several journal issues that represent some of the best work in my field. I have had to take on additional forms of employment as well, as almost 65% of my monthly from the university salary goes to paying my rent. At times, it feels almost impossible to make progress toward my degree and complete all of my school work, while also navigating the myriad other responsibilities it is necessary for me to take on. I know that I have colleagues who have to navigate these financial hardships, second and third jobs, and academic stresses while also being responsible for children and family members, and have had brilliant and motivated friends who have had to drop out of their graduate program because these compounding hardships were too difficult to manage. I'm passionate about my work and believe that allowing people to pursue higher education benefits the community at large. My hope is to see higher education become accessible to all members of our community, many of whom can not afford to subzist on such low wages while pursing graduate degrees for years at a time.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain with our employer, as the Labor Board ruled we have the legal right to do, and as similar other graduate student works in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 2:14:57 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erin McConkey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Erin McConkey, a PhD candidate in Anthropology and a graduate student worker. I am writing in support of HB 2720, a bill that will create a new bargaining unit for graduate student workers. I am represented by Senator Les Ihara, Jr. and Representative Jackson D. Sayama. I assist in teaching upper-division courses, where I facilitate discussion and grade the work of more than 50 students each semester. A graduate assistantship is the only employment I can hold to support myself as a full-time PhD candidate while I write my dissertation and gain the teaching experience necessary for my career. However, despite being paid for 20 hours of work per week, last fall I frequently exceed more than 30-40 hours of work as a part-time teaching assistant. This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit so that we can directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. Thank you for your consideration.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 2:26:41 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lucie Duffy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the House Higher Education Committee:

My name is Lucie Duffy and I am currently completing my MA in Asian Studies at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa. I am a Graduate Assistant for the Asian Studies Department at UH, and I work as both a Teaching Assistant and Conference Organizer in this role. I live in the Ala Moana area of Honolulu, and my representatives are Scott K. Saiki and Sharon Y. Moriwaki. I am writing in support of HB 2720.

This spring, I am a Teaching Assistant for the online course Asia Past and Present: Korea, where I review and grade multiple assignments for 40 students twice a week. I also hold one office hour per week, where students come and ask me for help related to the course. Additionally, I set up the zoom classroom for the Professor every week, and the online classroom portal in its entirety (if you’ve ever tried to use the UH online system, you know this is not an easy task). Last semester (Fall 23), I was a TA for the class Introduction to Asian Studies: South and Southeast Asia, where I graded weekly assignments for over 100 students. In addition to my role as a TA, my Graduate Assistantship also requires me to organize the 2024 School of Pacific and Asian Studies Graduate Student Conference. This is an annual conference held at UHM that features stellar graduate student research from students here, as well as those who come from the mainland USA and internationally overseas. It is the key event in the Asian Studies Department’s yearly calendar, and it is entirely organized by Graduate Assistants.

My Graduate Assistantship pays for 20 hours of work a week, but, every week without fail, I regularly work upwards of these set hours and yet I am ineligible for any type of overtime pay. In addition to working as a Graduate Assistant, I am also a full-time student researching the historical visual media of colonial-era Korea (1910-45). My work expands on the field of research in this time period in an original and nuanced manner, exploring how histories of empire can affect our present. Despite all of my hard work and the labor that I provide the University, which I am very passionate about, in research, conference organizing, and teaching, I struggle immensely to live in Hawai‘i on the salary provided by UH, where the cost of living is extraordinarily high compared to many places on the mainland US. As an international student from the United Kingdom, I am legally only allowed to work 20 hours per week in a position funded by the University to keep my student visa status valid. This means I rely entirely on my Graduate Assistant salary to legally support myself, which is \$17,000 below the annual recommended living wage in Hawai‘i for a single person with no dependants. However, I am from a low-income background and without my position as a Graduate Assistant, I would not be

able to afford to attend UH nor continue my academic studies at all, so this position is central to my livelihood here.

The bill I am writing in support of, HB2720, would allow graduate student workers like me to address their concerns in the workplace by creating a bargaining unit for us. This means we would be able to directly bargain with our employers, just like any other unionized worker, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4th, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees with the right to collectively bargain. The best path forward for us as graduate student workers is to take ownership of our contract negotiations. The legislature should value the time, labor, and effort we put into supporting the education of Hawai'i's next generation at the University level, as our roles within the UHM system are vital to supporting undergraduate students in their studies and facilitating their learning opportunities. At UHM at least, Graduate Students are the backbone of almost all classroom and learning logistics. We hope the legislature grants us the opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the mainland USA have been doing so for the past 50 years.

Thank you for your consideration.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 2:29:29 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kami Yamamoto, MPH	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a former graduate student worker, I support the Academic Labor United's unionization bill. I understand first hand how difficult it is to balance studies, work, and making ends meet especially as the person that your family and loved ones rely on for support. These challenges are exacerbated by issues such as mental health crises due to high cost of living, low pay, and being expected to do the same amount of work as those who have salaries. Having an existing bargaining unit would have helped to advocate for my needs, and raise the conditions of substandard living and working conditions so that I didn't feel like I had to just struggle in silence and isolation. UH graduate student workers have the right to collectively bargain and represent their genuine interests. If you expect Hawai'i's youth to pursue higher education in order to contribute to its economy and workforce, it is imperative to support bills like HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 2:34:56 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lauryn Pisciotto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 2:41:33 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amiti Maloy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720!

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 2:51:46 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jackson Neeley	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 2:52:45 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lucie Knor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Lucie Knor and I have been a Graduate Assistant (GA) at the University of Hawai'i with the Department of Oceanography since 2016. During my time at UH I have seen many of my brilliant colleagues struggle through and sometimes even fail at their studies because of the completely unregulated and therefore often abusive and exploitative working conditions they have faced as Graduate Assistants.

Graduate Assistants teach large classes, keep laboratories and complicated machinery running, design curricula, mentor students, manage toxic waste, and more. In my time as a research assistant I have led and participated in ship-based fieldwork to deploy, recover and maintain a total of 7 600lb moorings with 1500 lb anchors that measure carbon dioxide in the water and air, contributing crucial data for research on ocean acidification and climate change impacts on coral reefs. This work is by no means part of my studies or training.

On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified graduate assistants as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. Finally, with this recognition, there is a path forward for graduate assistant unionization.

With union representation, my colleagues and I will no longer be unsure of how many hours a week we can be expected to work as a GA. In the beginning of my studies, I was told that "it says 20 hours, but it's really way more", and the expectation is that GAs work well over 40 hours in most cases. This is particularly harmful for international students on F-1 visas like myself, whose immigration status is directly tied to our employment as a GA. In many cases, our supervisors are thus our employers, mentors for our studies, and in charge of our immigration status in the United States. This extreme power differential leaves GAs vulnerable to exploitation and harassment, with few options for recourse if we feel our rights have been violated. I have witnessed a colleague of mine get blacklisted from teaching in our department by her thesis supervisor, just because she decided to pursue her degree with a different professor, leaving her scrambling for financial security. I've seen multiple colleagues who have been sexually harassed by their superiors stop coming to campus to avoid running into their harasser, while there were no consequences for the perpetrator. These behaviors are already illegal and classified as transgressions based on current university policy, but the truth is that it is very hard for GAs to protect ourselves from retaliation in these cases if we speak up.

Union representation through grievance processes and a contract that explicitly states our responsibilities and rights are the only remedy for this dire situation, and the whole time I've spent at the University of Hawai'i, GAs have organized relentlessly as Academic Labor United to gain recognition as public employees, and to build our own union from the ground up. We have already negotiated with UH administration to implement the first sick leave policy for Graduate Assistants, as well as pay raises. During the first few months of COVID-19, we organized a hardship fund for students that was up and running months before the official University fund. Last fall, we organized an affiliation campaign with the largest union in the United States, the National Education Association (NEA), who are now a great ally and resource for us. We already have a constitution, and are working on revisions of that constitution with member participation. I believe that our organization is ready to take on the task of contract bargaining for our membership, and that the rulings by the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board and the Supreme Court have shown that our status as public workers is out of the question. Please stand with us at this historic moment that graduate students have worked for since the 1970s, and pass HB2720 in its current form.

Mahalo!

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 2:55:16 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joseph Cronin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a employee of the State of Hawaii through the Department of Education, I believe that Hawai'i's flagship institution and the community college systems have a duty to act as leaders in supporting their employees and students. I support HB2720 in adding Grad Student Assistants as an explicitly specified group able to form collective bargaining units.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 2:56:03 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rickey Thomas Larkin Jr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm Rickey Thomas Larkin Jr, I have taught as a graduate student worker at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa since 2020 and have lived in Mānoa since then. I support HB 2720 in its current form.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 3:05:00 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shannon McClish	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Shannon McClish. I am a graduate student worker, and I support HB2720. I am a PhD candidate in the Department of Oceanography, and during my time at UH, I have published a first-author publication and was awarded a Future Investigators in NASA Earth and Space Science and Technology grant. I have also guest lectured in global environmental science courses and was a teaching assistant. I decided to pursue a graduate degree in oceanography because I care deeply about understanding current climate change and building better forecasts for the future.

I am passionate about my work and contributions to the university, but throughout my time at UH, I have experienced financial stress. My graduate assistant stipend is significantly below the annual recommended living wage in Hawai'i for a single person with no dependents. I spend about 60% of my income on housing. When I experienced a chronic illness, I was unable to pay for medical care with my salary and had to rely on a loan. This caused severe stress that impacted my work.

I support HB2720 because creating a bargaining unit for graduate student workers will allow us to finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i, and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions.

Thank you for your consideration.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 3:16:17 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keanu Rochette-Yu Tsuen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Graduate students should be able to discuss fair compensation in order to afford the cost of living in the state of Hawaii. Establishing a collective bargaining unit for graduate students will ensure job security and representation at the institution such that workers have advocating power to improve work conditions, and prevent power imbalances in the work place.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 3:19:20 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ivy Wappler	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Ivy Wappler, I am a graduate assistant at The University of Hawaii at Manoa and I support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 3:20:16 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lentina Villa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Lentina Villa. I'm not a graduate student worker but I support HB 2720!! Graduate students who accept University student employment to pay for living expenses in Hawai'i are grossly underpaid for the amount of resources (expertise, knowledge, initiative, time, energy, mental health, effort, etc.) they contribute for the faculty and University. Some faculty exploit their teaching assistants/graduate assistants more than others! I support HB 2720 as an individual citizen with a child who may one day choose to pursue higher education. I want better rights and working conditions for all graduate student workers.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 3:28:32 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Blake Stoner-Osborne	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Blake Stoner-Osborne, I live in Palolo valley, my representatives are Ihara Jr. and Sayama, and I am a third year graduate assistant (GA) at UH Manoa pursuing my PhD through the Oceanography department. My role as a gGA is how I am able to financially support my education. I make roughly \$35,000 a year and I am paid to conduct 20+ hours of research under a faculty member at UH studying deep-sea food webs. Not only does this GAship allow me to get the research experience necessary for me to earn my PhD and to be qualified for employment after graduate school, it also allows me to take graduate coursework through the university. Although my contract is for 20+ hours a week, I spend upwards of 40+ hours a week in the lab conducting research. I also spend my time outside of the lab visiting local elementary, middle, and high schools (55+ hours of outreach to 30+ schools) to teach about Hawaii's local deep-sea ecology and to show some of our animal specimens and the crazy adaptations they have for surviving in the deep-sea. I have also led a series of free professional development workshops for undergraduate students from backgrounds historically underrepresented in STEM (50+ attendees) to help them navigate the graduate school application process with the main goal of helping local and underrepresented students to have successful careers in STEM both on island and around the world.

As exemplified above, I work almost double the hours that my GAship supports and I am struggling to pay rent/utilities, buy groceries, and afford necessities like gas and clothes. 55% of my paycheck goes to rent/utilities alone. As a member of the UH community and the Honolulu community at large, my goal is to help our keiki connect with the oceans that surround them; to learn about the kai that sustains us and our kuleana to understand and protect it. Unfortunately, on the current salary that graduate students are paid, that may not be possible for much longer. I consider myself lucky because my department is paid at a higher pay scale than other GAs in different departments, many of which make \$30,000 or less. Regardless, we are all overworked, underpaid, and deserve to have a bargaining unit for our salaries so we can bargain with our employers, the State of Hawaii, and the Board of Regents. On January 4th, the Hawaii Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees with the right to collectively bargain. Myself and many of my colleagues and peers desire to take ownership of our contract negotiations to continue doing what we love. We want to make sure that we (and all future graduate students and leaders in STEM after us) are compensated fairly for the hard work we do in research, teaching, and outreach so that we may keep supporting our island community, conducting research that will protect the future of humanity, and supporting the next generations

of students as they pursue their careers whatever they may be. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights. Thank you so much for your consideration, and I hope you come to visit us at the Deep-Sea Ecology Lab at UH Manoa so we can talk story about graduate student life and show you some of the magnificent and wacky deep-sea animals that live all around our islands, across the Pacific, and around the world!

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 3:29:42 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sam Walker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 2720 in the most emphatic of terms. UH runs on graduate student labor, and we deserve the right to collectively bargain in just the same way as UH faculty do. Having said that, the needs of faculty are self-evidently distinct from the needs of graduate students, and it is clear that graduate students do not belong in any of the existing bargaining units. UH graduate students deserve to be able to speak up and have their voices heard, to ensure that we are paid a fair wage for our work, and to protect our fellow students from harassment in the workplace. Graduate students frequently have to skip meals and work additional jobs in order to make ends meet, and we have earned the right to bargain for better. Divided we beg, united we bargain. Thank you for your time.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 3:32:48 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jocelyn Brody	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Jocelyn Brody and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. I support HB 2720 because I work hard to teach classes at UH Manoa and barely get paid enough to live on. For myself, for the quality of education that my students and I receive, and for the benefit of our whole community I believe that graduate students at UH need a collective bargaining unit.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 3:42:06 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Charlotte McClintock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I urge the legislature to support HB2720 and support graduate students at Hawai'i universities.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 3:43:58 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Scott Kidd	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this proposal

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 3:46:47 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Callie Stephenson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Callie Stephenson, I am a graduate student worker, and I support HB 2720 in its current form.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 3:48:27 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Litke	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the House Higher Education Committee:

My name is Michael Litke. I am a PhD student in physics at the university of Hawaii, where I am currently employed as a graduate TA. I live in Makiki and I am represented by Della Au Belatti. I'm writing in support of HB 2720, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

Aloha Chair Matayoshi, Vice-Chair Garrett, and Members of the Labor & Government Operations Committee,

My name is Donovan Kamakani Albano. I am a proud member of Academic Labor United, a PhD student in Political Science, and a graduate student worker at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. I am also a Kanaka ‘Ōiwi from Kalihi, O‘ahu. I am writing to submit testimony **IN STRONG SUPPORT of HB2720: Relating to Collective Bargaining** that establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawai‘i and community college system.

As a queer Native Hawaiian person, I deserve the opportunity to be able to afford to live comfortably in my native homeland. I deserve to be able to find a place to live on my own and to pursue my doctorate education without concerns of instability. I deserve to be able to see my fellow Indigenous peoples pursue higher education without concerns of instability. I deserve to be able to see fellow LGBTQIA+ and MVPFAFF+ graduate student workers & students not have to face oppression and violence in their workplaces, especially cisheteropatriarchy. We have the opportunity to change that with this bill. If you care deeply about Kānaka ‘Ōiwi communities, whose Native lands you make decisions about and upon, then supporting this bill is critical.

As UH graduate student workers, we have the right to collectively bargain. As a GA myself, I recognize that we are severely underpaid, need to be afforded the opportunity to fight for better working conditions and access to resources, and *we make the university run*. UH runs on graduate student labor, and yet our living and working conditions are suboptimal. We teach courses, work in labs, conduct research for important departments and offices, and allow for movement to happen within the university. And yet, we are paid below the poverty line, live paycheck to paycheck, can barely afford rent and food, lack medical leave, international students receive delayed payments, workplace abuse, and other things that we should not be subjected to, considering the amount of labor we provide for the university. ***The University of Hawai‘i could not run without its graduate student workers. We deserve the right to collectively bargain, and exercising that right would help alleviate our concerns.*** We deserve the opportunity to do so.

We also do not belong in any existing bargaining units that are an option for us. We are being supported by various labor unions throughout Hawai‘i, who recognize the importance for UH graduate student workers to be in our own collective bargaining unit. Graduate student workers have represented themselves at the bargaining table for 50 years to great success, and union support is increasing, especially among youth. As one of over 1,500 graduate student workers at UH Mānoa, I ask you to support this bill. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Sincerely,
Donovan Kamakani Albano

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 3:55:54 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brianne	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 3:57:24 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeffrey Drazen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support HB2720. Our graduate students are state workers and suffer from unequal pay across the UH system and a lack of rights that other state workers enjoy.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 4:14:11 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Corinne Hite	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Corinne. I am a graduate student worker and I support HB2720

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 4:15:04 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kyle K Kajihiro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Matayoshi and members of the House Committee on Labor and Government Operations

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2720. Graduate student assistants are a crucial part of the workforce in any university. Yet in Hawai'i, graduate student assistants have been denied the right to form a union and to collectively bargain. In a state that prides itself on its rich labor history, this is an embarrassment. Now that the Hawai'i Supreme Court has affirmed the right of graduate student assistants to unionize, it is incumbent on the Legislature to create a bargaining unit for graduate student assistants within the University of Hawai'i system. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kyle Kajihiro

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 4:23:14 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dorian Daimer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the House Labor and Government Operations Committee:

My name is Dorian Daimer, a PhD candidate in Physics. I live in Kaimuki, and I'm represented in the House by Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, and Sen. Les Ihara in the Senate. I'm writing in support of HB 2720, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

This Spring, I'm a Research Assistant, working on the physics of information processing and attempting to reformulate our understanding of quantum physics. Last Fall semester, I worked as a Teaching Assistant for the introductory physics labs, teaching two classes of 20 students about electricity and magnetism in a lab setting. Both teaching and research assistantship pay for 20 hrs of work per week, but regularly I will work beyond those set hours and yet I'm ineligible for any type of overtime pay. To fulfill my degree requirements (which is why I'm only paid for 20 hours per week, as I'm also a student), I'm working on my research which is focused on the fundamental costs of performing quantum operations. This work is crucial for estimating and lowering the energetic costs of information processing in years to come. Despite all my hard work and the labor that I provide the University both in teaching and research, I often find it difficult to manage living in Hawai'i on the salary provided by UH, where I spend 60% of my monthly salary just on rent. As an international student, I'm only allowed to work 20 hours per week in a position funded by the University to keep my student visa status valid. This means that the only avenue by which I can legally support myself is through my graduate assistant salary, which is \$15,000 below the annual recommended living wage in Hawai'i for a single person with no dependents.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 4:28:54 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Norman Chung	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am Norman Chung, a graduate student worker, and I support HB 2720 in its current form.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 4:29:34 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Austen Conlon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the House Labor & Government Operations Committee:

My name is Austen Conlon and as a former graduate assistant and concerned citizen I support HB 2720. UH relies on graduate worker labor to conduct research and teach classes, and yet graduate assistants here receive some of the lowest salaries compared to cost of living in the country. Supporting graduate assistants by upholding their right to collectively bargain would help improve working conditions, making UH a better place for everyone to learn and grow together.

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 4:53:02 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nate Hix	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Workers who also attend school deserve the same rights as those who are not also attending school. Please treat graduate student workers with the same level of respect that you show other employees. Please pass HB2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 4:53:08 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Nightingale	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is John Nightingale, I'm a graduate student worker, and I support HB 2720

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 5:03:59 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ande Grace Westerhausen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 5:04:40 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mattia	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 5:08:40 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Landon Schumaker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 5:11:03 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kenji Cataldo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a current masters student and employed graduate assistant at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, I strongly support HB 2720. Due to the unique status and employment conditions of graduate assistants, our interests will be best met through the creation of our bargaining unit.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 5:11:39 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Harold Carlson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720!

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 5:30:38 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sean-Joseph T.K. Choo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Matayoshi and LGO Committee members,

Mahalo for your work on behalf of workers, your time and consideration on this topic.

What does it say about our society when we pay students/workers less than what they deserve for their work? What does it say about our society when we think students or interns or assistants are less than? Graduate students are in a category of workers on their own, as well-expressed by the wonderful folx at ALU. We should respect the special position of graduate student workers and grant them their own collective bargaining unit, not lump them in with other governmental employee bargaining units.

As a former educator myself, as many you will know who have ever taken on the mantle of educator, many of my students have been my teachers in addition to being my pupils. Sometimes the lessons they gave me were hard, sometimes pleasant. In every lesson, I showed them respect, and I believe this measure is a good step in the right direction towards affording graduate assistants the respect they deserve.

Mahalo,

Sean Choo

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 5:38:43 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kawenaulaokala Kapahua	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha,

I am testifying in the **Strongest support of HB2720** relating to collective bargaining. As the former Chair of Academic Labor United, the union of the Graduate Assistants (GAs) of the University of Hawai‘i I can say with the utmost certainty that the GAs need this bill to be passed. Hawai‘i State Constitution mandates that public employees are guaranteed the right to collectively bargain. As the Hawaii Labor Relations Board affirmed this January, graduate assistants are indeed public workers and are therefore entitled to this right. Currently, as the Board did not place the GAs into an existing collective bargaining unit for public employees due to their unique class of workers, the constitutional right of collective bargaining is being denied to these workers. This is wholly unacceptable and this committee has the opportunity to rectify this. This committee has the rare opportunity to restore the rights of 1500 workers, to ensure that the rights of 1500 people are respected and a grave injustice, nearly 50 years old is finally corrected. I urge the committee to do so.

I would point out that the Hawaii Labor Relations Board was not the only state entity to agree with the Graduate Assistants, in April of 2023 the Hawaii Supreme Court made it very clear where it stood on the issue. These facts, plus the Hawaii State Constitution make it clear, that should this committee fail to pass this bill, it will be opening up the state to a lawsuit for denying the rights of these workers as given to them in our constitution. I urge you to save the taxpayers time and money by doing the right thing now.

If you know anyone who has ever attended the University of Hawai‘i, you know someone who has been educated by Graduate Assistants. If you have attended, you have directly benefitted from our labor. In my time as a graduate assistant, I have taught faculty themselves at the university as part of my job duties. If I am qualified to instruct Ph.D. holding professors, who are themselves unionized, then clearly I am qualified to collectively bargain as I am no mere student help, nor are any other of my union brothers and sisters at the university. Do the right thing, pass this bill.

Mahalo

Kawena‘ulaokalā Kapahua

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 5:39:47 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lurana O'Malley	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings, I am a professor at UHM, and I support this measure, which in turn supports our hard-working graduate students. Graduate student labor involve power dynamics with teachers and research supervisors; these conditions can lead to abuse. Collective bargaining will prevent unfair working conditions from detracting from these students' educational experiences.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 5:40:53 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacob B Shearer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Jacob Shearer, I intend to become a graduate student worker in the next few years as I pursue a graduate degree in Hawaiian Language. I support HB 2720.

Mahalo.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 5:47:46 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Louis Chua	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am Louis Chua, PhD Student in the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Management (NREM) at UH Manoa. I live in Palolo Valley and have been in Hawai'i since Oct 2021. I am an economist and my research is in modeling and valuation of ecosystem services, and natural capital in Hawai'i. My particular interest is in cultural ecosystem services, and am working to elevate Hawaiian values in policy and economic decision making by borrowing theories and methods foundational to neoclassical economics and econometrics respectively. I volunteer frequently in community and 'āina-based organizations. All graduate students I know either get financial help from their parents, or work multiple jobs (gig economy, own company, tourism/ service jobs) to be able to do their Master's/ PhDs in Hawai'i. However, international students like me do not have that option due to visa restrictions. We are paid far below the living wage (see MIT living wage calculator for reference) with no ability to work more than 20 hours and only on campus. As a quick reference, I pay about 55% of my take home wage to rent, and the rest is for food (give and take). For comparison, as a Master's student at Cornell University (a similar R1 research college), my pay was 30% higher, and my health insurance was covered. In UH Manoa, I pay for health insurance out of pocket and the cost of food is many times higher compared to rural NY. One pertinent reference- a quick search through HUD will show that housing affordability means rent ought not to be more than 20-30% of gross income. Giving Graduate students the right to bargain redresses this power imbalance and is a win win for all, since a free and fair market economy tends to allocate resources more efficiently. This benefits American students who work multiple jobs too, and opens doors to those who are underprivileged, to equally engage in scientific reseach at the highest level. This means more vibrancy, production of compelling research, and the ability to attract the best talents to Hawai'i and UH Manoa (speak to my advisor and you will understand how difficult it is to hire young postdocs or faculty willing to relocate to Hawaii).

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 5:49:27 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Lewis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I suport HB270 as a graduate student employee who feels that we deserave fair compensation for our work. The University does not work if we don't. Graduate students deserve the right to unionize!

Representative Amy A. Perusso, Chair
Representative Jeanné Kapela, Vice Chair
Higher Education and Technology Committee

Dr. Dean Itsuji Saranillio

January 31, 2024

SUPPORT FOR HB 2720, relating to collective bargaining unit for graduate students at UH Mānoa

My name is Dr. Dean Itsuji Saranillio. I am an associate professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

I live in Mānoa, District 22, in Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett's district.

I write in strong support of HB 2720

As a former graduate student from the University of California, Los Angeles and the University of Michigan, and former faculty at New York University where graduate students there recently won the right for collective bargaining, graduate students require a separate collective bargaining unit than currently exists.

Graduate students across the university face considerable short and long-term difficulties that grow out of both the structure of their compensation and Hawai'i's high cost of living. Graduate Assistants perform a central role in the core missions of the university and the lack of support for them creates conditions where their needs remain acute—many cannot afford adequate housing or food. As a result, our own department offers graduate students nonperishable food, an initiative founded and sustained by faulty donations.

Our students, who are highly educated and skilled, courageous and brilliant, are facing financial constraints that will have long-term consequences. The wages and working conditions they experience in graduate school will have material implications for their futures.

For these reasons and more, graduate students at the University of Hawai'i require a separate Collective Bargaining Unit that HB 2720 can provide. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 6:15:21 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kathy Ferguson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a faculty member at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa living in Pauoa Valley, represented by Jenna Takenouchi in the House and Karl Rhoads in the senate. I am writing to support HB 2720 which will allow graduate students to form a union.

I have been a faculty member at UHM since 1985 and for almost 40 years I have worked side-by-side with many, many graduate students who do a great deal of the work of the university. They teach classes, conduct review sessions, tutor students in writing and in their subject matter, oversee student clubs and projects, share in academic advising, and serve as role models for undergraduate students. They also serve as researchers and help run departments and offices. This is all in addition to their own demanding school work.

I have enormous respect for my graduate students and fully support their goal of unionizing. They are in many ways my colleagues, yet they are subject to faculty and administrative authority that can be abused and against which they have little recourse. They need a union.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 6:17:51 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lauren Taijeron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please vote yes and support HB2720. UH graduate student workers have the right to collectively bargain. UH runs on student labor and students deserve better working and living conditions.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 6:20:00 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ty P. Kawika Tengan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 2720 because our graduate assistants are public workers whose labor helps to run our university and serve Hawai'i. They have the right to collective bargaining and need to be supported.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 6:23:06 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aree Worawongwasu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou,

My name is Areerat Worawongwasu, and I am a PhD student in American Studies. I am writing in support of HB 2720, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the University of Hawai‘i system.

As an international GA, I am only allowed to work 20 hours per week in a position funded by UH. This means that the only avenue by which I can legally support myself is through my teaching assistant salary, which is \$19,686.00, putting me in the poverty line in Hawai‘i. This past Spring, I taught 40 students in two writing-intensive classes that I designed entirely by myself. I have also been serving as a teaching assistant in courses about Indigenous Studies, ethnic studies, and civic engagement for the past three years. I love teaching and research, but the UH simply does not pay us a living wage in order for us to sustain the work that keeps this university running. Many of my students have directly told me that they are inspired by me to go to graduate school and have asked me for recommendation letters, and while I am always happy to support my students, part of this support is also needing to warn them about how exploitative universities are to graduate workers, which is heartbreaking.

HB2720 opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai‘i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai‘i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, as all workers deserve. In supporting HB2720, we all have the opportunity to support the future of higher education in Hawai‘i.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Areerat Worawongwasu.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 6:23:11 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gabrielle Stedman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Gabrielle Stedman. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and live in Makiki. I support HB 2720 in its current form to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

Graduate workers in the UH system have been taken advantage of as cheap labor for far too long, while access to our rightful resources as contributing members of this state institution has been continuously gatekept from us. We, graduate workers at UH, perform fundamental services to this state university including: executing administrative tasks, teaching, mentoring, contributing intellectual property, and publishing research. In return, we are exceptionally poorly compensated and lack protections from abuse.

UH has some of the lowest-paid graduate assistantships relative to the cost of living in the nation, with some departments, until recently, offering salary below the poverty line. Too many of us can tell you a story directly affecting us or our colleagues regarding harassment, workplace violence, and unsafe or hazardous working conditions. To complicate this further, there is a power structure affecting graduate workers and retaliation is common in these abusive situations. We are dependent on our bosses for not just salary, but also for our data, publishing our intellectual property, writing letters of recommendation, and granting of degrees. UH system has avoided any responsibility for this longstanding abuse for decades, typically covering up cases, or attempting to mitigate abuse on a case-by-case basis.

We are here to learn and to give back to education. And quite frankly the University is standing in our way. I urge you to listen to the stories of UH’s Graduate workers — stories of abuse, poor working conditions, unfair compensation, and other grievances. Education, ideas, dreams, worth, and safety should never be compromised by a need to navigate around institutional abuse. As public employees, all Graduate workers deserve the right to collectively negotiate. The Supreme Court decision last April 2023 ensured that the HLRB needed to decide on whether or not we are public employees. Please pass HB 2720 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolution to the issues we universally face — not just at some convenient time, or for some departments. But now, for all, into the future.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 6:27:33 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Benjamin West	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Benjamin West, I'm a graduate student worker and I support HB 2720 in its current and complete form.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 6:38:27 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
JIAWEI LIU	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Jiawei Liu,I'm a graduate student worker, and I support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 6:47:02 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lehua	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Lehua Matsumoto, I am a graduate student worker in the Department of American Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and I support HB 2720.

I am a second year graduate student, and I have led undergraduate discussion sections for two different classes, coming up with entertaining ways for students to engage with the material and ensuring that they are learning something from our coursework. In the last year, I have worked with our department as an Editorial Assistant for American Quarterly, ensuring that our department maintains its exemplary status within the field of American Studies.

I support HB 2720 because I know that the stress of graduate school should not be compounded by the stress of unforgiving labor practices and expectations, including an overwhelming workload, insufficient pay, and employment uncertainty. This bill will allow grad students like myself to address these concerns and communicate directly with our employers, the State of Hawaii and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions.

I hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain our rights, similar to how other graduate student organizations on the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years.

Thank you for your consideration.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 6:48:41 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kawika O'Connor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha LGO commitee,

My name is Kawika O'connor, writting to support HB2720. For the past year or so, I have worked as a graduate assistant in the Department of Mathematics at UH Manoa. I have seen first hand how professors and faculty take advantage of graduate assistant labour without offering appropriate compensation. I entered academia to pursue and advance my love of mathematics. While I have been able to to do this, it shouldn't be necessary to do this on food stamps and meer hours of sleep a week due to an exploitative amount of grading.

Support the ability for graduate assistants to collectively bargin. Any other position is equivalent to knowing support of exploitation.

Mahalo,

Kawika.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 7:01:10 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephanie Dossett	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Stephanie Dossett, I'm a graduate student worker and I support HB 2720. I teach 22 students in an online asynchronous course, monitoring their progress, communicating and grading assignments, and offering office hours twice a week.

This bill specifies the creation of a new bargaining unit for graduate student workers in Hawai'i, a necessary step so that we are not in the same unit as our direct supervisors, the staff who file our employment paperwork, or one that fails to address teaching positions whatsoever. On January 4, 2024, HLRB determined that graduate students are public employees with the right to collectively bargain. This bill ensures the implementation of this decision, 54 years after the first graduate student union was established by TAs at University of Wisconsin-Madison.

In 2023, around 75% of undergraduates at UH Mānoa would have been directly supervised by a graduate student teaching assistant. The universities and community college system run on our labor, and yet we are not guaranteed a liveable wage. The university promised to have Step 12 as the minimum pay step for all TAs and GAs by Fall 2023, 67.5% were still payed as Step 9 to 11, with 40% still paid at Step 9. A strong GA union would ensure that these "promises" for pay increase are implemented.

We hope that legislature grants us the opportunity to bargain for our rights, as our counterparts on the continent have been doing for the past 50 years. Thank you for your time and consideration.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 7:22:34 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ian Strieter	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Ian Strieter, I'm a graduate student worker, and I support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 7:24:58 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Madeline Davis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Madi Davis, I am a graduate student worker, and I support HB2720. I am paid for 20 hours per week, but I easily work 40-50 hours regularly. I am putting myself into debt just to take care of myself. I love researching and I love teaching, but I cannot sustain living paycheck to paycheck for the amount of labor I do. Please recognize that we are human beings too, and are being taken advantage of.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 7:34:10 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hannah Rozendo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the House Labor & Government Operations Committee:

My name is Hannah Rozendo, a Masters candidate in Tropical Conservation Biology at UH Hilo. I live in Kurtistown, Puna and I'm represented in the House by Rep. Jeanne Kapela, and Sen. Joy A. San Buenaventura in the Senate. I'm writing in support of HB 2720, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

Currently, Graduate Assistants (GAs) at UH Hilo are capped at a pay level lower than where the lowest UH Mānoa GAs start. I get to teach introductory Oceanography at UH Hilo, which is the highest paid group of GAs at UH Mānoa, who make excess of \$10,000 more than my annual salary at UH Hilo. Additionally, Research Assistants at UH Hilo do not receive a tuition waiver, unlike RAs at UH Mānoa. A collective bargaining unit for UH GAs and RAs is the first step to equal compensation for the work that GAs and RAs provide UH and the greater community.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully, Hannah Rozendo

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 7:50:09 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brianna Ninomoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Brianna Ninomoto. I am a second year graduate student at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo. I am writing to support of HB 2720, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai‘i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai‘i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 7:55:52 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Yuta Norden	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 7:58:32 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Miller	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm Elizabeth Miller, a graduate student worker, and I support HB 2720 in its current form.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 8:23:51 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Yu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Yu He, I'm a graduate student. As a future worker I support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 8:25:33 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Yunxuan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Yunxuan Zhong, I'm a international graduate student worker, and I support HB 2720. I hope it can help people that are or will be one of us.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 8:44:37 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Meyer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Andrew Meyer, I am a PhD Candidate in Physics at UH Manoa. I'm writing in support of HB 2720 in its current form to give graduate student workers of the UH System a collective bargaining unit.

Graduate students have struggled for decades with being paid at a level far too low to be able to afford living in Hawai'i while having little to no recourse for dealing with poor and abusive working conditions. With HLRB recognizing us as public employees, we now need to be granted our own collective bargaining unit so that we may redress these concerns, as our graduate counterparts on the mainland have been doing for around 50 years.

Thank you for your consideration.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 8:50:46 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ethan Hartley	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Ethan Hartley, I'm a graduate student worker, and I support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 8:53:39 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alan Tong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Hawai'i State Legislature,

My name is Alan Tong, a graduate student at University of Hawai'i Manoa writing in support of HB2720. I grew up in Makaha, went to high school in Pearl City, and now rent a home in Manoa Valley with fellow graduate students in math, hence I am represented in the House by Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, and Sen. Carol Fukunaga in the Senate. I am born and raised here, with my parents legal immigrants from Vietnam working low class labour.

I have worked both as a research assistant and a teaching assistant for the math classes at the university. If you or anyone you know has gone to UHM, they have passed through our department in one way or another. We facilitate teaching of mathematics courses, and even the placement exams to skip the courses; since mathematics is so prevalent in the world, **every** student needs a mathematics credit, so we typically run through the entire system. For this, we get paid our tuition and a yearly stipend of about \$20,000. Compared to the [MIT's living wage estimation for Hawai'i](#) of \$47,341 which accounts for the costs of living, the discrepancy is what a statician would call "significant".

After paying rent, utilities, and other monthly bills, my monthly income is \$150, still yet to be spent on food or gas. HB2720 is one of the changes I hope to be made to improve my life and the lives of other graduate students by allowing us a collective bargain. Thank you for reading my letter.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 9:06:22 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joan Pan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in support of HB 2720. Thank you.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 9:07:14 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
XIAOBO LIANG	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Xiaobo Liang, I'm a graduate student worker, and I support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 9:07:49 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ryan Vande Linde	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a former graduate student, I understand the difficulties and obstacles these workers face. It's imperative that they're able to collectively bargain in order to get better healthcare, wages and overall working conditions. Grad students deal with a considerable amount of stress, and deserve the right to advocate for their needs.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 9:22:09 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carter Elliot Beale	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Carter Beale. I am a graduate research assistant at UH Manoa, where I am working on my MA in the Geography and Environment Department. I am writing to express my support for HB2720. Upon arriving at UH for graduate school after completing my BS at UC Berkeley, where student organizing efforts have led to such a robust and thriving support infrastructure for student employees, I was shocked to learn that state policies preclude the ability for graduate student workers in Hawai'i to collectively bargain at all. This is clearly an anachronistic policy, and it is important that HB2720 be passed in its current form. This will have positive impacts on the dignity of the student employees, their psychological, material, and performance outcomes, and also contribute to the continued success and growth of higher education in Hawai'i.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 9:27:14 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Monisha Das Gupta	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support the rights of graduate students at the University of Hawai'i to unionize and collectively bargain for wages, benefits, and workplace protections. Graduate students are responsible for teaching students and supporting them, running labs, and contributing to faculty research. Thus they are essential workers. Without them, the faculty, and by extension the university, will not be able to conduct the many tasks crucial to the academy.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 9:40:59 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Annie Chien	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a graduate worker who works between 40 to 70 hours a week while making less than the amount I need to afford groceries once a week, I support HB 2720 in its current form.

Aloha and terveh. My name is Sara Maaria Saastamoinen, and my pronouns are she and they. I am a Ph.D. student in Political Science in my third year as a student and graduate worker at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I live here in town in Ala Moana, and I am the constituent of Representative Scott Saiki in the House and of Senator Sharon Moriwaki in the Senate. As a graduate student worker, I **fully support House Bill 2720** for our right as workers to collectively bargain in accordance with the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board determination last month. I urge you to join me with your unequivocal support.

I wanted to start by expressing my passion and appreciation for the representatives who brought forth this bill, the lawyers who have worked with Academic Labor Union organizers for years, and of course, my fellow graduate students who are all working to secure our right to a union that can support graduate student workers — who are here today to speak with you, taking time away from the many responsibilities we carry as students, scholars, teachers, researchers, parents, friends, caregivers, and citizens to ask you to listen.

For years now, graduate students have been denied our right to collectively bargain our contracts. This impacts not only us graduate students but also the future leaders we educate, so supporting graduate workers should be one of the most crucial issues for this legislature. This academic year alone, I am teaching more than 45 undergraduate students who will be the leaders of Hawai'i. For the past four semesters, as the sole instructor who entirely devises her own curriculum, I work for the state by selecting thought-provoking readings and creating accessible and engaging assignments, by solely grading all students' in-class and written assignments and providing robust written feedback, by devising lectures and in-class activities to help students both digest and weave connections between selected course materials and the real-world issues we face in Hawai'i and globally, and by fulfilling numerous other responsibilities expected of faculty, such as participating in surveys to secure funding for UHM through grants, writing reference letters for students to study abroad programs, graduate school and other degree programs, jobs during and after college, and more.

Here are some snippets of my students have to say about my teaching:

- I believe Sara did a good job furthering and challenging students' thinking and from what I have heard other students say, this class has changed the way we think about water and our relationality. I felt like Sara cared more about what the students wanted out of the class and how we learn best than what I have experienced from other instructors.
- To Sara: The passion you have for this class was inspiring. You made this class something I wanted to attend and also to succeed in. You taught me more than water politics. You taught me to think about more than the living things.
- Sara is incredible, literally one of the best if not the best teacher I have ever encountered. I cried to my mom after going to office hours one day because of how incredible she is.

- Excellent mind-opening course that had me grow so much academically and in my general thinking of the world. As an added positive note Sara is the best professor I have had in the whole past two years I have been in college! She had very extensive knowledge about the topics covered in the class as well any other topic brought up. She was very good at giving detailed feedback and really seemed as if she was there to help all the students succeed and grow!
- To Sara: I want you to know that you are the most caring and intelligent teacher I have ever encountered. You are why I go to school. It is teachers like you who change lives.

For all of this work and even with rave reviews from students, the state pays me poverty wages. The state is not even paying me half of what a living wage is for Honolulu County. As the instructor of your children, your future leaders, I make less than \$22,000 a year: to pay rent, to cover utilities, to feed myself, not to mention healthcare, clothing, or any paid time off to get to rest.

So, I work two other jobs — on top of teaching and being a student myself — to make ends meet. In doing so, I am bringing further prestige to the university as one of six Futures Studies Fellows from around the globe with the United Nations Development Programme. And, even without being paid a living wage by the university, I work to support it financially. Over the last three semesters alone, I brought in thousands of dollars of funding for my department's programming, specifically to put on talks with distinguished academics, political leaders, and organizers from around the world.

We should be supporting those who are cultivating our brightest minds, instead of leaving teachers to struggle every month to make ends meet. As public employees, we deserve to form a union to collectively bargain for working conditions that are fair, equitably, safe, healthy, and which serve the future of Hawai'i—not its underpaid and overworked past.

Without us, the University of Hawai'i would not have the world-class teaching and research that it is known for; without us, the State of Hawai'i would not have a Research One institution to call its own. I ask you to **pass HB 2720 urgently** and to listen to the voices of Graduate Assistants who have been fighting for years to secure our right to unionize. Mahalo nui and passibo.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 9:57:03 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jordan Ando	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Jordan Ando, I am a graduate student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and I support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 9:57:11 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
K. H.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e,

I am a resident of Senate District 28 and House District 13. I am a former graduate student and alumna of UH Manoa, class of Spring 2019. I am in support of HB2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 10:00:12 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ayah Abdo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 10:05:28 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Korey Wetherell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Korey Wetherell, I am a graduate student worker at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and I support HB2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 10:12:23 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Colleen Rost-Banik	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Representatives,

My name is Colleen Rost-Banik and I am a Sociology Instructor at the University of Hawaii, Manoa. I ask your support for HB2720 which would create a separated bargaining unit for graduate assistants at the university and community college level within the University of Hawaii system. I work with graduate assistants in the classes I teach. I simply would not be able to teach the number of students that I do (between 200-300 students each semester) without graduate teaching assistants.

UH has increasingly relied on graduate assistants for teaching, grading, and research. With pressure to have larger class sizes and with many departments working with fewer faculty (due to faculty retirements and no guarantee for replacements), graduate students have become responsible for some of the most core functions of the university system. To stress how much UH relies on graduate teaching assistance, some departments have one TA for 175 students.

Graduate assistants' pay is woefully inadequate for Hawaii's cost of living. Most graduate students must work outside of their graduate assistantship in order to make ends meet. This is not only untenable for their daily lives, but it also makes it such that graduate education is only accessible to a limited group of people - those who 1) are already of high socio-economic class, 2) are willing to take out significant student loans to cover the cost of living, or 3) are willing to run themselves ragged as they work an additional job on top of their graduate assistantship and coursework.

Graduate students deserve to be unionized and to have their own collective bargaining unit. Combining them with any of the current bargaining units would be a significant conflict of interest given the hierarchical nature of university systems and the power dynamics embedded within.

I highly urge you to support HB2720.

Mahalo for your time and attention.

Colleen Rost-Banik, PhD

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 10:26:18 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Abigail Hawkins	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Abigail Hawkins, I am a graduate student worker, and I support HB2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 10:34:37 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Allison Benz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 10:37:21 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alzira Fernandes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the House Higher Education Committee:

My name is Alzira Fernandes, an MA Candidate in Landscape Architecture. I live in Mānoa Valley, and I'm represented in the House by Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, and Sen. Carol Fukunaga in the Senate. I'm writing in support of HB 2720, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

During my time at UH, I've worked as a teaching assistant, and currently as a Design Assistant at the UH Community Design Center (UHCDC). There are working conditions in both positions that could certainly benefit more from organized support. UHCDC employees are incredibly hard working, and the organization would not function without students. I believe that these positions should be compensated at the graduate research assistant level, yet we are only paid an hourly rate with is insufficient for the cost of living in Hawaii.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 10:41:12 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Charles Addey	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

I am Charles Addey, a graduate student worker, and I support HB 2720 in its current form.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 10:44:29 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sankaran Krishna	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support the rights of Graduate Students to establish their own Collective Bargaining Unit and to form their own Union in due time. As a Professor at the University of Hawaii at Manoa (I joined the faculty in 1990), I can attest to the fact that the University would not survive for one week without the work of our grad students - as teachers, as researchers, and as mentors to our undergraduate students. The truth is that, like in most other public and private universities, graduate students are exploited by the system: their remuneration is nowhere in proportion to their work and centrality to the university. The only way to work towards a system that is fair and recognizes their role in the sustenance of higher education in this State, is to allow them to establish their Collective Bargaining Unit through unionizing. The state supreme court has conceded this - its time for the Legislature to make this happen.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 10:45:09 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Peggy Kwi-Suk Hong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a UH-Mānoa community member and kūpuna. I am currently taking a class with a graduate student worker in Political Science. I support this bill because graduate student workers are doing some of the most important work on campus. I am so impressed and grateful for their work on campus, which is absolutely necessary for the functioning of the university.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 10:45:37 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelly Duong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a graduate research assistant that is severely underpaid, I support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 10:46:00 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hannah Hyman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Hannah Hyman and I am a third year PhD student in the Political Science department. I am writing in support of HB 2720, and urge the legislature to support the creation of a collective bargaining unit for UH graduate student workers.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 10:49:11 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sarah Popenhagen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Sarah Popenhagen. I am a 4th year PhD student and graduate assistant at the University of Hawai'i. I live in Mō'ili'ili and am represented in the House by Rep. Scott Y. Nishimoto and in the Senate by Sen. Les Ihara, Jr. I'm writing in support of HB2720 in its current form, which will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers like me so that we can directly bargain with our employers. Many of us, including myself, are struggling to come up with the money for basic needs like groceries and rent as the cost of living increases in our neighborhoods. Personally, in the three years I've been living in my current apartment, my rent and utilities have increased by 16.5%, yet my salary has increased by less than 3%.

On January 4th, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board determined that graduate students are public employees with the right to collectively bargain, and I firmly believe that due to graduate students' unique working conditions creating a new collective bargaining unit is the best path forward.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 10:50:36 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nandita Sharma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a Professor of sociology at UH Mānoa, I am strongly in support of graduate students having the right to collectively bargain. When graduate students are also workers, they must have the same rights as all other workers - to choose to join a union and collectively bargain for the terms of their working conditions, including pay rate. As someone who has had the assistant of numerous graduate assistants (GAs), I can testify to the crucial role they play in the ability for faculty to teach and carry out their research.

I encourage you to support our graduate student workers.

Sincerely,

Nandita Sharma,

Professor

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 10:50:58 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ken Reyes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Ken Reyes, a PhD candidate in Political Science at UH. I live in Makiki, which is represented by Sen. Carol Fukunaga and Rep. Della Au Bellati. I'm writing in support of HB 2720, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 10:52:52 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristy Lam	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha nui nō,

My name is Kristy Lam (PhD, Natural Resource Management Department). I live in Mō‘ili‘ili & am represented by Scott Y. Nishimoto in the House. I am writing in support of HB 2720.

I’ve spent a total of 6 years being a graduate student at UH Mānoa and plan to become a professor. In the past, I’ve spent up to 60 hours a week working as a TA (during the pandemic) and did not feel recognized for going above and beyond the 20 hour max work week required of TAs. I wish I had a union to advocate for me. I’ve also struggled with Title IX related issues. It is already overwhelming trying to maintain our course work and research project, let alone the weight of a Title IX investigation on top of that. Union representation would alleviate the pressure on students and allowing us to follow through with investigations with more ease. My main concern is the safety of our students from predatory behavior. As an aspiring professor, I really value the student-faculty relationship. It has the power to make or break a student... I hope you seriously consider passing this bill so we can keep our current and future graduate students safe. Mahalo for your time, mālama pono!

-Kristy L.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 10:57:46 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lindsey Merifield	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Lindsey Merifield and I support HB 2720. I am a graduate assistant focusing on cancer research. In order to do impactful research to help the community, we need adequate compensation to support ourselves, and the opportunity to unionize.

Mahalo

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 11:04:45 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sophia Somerscales	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Sophia Somerscales and I'm a master's student in Geography and Environment at UH. I live in Ala Moana and am represented in the House by Rep. Scott Y. Nishimoto and in the Senate by Rep. Sharon Y. Moriwaki. I write in support of HB 2720.

I'm currently a Teaching Assistant for two courses in the Geography department, where I hold a lab for 80 students each week to provide in-person support for class concepts, help on assignments, and technology troubleshooting. I also schedule additional one-on-one meetings and am the first point of contact for all student emails throughout the week.

This role is 20 hours a week and while I enjoy the work that I do, the pay is simply not enough to cover living expenses in Hawai'i considering I'm also a full-time student working on a research project. This bill to create a bargaining unit is crucial to negotiating better working conditions for graduate student workers. Thank you for your time and consideration.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 11:12:09 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Linnea Miriam Wolniewicz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Linnea Wolniewicz, I am a graduate student worker at UH Manoa, and I support HB 2720 in its current form.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 11:13:25 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chloe Obara	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 2720 in its current form.

Chair Scot Matayoshi
Vice Chair Andrew Garrett

House Committee on Labor & Government Operations

Thursday, February 2, 2024
9:30 AM

Aloha Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Garrett, Members of the House Committee on Labor & Government Operations,

My name is Jun Shin. I am a labor and social justice activist, testifying as an individual in **STRONG SUPPORT** of **HB2720**, Relating to Collective Bargaining. During my time at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa as an Ethnic Studies and American Studies double major, I had several classes where a graduate assistant was either the primary instructor or taught alongside the professor. I found them to be passionate and dedicated, which makes sense given that they were working towards completing higher education in subjects related to those classes. They were willing to help me when I was struggling with class or had questions. I also found them to be very understanding and empathetic, given that they were also students and/or were closer to us in life experience.

Graduate student workers are some of the best instructors I ever had, but they are not only instructors. They labor for the university also as tutors, researchers, administrative assistants, even unofficial counselors and so much more. They are the backbone of UH and should be treated as such. Like all working people, they deserve respect on the job and should not be scraping by and struggling to barely survive while working and studying. Graduate student workers have been organizing on and off for years now and need your support to officially form their own collective bargaining unit as public workers.

A union will allow graduate student workers to have a vehicle to fight for higher wages and better benefits. It will allow graduate assistants to be able to have a protected voice in how their workplace, the University of Hawai'i is being run. It would create an avenue for graduate student workers to address critical issues in the workplace like equal pay, sexual harassment, abuse of authority, and discrimination in its many forms.

I also support the establishment of a separate collective bargaining unit, Unit 16 for graduate student workers for these reasons:

1. Graduate student workers cannot be categorized into either just instructional (Unit 7) or just administrative, professional, technical (Unit 8). Their jobs are in many ways a combination of both specifications.

2. Unique among the University of Hawai'i workplace, the composition of the graduate student workforce will consistently change. Graduate student workers are not just public workers, but also students.
3. In the case that graduate student workers are placed under Unit 7, they would be in the same bargaining unit as their supervisors.

Please **PASS House Bill 2720** out of your committee and allow for graduate student workers to enter into workplace negotiations in equal footing with their employers.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Jun Shin,
State House District 23 | State Senate District 12
Cell: 808-255-6663
Email: junshinbusiness729@gmail.com

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 11:17:31 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Camille Adkison	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Camille Adkison, and I am a PhD student in Oceanography. I live in Kaimuki, and I'm represented in the House by Rep. Jackson D. Sayama, and Sen. Les Ihara Jr. in the Senate. I'm writing in support of HB 2720. I have been in graduate school at UH for three years. I research how nutrients move through the North Pacific Subtropical Gyre, the largest habitat in the world. This site is a downwelling zone, which means water and carbon from the surface are sent to deeper depths. Therefore, my work is closely related to climate change, and I hope my results will aid in climate mitigation efforts. I have participated in several research cruises exploring the gyre, specifically to Station ALOHA, a site 100 kilometers north of Oahu. I also serve as a Teaching Assistant for the introductory oceanography course, OCN201 Science of the Sea. I teach a 13-student lab every week. For my lab, I prepare and give a weekly lecture, set-up scientific equipment, lead demonstrations, and grade weekly quizzes and weekly labs. I am also required to lead a biweekly discussion section. This semester I am leading one section of 28 students. In previous semesters I have been required to lead two sections with twenty students in each section. I am responsible for lecturing during each section and grading pre and post discussion assignments for all of my discussion students in addition to my lab duties. This is my second semester serving as Lead TA, which means I oversee the other TAs and work closely with the instructors to make sure the course runs smoothly. My teaching assistantship pays me for 20 hours of work each week, but to fulfill all these requirements I regularly work beyond those hours. When I originally accepted the position, I was told I would receive overtime pay to compensate me for this time. I do not. I already found it difficult to manage living in Hawai'i when I budgeted expecting to receive overtime. Now, I find it impossible. I spend 64% of my monthly income on rent alone. Still, I consider myself one of the lucky ones as many of my peers move multiple times a year due to rent increases, and I have moved only once. In addition to teaching, I am expected to take graduate courses, for which I must receive at least a B average or be expelled from the graduate school and make consistent progress in my research. Before starting grad school, I worked as both an elementary school teacher and cybersecurity consultant. Being a teaching assistant and graduate student is by far the most demanding and challenging role I have ever been in, yet I am also in the most financially precarious position I have ever been in. Again, I feel lucky to still be here. During my first week of graduate school, I was hospitalized due to an unexpected illness. It took roughly a month for me to recover, but I was expected to and continued to work as soon as I was out of the hospital. When I expressed concerns for my health, I was encouraged to quit. This bill provides a way for graduate student workers like me to address our concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board

classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. Being a graduate student is a unique experience, and we believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights. Thank you for considering my testimony.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 11:19:04 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noelle Iati	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Noelle Iati, I'm a graduate student worker, and I support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 11:23:36 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hiroko Saito	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Hiroko Saito. I am a graduate student worker, and I support HB2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 11:26:13 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dianne Deauna	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the House Higher Education Committee:

My name is Dianne Deauna, a PhD candidate in Oceanography. I live in Mānoa Valley, and I'm represented in the House by Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, and Sen. Carol Fukunaga in the Senate. I'm writing in support of HB 2720, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

This Spring, I'm a Teaching Assistant for the online course Sustainability in a Changing World, where I review and grade multiple assignments for 150 students each week. I also hold two recitation hours per week, where students come and we do a deeper dive into concepts discussed in class. Last Fall semester, I offered introductory calculus and chemistry tutoring to over 200 students, holding 10 hours of one on one instruction and 4 hours of group tutoring classes per week. I also hosted the undergraduate club, organizing events such as beach clean-ups and t-shirt dyeing sessions.

These teaching assistantships paid for 20 hrs of work per week, but occasionally I will work beyond those set hours and yet I'm ineligible for any type of overtime pay. To fulfill my degree requirements (which is why I'm only paid for 20 hours per week, as I'm also a student), I'm working on my research which is focused on the effects of climate change on the North Pacific Ocean. My work provides crucial context in determining how we can adapt to these changes, and what is necessary for us to do now to avoid the worst outcomes. Despite all my hard work and the labor that I provide the University both in teaching and research, I often find it difficult to manage living in Hawai'i on the salary provided by UH, where I spend 65% of my monthly salary just on rent. As an international student, I'm only allowed to work 20 hours per week in a position funded by the University to keep my student visa status valid. This means that the only avenue by which I can legally support myself is through my teaching assistant salary, which is \$17,000 below the annual recommended living wage in Hawai'i for a single person with no dependents.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path

forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

Testimony in Support of HB 2720

Arturo Jaime

My name is Arturo Jaime, I am a PhD student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa working as a Teaching Assistant in the mathematics department. I live in St. Louis Heights, Honolulu, HI where my respective house and senate representatives are J. Sayama and L. S. Ihara, Jr., and I am writing in support of HB 2720.

I have been a graduate student and Teaching Assistant at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa for what will be five years at the end of this semester. I have been a Teaching Assistant to over 450 students in that time. Where currently, I am Teaching Assistant to 50 students for Calculus 2, a standard and required course for a majority of students majoring in STEM.

The biggest challenge being a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i has been the attempt to live in Honolulu (the 3rd most expensive city to live in according to USNews 2023 Rankings) with a monthly income not comparable to even graduate student salaries in small-town graduate programs across the country.

HB 2720 creates a much needed and long overdue pathway for graduate student workers like me to address concerns such as the fact that despite the University's promise to have Step 12 as the minimum pay step for TAs and GAs by Fall 2023, 67.5% were still paid as Step 9 to 11, with 40% still paid at Step 9. A strong GA union would ensure that these "promises" for pay increase are enforced by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 11:35:51 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Bannister	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 2720 in its current form

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 11:55:22 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Randizia Crisostomo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the House Higher Education Committee:

My name is Randizia Crisostomo, a PhD student in Political Science. I live in Mānoa, and I'm represented in the House by Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, and Senator Carol Fukunaga in the Senate. I'm writing to support HB 2720, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

This Spring, I am a Teaching Assistant for the in-person course surrounding Gender, Law, and Justice. Every week, weekends included, I review and grade multiple assignments for 25+ students, which includes in-class discussions, participation, activities, and video responses created by my class. Our course meets twice a week for 1 hour and 15 minutes, 2 hours and 30 minutes, plus office hours for the weekly cycle. In addition, I also maintain a second teaching job to make ends meet and offset the cost of living in Hawai'i. Last Fall semester, I offered introductory political science courses and tutoring with 30+ students, as well as teaching another course consisting of 30 students in my secondary job.

These teaching assistantships paid for 20 hrs of work per week, but I more than often work beyond those set hours and yet I'm ineligible for any type of overtime pay or compensation. To fulfill my degree requirements (which is why I'm only paid for 20 hours per week, as I'm also a student), I'm working on my research which is focused on the effects of collective grief and Indigenous critical wellness Practices in Guåhan, the Marianas, and Micronesia. My work provides a crucial context in determining how to increase mental health resources surrounding intense grief and mourning, and what is necessary for the healing of CHamoru communities-- particularly youth who experience high rates of depression, suicide, and anxiety in my community. Despite all of my hard work and the labor that I have provided the University both in teaching and research, I often find it difficult to manage living in Hawai'i on the salary provided by UH, where I spend 65% of my monthly salary just on rent and necessities for living. In most cases, the salary provided to student workers is way below the average income-to-household ratio needed to live in spaces such as Hawai'i, which accordingly is one of the most expensive places to live according to the 2023 census surrounding healthcare, household, and transportation index.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i, and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On Januar

4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hop the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 11:55:48 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sophia Hanscom	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 12:18:26 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Motoki Saito	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Motoki Yamamori and I currently am graduate student majoring in Travel Industry Management and hope to work as a graduate student worker next semester. I support HB 2720 because as we graduate employee have the right to collectively bargain.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 12:19:56 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Wiwik Dharmiasih	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Wiwik Dharmiasih, I'm a graduate student worker, and I support HB2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 12:23:12 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ci Yan Sara Loh	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Loh Ci Yan Sara, I'm an international student and graduate student worker, and I support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 12:28:27 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anna Yu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Anna Yu, and I am an MA candidate in Asian Studies. I am writing in support of HB2720, a bill that creates a new bargaining unit for graduate student workers at UH and the community college system.

On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labour Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collective bargaining. I therefore believe it simply makes sense for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We provide so much labor in the operation of the university, from being teaching assistants, researchers, and also as administrative workers in various departments. I myself work for UH's Program Fee Board, which is in charge of distributing fund to various UH organizations - not just student clubs, but even other academic departments. Being able to collectively bargain for ourselves is therefore crucial for us to be able to address the concerns that arise as part of our essential labor for the university. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity, similar to how our counterparts on the continent have been doing for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration!

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 12:30:57 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Armando Molina Gómez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Armando Molina Gómez, an MA student in the Department of Linguistics, and I support HB 2720, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 12:34:51 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Candace Fujikane	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB 2720, and I urge you to do so as well.

I am an English professor at the University of Hawai'i, where I have taught for 28 years. Graduate assistants make it possible for us to have a thriving university: without graduate students, we would not be able to offer enough classes to serve the people of Hawai'i. The flip side to this is that graduate assistants are also incredibly vulnerable to having their labor exploited by departments and the university. It is critical that graduate assistants have their own bargaining unit as we already see all over the country.

I have seen legislative session after legislative session where legislators promise to support graduate assistants and then fail to make good on their promises. It's time that the legislators demonstrate true respect for the work that graduate assistants do and recognize them as labor who must have collective bargaining rights as a bargaining unit.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 12:37:28 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tiffany Beam	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Tiffany Beam, and I am a PhD student in Political Science at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. I live in Makiki and am represented in the House by Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, and Sen. Carol Fukunaga in the Senate. I am writing in support of HB 2720. I am a graduate assistant of the Poli Sci department that teaches undergraduate students. I have taught an average of 30 students for a course that I design myself for four out of six semesters of my PhD program, with the first two semesters being a teaching assistant. Most PhD programs guarantee funding for four to five years, yet we have to compete with one another over scarce opportunities, apply for GA-ships, and seek out external funding every single year. There is a huge discrepancy between our GA stipend and the exorbitant cost of living in Honolulu. 60% of my monthly salary goes towards paying rent, not including utilities. 30% goes towards financial obligations, leaving just 10% for essential living expenses, transportation, any chances towards a savings goal, and the looming possibility of a hike in food prices or an unexpected trip to the emergency room. It is for this reason that I work an additional 25 hours a week at a part-time job in order to avoid going further into debt. While I love teaching and enjoy my second job, the lack of funding at UH has made it challenging for me to have the time and energy required to work on my dissertation research, which should be my main prerogative as a PhD student. I often find myself having to choose between my teaching responsibilities, rent & food, and my PhD research when these should not be in competition with one another. Each semester of my GA-ship, I have had to ask for extensions on final term papers or request an “incomplete” grade with my graduate courses because the little time I have outside of making rent, repaying debts, and preparing classes goes primarily towards grading final papers and projects for 30 students. Each semester of my GA-ship, I subconsciously hope I get fewer enrollment and fewer requests for letters of recommendation, which is disheartening when I see it as an honor and joy to support undergraduates. Each semester, I have fallen ill due to stress and lack of sleep, and due to living in an ongoing pandemic. Having a collective bargaining unit for UH graduate workers can give us a chance for adequate healthcare that would provide quality prevention services and alleviate persistent anxiety around needing physical, mental, and emergency care. A CBU would offer us the ability to negotiate higher wages, which would afford us the time and ability to actually use our healthcare instead of working a second job to make rent. The lack of funding and a union for UH graduate workers only works for those who are in prime health, who have had access to healthcare their entire lives, who are O‘ahu homeowners, who are financially supported by partners or family members, come from generational wealth, are U.S. citizens, and/or have not incurred any debts. Graduate workers deserve better pay and care. Given the fact that a large number of us are responsible for teaching at UH, the next generation deserves better as well.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 12:43:27 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Henry Zhang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Henry Zhang, I'm a graduate student worker, and I support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 1:03:58 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mohammad Shadman Ishrak	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am Mohammad Shadman Ishrak, a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. I am reaching out to express my support for HB 2720, which is aimed at establishing a collective bargaining unit specifically for graduate student workers within the UH and community college system.

I am a Research Assistant committed to a 20-hour workweek. My focus is on developing innovative, non-contact, non-invasive radar techniques for vital signs and occupancy measurement. This work holds promise for substantially reducing the costs of critical health tests, such as those for sleep apnea, and offers a non-intrusive option for monitoring the vital signs of vulnerable groups including burn victims and infants. In addition to my research, I play a pivotal role in guiding undergraduate students through their capstone projects within the EE 396 and EE 496 courses.

Despite the significant contributions I and my fellow graduate students make, our financial stability is precarious. My international student visa stipulates a work limit of 20 hours per week at on-campus jobs, resulting in an annual salary of \$23,000—far below the living wage for an individual in Hawaii. With housing claiming 50% of my income and necessities like food consuming another 30%, the prospect of saving for emergencies is bleak.

We firmly believe that granting graduate student workers the right to self-advocate through collective bargaining is the most equitable path forward. Such empowerment would align us with our peers on the mainland, who have been successfully navigating contract negotiations for over fifty years.

I appreciate your consideration of this pressing issue and your support for HB 2720, which will undoubtedly foster a fairer, more productive academic environment for graduate student workers.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 1:19:10 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Soren Ruppelius	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a UH alum, I am testifying in support of HB2720. In my time as a graduate student at UH, the stipend I received was not enough to support myself. I relied on food stamps and state health insurance, spending no more than \$100 a month on groceries. I had no guarantee of time off if I became sick, and no guarantee of funding each year in order to complete my studies. A bargaining union would allow graduate students, whose labor the university relies on, to access basic living standards. UH graduate students have the right to collective bargaining, and should be able to form a union that supports their rights. Graduate programs at many other prestigious universities provide stipends that allow their students to fully commit to their work and produce great research, along with access to basic rights. UH is currently failing its students, leaving them to struggle to survive while expecting exploitative quantities of work. With a union, UH grad students can continue to stand up for the rights they deserve and be treated with respect as public employees. Support students, and support HB2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 1:47:11 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shannon Pomaika'i Hennessey	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha kākou, my name is Shannon Pōmaika‘i Hennessey, and I was born and raised in Niu Valley, O‘ahu, represented by Rep. Mark J. Hashem in the House, and Rep. Stanley Chang in the Senate. I am also a PhD student in Indigenous Politics and member of the Academic Labor United here at UH Mānoa. I am writing in support of HB 2720, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address our concerns regarding livable and fair wages, access to healthcare, and ability to address grievances by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai‘i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai‘i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 2:17:32 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Miles Drazkowski	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

I count myself fortunate to stand with my peers as a graduate student worker. As a result, there are a multitude of reasons why I think this bill deserves your support and attention.

Whether it is simply, that as public employees it is our right to collectively bargain, or whether it is the fact that our contributions are invaluable to not only the university but academia and the intellectual future of our given fields, or even whether it is the direct effects that we will have on the lives of our students and colleagues, not to mention the lives of everyone that calls these islands home, we deserve better.

We have been asked, why make the choice to be a graduate student worker?

In my field of engineering, employment that would simultaneously offer me the flexibility and financial resources that could allow me to pursue a graduate degree, doesn't exist. Hence, I've sought employment as a Teaching Assistant.

In Fall 2023, out of the 1,536 graduate student workers, 579 were Teaching Assistants. If TAs average 20 students, that means around 11,600 undergraduates have been directly affected by our labor. The UH Manoa undergraduate population is approximately 14,500, that's almost 80% of the undergraduate population attending TA led classes. And that is only considering one class. In most cases, undergrads take multiple classes that are taught by TAs.

The students that we teach, the students that I teach, will wind up as the engineers in your Department of Transportation, your Board of Water Supply, your Clean Water Branch.

The benefits that [students and society reap](#) are, in large part, due to our labor. And yet, the compensation and working conditions offered to TAs has led to hiring shortages for example those in the Physics Department and School of Life Sciences. As a result, sections of required classes are canceled, student progress is delayed.

And yet, I'm privileged. I'm able to take on overload positions to augment my income which even still remains below a Honolulu living wage (MIT's published [living wage for Hawai'i](#) is currently at \$47,000)

Being able to collectively bargain in our own unit, will allow graduate workers to improve our living and working conditions. Inevitably, this will result in hiring from a more diverse and

typically underrepresented background, bringing not only monetary value but intellectual and cultural contributions to the university and Hawai'i as a whole.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 3:00:09 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tatsuki Kohatsu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Graduate student workers at University of Hawaii at Manoa deserve the right to collectively bargain. It is undeniable how essential the work of student workers is for the entire operation of the university. Not having the right to collectively bargain leaves very little space for the student workers to seek improvements in their situations in a place where living expenses are much higher than other places. As an international student, I often find it challenging to make ends meet not only because my visa status limits my employment options, but also the 20 hours cap does not provide enough to cover living expenses with unexpected expenditures at times. In addition to that, with the limited funding for international students, just like other international students, I often find myself being tied up to spend a lot of time working on funding applications to continue my study for the next six months or so. Then I find myself exhausted by it and my performance declines at work. This is not unique to me. Graduate student workers encounter many kinds of difficulty and challenges, depending on their situations. These challenges negatively affect their work performance. For that, not having the right to address these challenges for graduate students also negatively affects the university as a whole, given that the operation of the university as an institution is dependent on the work the students do. So, the right for the students to collectively bargain is essential not only for the students, but also the university as well.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 3:03:47 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Samantha	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Grad students deserve the dignity and respect of receiving a fair wage, a decision in which they should have a voice. Denying them this reflects poorly on the school and adds another barrier of study, in addition to the effects current grad students feel when trying to live off the wage given to them.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 5:15:59 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jason Mark Alexander	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Jason Mark Alexander. I have served as a Graduate Assistant for 2.5 years and am a PhD candidate at the University of Hawai‘i. I strongly support HB2720 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain. As a 6th year PhD student in Sociology and a worker, I am specializing in conflict transformation and ways state administrators should care about their constituents.

This bill integrates Graduate Assistants as a category of legitimate Public Employee into the existing systems of collective bargaining and negotiations to which we are entitled. Once this adjustment is made, with Bargaining Unit 16 specifically for the unique interests of research, clerical, and teaching work GAs perform at all hours of the day across the UH system, we can proceed as working adults in equal conversation with our employers, entitled to legal protections in negotiating workplace issues as we are living in and contributing to this state.

All of work in graduate school is done by people in their 20s, 30s, and older, with routine needs to support dependents and their own wellbeing while confronting the range of inequities of citizenship, race, gender, physical abilities, and generational situation. The decades-long denial of union rights is a shameful injustice by which UH can ignore the workers' situations. I have heard too many accounts from colleagues whose supervisors essentially interpret the bare-bones GA contract freely, with no oversight from department and college level administration because the short-term work demands override the welfare of the graduate assistants doing the work. I am attaching an anonymized version of my own GA contract; it is vague in oversight of supervisor decisions, contains no benefits, and was not updated and reissued when sick leave and salary adjustments were instituted in August 2022, so I have no contracted guarantee of these changes for my specific position, and has been a source of anxiety. Can you imagine having to work 60 hours per week, even though the contract sets a limit of 20, with no overtime pay? This is what happens at UH for many workers. There is a spiritual drain that comes from seeing your supervisor monopolize your time, forcing you to stretch your academic degree progress by years. Conditions vary depending on the supervisor, but the issue of workers having no systematically ensured influence on conditions, while the number of open positions in one's area of expertise is limited, encourages the trend of exploitation to go unchecked. It feels coercive, and there's not even job security throughout an academic career under the current system of single-year contracts that do not automatically renew.

The University has not taken meaningful initiatives to understand workers' voices or incorporate our standpoints as both workers and students into the institutional priorities. In the new UH

System Strategic Plan 2023-2029, approved on November 17 2022 by the Board of Regents, one of the four imperatives is to Meet Hawai'i Workforce Needs of Today and Tomorrow. The Goal is to "Eliminate workforce shortages in Hawai'i while preparing students for a future different than the present," with primary metrics being the number of shortages and of number of students learning career skills. Nowhere in this framing is a consideration of the positionality of the thousands of students enrolled at UH who are also employees of UH during that period, nor the health and motivation of these workers even if they find a job, which is a crucial determinant of the very shortages the state is facing as people leave in disgust over employers' humiliating contract conditions. In town hall forums on the strategic plan, I raised this issue of excluding university laborers from the workforce of the state, including the urgent need for collective bargaining rights to help the university community as a whole meet all its constituents labor goals holistically. Disappointingly, as I see the exclusion of this consideration from the plan's structure and President Lassner's empty promises, it is crystal clear that UH administration is not going to seriously consider contract negotiations until this legislature passes this bill I testify on now. There won't be any meaningful workplace reform or pathways of discussion over issues until we establish them with everyone at the table.

I routinely feel obligated to warn enthusiastic professionals, potential arrivals to the UH system, that they can easily be placed at high risk of being exploited with no recourse to protect their health other than leaving the UH system itself. And they already know that, because so many other universities are more attractive to work at with established non-faculty unions giving people living wages and senses of safety in work environments. The conspicuous lack of a union, not just for graduate assistant workers but also for lecturers and undergraduate students, is causing a brain drain of people currently enrolled as living costs and workplace stresses increase. It particularly blocks out people without financial and social wealth and safety nets, as well as international students from all over the globe as visa conditions further limit what workers can do to survive the slippages between the unilaterally imposed contracts and reality.

As workers for a public employer, all GAs deserve the right to collectively negotiate their contracted working conditions to determine the quality of their lives, their health, and the well-being of their communities in Hawai'i. I urge you to listen to the voices of GA workers struggling with poverty wages, supervisor abuse, and other grievances. Please pass HB2720 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 5:19:27 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chloe Hartwell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou,

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit this testimony in strong support HB 2720.

Graduate student workers are critical to academic institutions and this bill allows them to collectively bargain as is their right as public employees.

There is 50 years of precedent on the continent to support this path and I believe it will make higher education in Hawai'i stronger, safer, and more equitable. I want graduate student workers to have the resources to access healthcare and afford rent, food, and all other foundations that best equip them to continue contributing to teaching, research, and beyond.

Mahalo nui loa for considering my testimony.

Chloe Hartwell

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 5:25:46 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marie Nour Nakhle	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm Marie Nour, a unionized graduate student worker from the University of Connecticut, and I support HB 2720 in its current form. Graduate student workers should have the right to unionize to ensure their basic needs are met!

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 5:38:25 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alyssa Rodriguez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 6:02:44 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Colwill	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I support HB2720

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 6:20:33 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Uma T Crouch	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 2720!

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 6:27:28 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tabatha Knudson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha esteemed committee members,

My name is Tabatha Knudson and I am from east Honolulu. I was raised on O‘ahu, and went through our public education system, from grades K-12, and then received my degree from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. As someone who was a student with many friends in UH’s graduate program, I strongly urge you to support HB2720.

My partner, Ben, and I recently graduated with our bachelor’s degree from the University of Hawai‘i. My partner, alongside many of his peers, pursued PHD programs after they graduated. My partner is currently a graduate student at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, while we have many friends who are pursuing their PHD at the University of Hawaii. While the Cornell graduate students are actually also in the process of unionizing, it is clear that there is a staunch difference in the quality of life between the two schools. This is especially concerning as universities heavily rely on graduate student labor to deliver the exact services the university is obligated to provide as an institution (teaching, grading, student resources, research, etc.)--all while grossly under paying and providing suboptimal living and working conditions.

While Cornell just barely provides all of the basic needs for their graduate students, the University of Hawaii doesn’t even meet the baseline. My dear friends at UH receive low pay, spending significantly more than 30% of their income for housing, experiencing food insecurity, and leaving them unable to have any savings or contribute much to their student loans. Also, these friends are part of the PHD programs on the higher end of the salaries provided at UH to graduate students, meaning that these issues are significantly worse for most others. Many of them are also expected to work long hours as TAs to fund their PHD, leaving them with little time for the actual classes and production of research they were hired to do.

With graduate student labor being essential for UH's operations, they deserve the right to collectively bargain on their behalf, as a union. Union support is increasing, especially among newer and younger graduate students, who are not afraid to stand up for themselves and advocate for what they deserve. Graduate student workers have represented themselves at the bargaining table for 50 years to great success despite not belonging to any of the existing bargaining units that are an option to them. All that they are asking is the ability to have a voice, to advocate for adequate compensations and conditions for the fruits of their labor.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony, and I strongly urge you to support HB2720.

Tabatha Knudson

Tknudson31@gmail.com

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 6:31:01 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emily Schkeryantz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Emily Schkeryantz, a graduate student worker at the University of Wisconsin Madison and a member of the Teaching Assistants Association/ AFT 3220. Formerly I was a masters student and graduate student worker at the University of Massachusetts Boston, where I was a member of the Graduate Employee Organization/ UAW 1596. I support HB 2720 in its current form. I have witnessed the ways in which unionization has improved the lives of graduate student workers, not only by increasing wages and reducing the amount of additional student debt people are required to take on, but by providing a safety net for graduate students who are otherwise placed in precarious situations with little to no support. I personally know of several graduate students who were only able to complete their degrees because they had a graduate student union and collective bargaining agreement that protected them from retaliation and discrimination. As we see an increasing number of graduate students unionizing in both public and private sector universities, the existence of a graduate student union and strong collective bargaining agreement is quickly becoming an additional factor in people's decisions about which program to complete their graduate work in. If the University of Hawaii system is going to remain competitive, the legislature must allow graduate student workers to pursue unionization.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 6:59:54 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emily West	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the House Higher Education Committee,

My name is Emily West, and I am an assistant professor at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. I am writing to express my strong support for HB2720. As a professor, I know how essential graduate students are to my students' education and to the university mission as a whole. Though graduate students do crucial work every day, they are not compensated appropriately, and many of the students I work with struggle to survive on poverty wages. Graduate students deserve a livable wage, and they deserve the right to organize their workplace so that they can negotiate with their employer to improve these exploitative working conditions. Thank you for considering this important bill.

Sincerely,

Emily West

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 7:01:54 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
eva brill	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a former UH Hilo graduate student and teaching assistant, I support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 7:04:28 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Corie Yanger	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello,

My name is Corie Yanger and I am a Volcano resident and graduate of the University of Hawaii at Hilo master's degree program in Tropical Conservation Biology and Environmental Science. I am writing to express my support for HB2720.

I was very surprised and disappointed to learn that currently, UH Hilo Graduate Assistants (GAs) are salary capped below where UH Mānoa GAs' pay starts, and Research Assistants (RAs) at UH Hilo do not receive a tuition waiver, unlike UH Mānoa RAs. In order to attempt to correct this discrepancy, UH Hilo students need a collective bargaining unit established.

Having been a graduate student and had many conversations with former master's and PhD students, I am aware of what it takes to survive on very little income while going to school. Students should have the ability to organize in order to request fair wages and other means of support to successfully reach graduation.

Mahalo for your time and consideration in this matter,

Corie Yanger

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 7:16:13 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jake Scarponi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm Jake Scarponi, a teaching assistant and PhD candidate at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts; my coworkers and I (all graduate student workers) are affiliated with United Auto Workers Local 2322, and I served on the bargaining committee that recently negotiated the collective bargaining agreement with our University that we currently work under. Before voting 93% yes to unionize in November of 2022, graduate student labor was undervalued, overworked, and unappreciated. We had no rights--we could be fired at any moment for any reason, our pay was far below livable and had not seen a significant increase in over 10 years, and we had no say regarding our working conditions or health insurance benefits. We would frequently be charged fees and footed large bills associated with basic services that are absolutely necessary to do our work. Graduate student workers, like all workers, deserve decent wages, benefits, living conditions, and protections from harassment and discrimination in the workplace that go far, far beyond Title IX legislation designed to protect the university from litigation more than to serve the needs of the victim. We deserve dignity and respect in the workplace, and forming unions is how we make an effective demand for it. My coworkers and I--like thousands upon thousands of other unionized graduate workers across the country, both public and private sector--no longer beg and plead for better treatment only to be denied, patronized, and condescended, but are empowered to actually receive it. This represents one part of a true solution to the systemic suffering endured by not only academic labor, but all forms of labor. The fruits of our efforts pay dividends to our respective institutions, and we desperately need to reclaim a fraction of that value to be able to simply continue doing the work that we love.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 7:18:26 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jaratnapa Surinlert	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Jaratnapa Surinlert, I'm a graduate student worker and I support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 7:32:29 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Breanne Fong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hi my name is Breanne Fong and I am currently a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and I support HB 2720.

UH essentially runs on graduate student labor, so graduate but living and working conditions are poor and unacceptable. UH student workers have the right to collectively bargain and don't belong in any of the existing bargaining units.

Though I myself do not work at UH, many of my friends and colleagues are graduate student workers that have expressed their challenges in trying to secure food for the week, pay for housing, or not being able to take off work when they're sick, all while taking classes, doing their graduate research, AND working as a graduate assistant. Graduate student workers should not have to risk their well-being for the sake of UH functioning.

Therefore, having a union to support graduate student workers is in their best interest and UH's best interest. I strongly support HB 2720. Thank you for your consideration.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 7:34:50 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Teri Skillman	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Garrett, and LABOR & GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS Committee Members,

My name is Teri Skillman and I am writing as a private citizen. I am employed at UH Manoa and received my M.A. and Ph.D. from UHM. During both degrees, I worked as a teaching assistant and in other capacities such as managing a Collection, covering a faculty member while on sabbatical, developing PR for the department programs, assisting with grant writing, and working in the department archive.

I write in full SUPPORT of ALU's efforts to unionize graduate students employed at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. The salaries are 50% FTE and are low in comparison to other universities as the cost of living in Hawai'i. A fair living wage is an issue for all State employees. GA salaries are paid with STATE funds and receive health insurance which in my mind means that they are state employees. When I was a GA, I was also a single parent, raising my daughter on my own, taking graduate-level classes, and either teaching a course on my own or assisting the professor as a teaching assistant.

Please pass HB2720. I stand in full support.

Mahalo nui,

Teri Skillman

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 7:40:41 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vic Quenessen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello, my name is Vic, and I'm a unionized graduate employee at Oregon State University. Without my union, I wouldn't have healthcare, maximum hours to work, a minimum salary, workplace safety guarantees, and many other contractual benefits that are the only reason I am able to afford to be a graduate assistant in academia, which is still fraught with toxic behaviors and policies. I support HB2720 in it's current form because a union is one of the few ways that universities can provide protections for graduate assistants to remove barriers and ensure equitable access to positions that would otherwise be reserved for the economically privileged few and would cause research and education to stagnate. More than that, a union is a place for community, mutual aid, and one of the few spaces graduate students can shape to fit their needs and wants. Graduate assistants in Hawai'i deserve this just as much as we do at Oregon State University. Pass HB2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 7:44:20 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Peter VanNostrand	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm Peter VanNostrand, a graduate student worker at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts and a member of the WPI Graduate Workers Union (UAW Local 2322). I'm writing in support of HB 2720 in its current form. As a graduate worker I perform critical research and instructional services that contribute to the profile of my university, bring in grant funding, and provide quality mentoring and education to its students. Unfortunately, our university has historically not adequately recognized these contributions and regularly underpaid and overworked graduate workers. By treating us alternately as students and as workers WPI regularly denied us basic working rights such as days off and access to affordable healthcare. Since WPI unionized our contract has won us a guarantee of a living wage, a fully funded high quality healthcare plan, strong harassment and discrimination protections, and a fair amount of time off to rest. This has been transformative to my life and allowed me to handle the rising cost of living, stay in my apartment, access critical healthcare resources, and afford the time off and expense to travel to see family for the holidays. Graduate workers in Hawaii deserve these same opportunities and the state must act to make that possible by passing this bill. Giving graduate workers a democratic say in their workplace through a union will immensely improve the lives of graduate workers in your state, make Hawaii a more attractive market for highly skilled learners and educators and ultimately improve the quality of work and services that these critical workers provide to your community.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 7:45:54 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Clemens Mayer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Clemens Mayer, I'm a graduate student worker in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and I strongly support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 7:50:09 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noelani Puniwai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hawai'i needs a more trained and qualified workforce. There is a shortage of graduate students to do the research and teach because they can get better pay in the fast food industry. Yet, they graduate without the work experience needed in their job fields that a GRA or GTA would provide. Allowing them to collectively bargain will assist in assuring their pay increases in comparison with other salaries in the State and assist the UH with needed student researchers and training the next generation of workers.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 7:50:54 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ally Morris	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the House Higher Education Committee:

My name is Ally Morris and I am a Masters student in Oceanography. I'm writing in support of HB 2720, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

This Spring, I'm a Teaching Assistantship introductory calculus tutoring to over 100 students. Here I hold 10 hours of one on one instruction and 4 hours of group tutoring classes per week. I also work with my supervisor to host an undergraduate club. I am currently creating a food drive for students, career events and graduate panels for undergraduates to learn more about graduate school.

This assistantship covers 20 hours of work however, I consistently work overtime to help meet the needs of my students. The other 20 hours of my work week is dedicated to my research. Currently my work focuses on utilizing high frequency sensors to further decipher the impacts of climate change and Ocean Acidification on coral reefs. This work is vital to further understanding how two prominent species of hawaiian coral will respond to changing conditions. Through this work I have advised three undergraduate students and secured part time pay for one student to help with rigorous feild work. In addition to this project I also work with Dr. Meléndez to deploy a drifter equipped with sensors to determine spatial variability of chemical parameters in Kaneohe Bay, O'ahu.

Despite the work and research that I do at UHM, I find It incredible difficult to support myself here in Hawaii. Currently, 50% of my paycheck is designated to rent. In order to make this possible, I live with six other graduate s students. As a Teaching Assistant I can only work 20 hours making me thousands of dollars a below the recommended living wage for a single resident of Hawaii. I rely heavily on Teaching Assistantship positions as my research advisor suddenly left academia dissolving much of the funding that was intended to support me through my PhD. I believe that this bill will start to offer students like me the support we so desperately need.

This bill will allow for graduate student workers to address financial concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us. This will give us the much needed opportunity to directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents to discuss improving our living and working conditions. As of early this year, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. I hope this testimony further supports the need for graduate student works to bargain for their rights. Thank you for your time and consideration.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 7:52:26 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Yu Baba	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Yu Baba, I'm a graduate student worker, and ai support HB 2720 because as we as graduate employees have the right to collectively bargain.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 7:52:58 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Luke Shinsato	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support bill

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 7:57:07 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robin Zeller	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I'm writing today to support the passage of HB2720, a bill that I believe has the potential to both drastically improve the lives of struggling students like myself, and is needed to secure student employees status as a bargaining union. ALU student workers have been organizing for 7 years and are prepared to bargain collectively as a labor unit.

Being able to bargain collectively will help our most vulnerable student workers obtain the benefits of higher education. GA jobs are some of the only ways that many Hawaii residents can afford to advance their education. This is true for many of my nursing colleagues, who would not be able to afford school without the assistance of graduate work. Please vote yes so that our student workers may have the protections needed to work, study, and create a more equitable society.

Kind regards,

Robin

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 7:58:48 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lorraine Waianuhea	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha kākou,

I am a graduate student worker at UH Mānoa, and I am submitting testimony in strong support of HB2720.

Graduate students have the right to collectively bargain, and we do not belong in any of the existing bargaining units.

The UH system runs on graduate student labor through teaching and research, yet our living and working conditions are suboptimal (inadequate pay, food insecurity, lack of medical leave, delayed payments for international students and workplace abuse).

Exercising our right to collectively bargain would help alleviate our concerns. Graduate student workers have represented themselves at the bargaining table for 50 years, and support is increasing especially among youth.

Please pass HB2720!

Mahalo for this opportunity to provide testimony,

Lorraine Waianuhea

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:04:11 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Benjamin Wiseman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Legislatures,

I am a Graduate Research Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa, a PhD student in Tropical Plant Pathology, and an alumna of the Tropical Plant and Soil Science Master of Science program at UH Manoa. I am writing to support HB 2720.

During my master’s research, I studied how to improve the postharvest shelf-life of breadfruit (‘ulu) to help increase its marketability in Hawai‘i. The research was funded by the United States Department of Agriculture through a grant to the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa and helped solve marketing challenges faced by breadfruit growers and processors in Hawai‘i. My PhD research is also funded by the United States Department of Agriculture through UH Manoa and I am researching organic pest management for sweet potatoes. During my time at UH, I have been first author on two extension articles and one peer-reviewed journal article and contributed to two additional articles. I expect to double my publications in the next two years as I complete my PhD. I have also helped lead farmer training events through the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Research. Last semester I wrote a proposal to bring in \$35,000 of external money to my department to support continued research on sweet potato pest management. I am able to do this work for the university and the state due to my compensation as a graduate research assistant.

Working as a graduate assistant is a vulnerable position because our academic advisors are often also our work supervisors. This vulnerable dynamic is acknowledged by the university in training materials on workers rights, but there are few practical options available to students facing harmful work conditions. There is need for graduate assistants to have better protection as workers to protect us in our role as workers at the university.

In considering if graduate assistants deserve the same bargaining rights as other employees of the university, it is important to consider that graduate assistants are in many cases doing the same jobs that were once assigned to full time employees of the university. I am a student in the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Research (CTAHR). Years ago, CTAHR had a large staff to manage research facilities like greenhouses and research farms. Over the years, CTAHR staff positions have been cut, and in many cases the tasks previously assigned to full time staff have been assigned to graduate assistants. Graduate assistants work in various roles for CTAHR from completing maintenance like cleaning greenhouses to leadership roles like managing lab activities. The university has transitioned jobs previously assigned to full time employees to

graduate assistants, so graduate assistants certainly deserve the same bargaining rights that the staff they replace once had.

HB 2720 opens a pathway for graduate assistants like me to improve our living and working conditions at the University of Hawai'i. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. I believe that the best path forward is for graduate assistants to take ownership of our contract negotiations. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ben Wiseman

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:12:43 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alyssa Salcedo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Garret, and members of the committee,

My name is Alyssa Salcedo and I am currently an undergraduate student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. I am submitting testimony in support of HB 2720 and I urge you to pass this bill.

HB 2720 allows graduate assistants employed by the UH system to form a collective bargaining unit. This would allow these assistants to negotiate for better pay, especially during times when budget cuts occur.

In one of my classes, I had a teacher assistant that was affiliated with ALU. Considering the size of the class (a lecture hall of almost around 70+ students), on top of the work that she had as a grad student, it must have been difficult for her to succeed in both endeavors. Moreover, as an international student, she must've been concerned with expenditures such as dorming and necessities.

Her and many other graduate assistants play key roles in improving the university experience and guiding their students to success. Hence why they should be able to negotiate for better pay.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony,

Alyssa Salcedo

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:18:34 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amber Joy "AJ" Vincelli	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello, I am AJ Vincelli, and I'm the co-founder and co-organizer of the Graduate Student Union at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. I support HB2720 in its current form, allowing graduate student employees at the University of Hawai'i to exercise their right to organize for improving working conditions, performing stronger research, winning more grants, and increasing the prestige of the university. Grad worker unionization is a clear win-win for both employee and employer! Please PASS HB2720 in its current form. Thank you.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:22:02 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eleni Ravanis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Eleni Ravanis, I'm a graduate student worker, and I support HB 2720 in its current form.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:24:41 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lee Robertson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm Lee, a unionized graduate student worker / higher education worker from Florida State University, and I support HB 2720 in its current form. Universities cannot run without the graduate employees to keep them running, and graduate employees deserve to have a voice just like any other worker for any other employer. Do the right thing.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:28:09 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shreya Yadav	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm Shreya Yadav, and graduated from the University of Hawaii with a PhD in 2022. During my time at UH, I taught two undergraduate courses, and published eight academic papers. One of the major challenges I faced as an international student was entering a university system that did not have a union with no one to advocate for my rights as a student, living in one of the most expensive cities in the U.S and earning much less than was possible to live on. For this reason I fully support HB 2720 in its current form and think that the University will be a much better place - and a much more productive, and happy place - with a collective bargaining unit in place. Thank you.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:29:23 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cardenas Pintor	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha,

I plan to become a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa with plans to become a graduate assistant. Because of this, I support this bill.

Mahalo nui,

Cardenas Pintor

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:32:06 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amy Parsons	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in full support of HB2720.

Graduate workers are underpaid and overworked. The work they do benefits not only higher education, but all of us. They deserve the right to a living wage, and the ability to bargain for better pay and working conditions.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:35:41 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cynthia Franklin (she/her)	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I write in support of HB 2720 as a professor of English at the University of Hawai'i. I have worked with graduate students since coming to UH in 1994. It is imperative that they have a union of their own that allows them collective bargaining rights.

When in the PhD program at UC Berkeley, I was part of graduate students' efforts to unionize. I did so because it was almost impossible to make ends meet under our poor labor conditions. Health care, sick leave, semi-fair pay: these were all things we needed and deserved as workers, and so we could succeed as students, too.

Decades later, conditions for graduate student workers have worsened, and they are particularly bad here. Everyone who goes grocery shopping knows this. Everyone who pays rent or utilities or has bought a house or condo knows this. In addition to the right and need to be able to bargain for fair pay, graduate student workers need protection from workplace abuses.

Graduate student workers are essential to UH, and all the more so with the erosion of faculty in tenure track positions. They need and deserve a union of their own. This bill specifies the creation of a new BU and this is critical: for student workers to be part of Unit 7 or 8 poses a direct conflict of interest. It would put students in the position of belonging to the same unit as their direct supervisors, the UH faculty, some of whom graduate student workers might have grievances against. UH admin are not part of the faculty union and by the same logic, graduate student workers should not be part of the same unit as UH faculty or staff who are in positions of power over them. Unit 13 does not cover teaching positions. All three of these units also have very different working conditions.

Graduate student workers need and deserve a union of their own. As a faculty member, I have the utmost respect for these workers, and know that faculty and students depend upon the crucial labor that they perform and the excellence they bring to the UH system. Passing HB2720 is the fair and right thing to do.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:36:37 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dylan Pilger	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha kākou,

My name is Dylan Pilger. I'm a graduate student worker and I strongly support HB2720! I live in Moiliili and my Senate Representative is Senator Les Ihara, Jr and my House Representative is Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto.

As Graduate Assistants, we work very hard and make meaningful contributions both to the University of Hawai‘i and the broader community. As a Graduate Assistant, I assisted with stakeholder engagement for Criminal Justice System reform on O‘ahu. I and my colleagues collectively conducted nearly 90 interviews with organizations all across O‘ahu, including state agencies, non-profit organizations, and community groups to receive input on our local justice system. Additionally, I conducted a systematic literature review which resulted in a report on restorative justice interventions and their feasibility in Hawai‘i. This crucial work on our justice system would not be possible without the labor of graduate student workers.

Furthermore, as someone born and raised on O‘ahu I would love to be able to stay in my home and continue to contribute to my community. As the father of a young child going through graduate school to accomplish my dreams has been incredibly difficult due to the added responsibilities of parenthood and the high cost of living in Hawai‘i. Graduate student workers need and deserve the right to collective bargaining to advocate for our needs as workers. This in turn will make it more feasible for local families to stay in Hawai‘i and continue contributing to their communities through pursuing higher education.

For these reasons, I will state once again that I strongly support HB2720!

Mahalo,
Dylan Pilger

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:39:55 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kira M Webster	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hi, my name is Kira Webster and I am a PhD candidate in Geography & Environment. My Senator is Carol Fukunaga and my House Representative is Della Au Belatti. I am writing you in support of HB 2720. I have been at UH for 10 years now, five of which have been graduate school. I have taught for the entire time I have been in graduate school, now continuing to teach in addition to my 20-hour-per-week graduate assistantship that I hold as my main source of employment. In addition to these two jobs, I am also the department representative for two separate organizations, I am the treasurer of Graduate Women in Science Hawai'i, and belong to another university organization, all unpaid labor. I regularly pick up jobs petsitting just to try to scrap together enough money to live on. As a single person living alone in Hawai'i (but with demands to be on campus everyday, leaving little room for housing location flexibility) it continues to prove difficult to keep my head above water financially. This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like myself to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:48:12 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erendira Aldana	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Economists and policy makers have suggested that poverty and all of its negative impacts have increased as the power and participation of unions decreased. I support HB2720 for this reason and as former graduate student that lived far below the poverty line while pursuing a PhD of Psychology.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:49:38 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Olivia Meyer	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

My name is Olivia Meyer, and I am a graduate worker. I study and work in the UH Department of Geography and Environment and live in Manoa Valley. I am writing to support HB 2720, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for UH graduate workers.

I came to graduate school to pursue a career in research and teaching on pressing environmental issues. I have been at UH since 2021 and received several large grants, including a fellowship of \$35,000 that raised UH’s status and recognition nationally. Beyond metrics officially recognized by the university, I have worked hard to build community within my department, in my international and Southeast Asian studies community, and beyond the university by getting involved with local and global environmental justice and labor issues.

While I love my research, professors and mentors, student mentees, and classmates, I also want UH to be a better place for all of them. During my studies at UH, I have witnessed students experience extreme workplace abuse and injustice. My friend experienced repeated verbal abuse from her supervisor, but her entire funding position relies on maintaining the relationship. During a crisis, one of my friends had to drop out of school entirely due to a lack of paid time off. Many friends work multiple jobs to afford even the necessities of living in Hawai‘i. Numerous friends have been unable to seek justice through the Title IX process and remain disempowered by university procedures. I have talked to many Graduate Assistants who consistently work double the hours of their contractual obligations. Our entire community suffers when we are not able to support one another. A harm for one is a harm for all.

At my master’s institution in Kentucky, Teaching Assistants in my department make roughly the same amount of money as they do at UH. While neither is remotely sufficient, the difference is the cost of living. Estimates often rank Hawai‘i as the most expensive state for cost of living, while Kentucky ranks in the top 3 most affordable states (US News & World Report). Graduate Assistants completing a Ph.D. (which typically takes five years or more) received a guarantee of at least three years of funding, whereas here, students receive no such guarantee. Ph.D. students are often offered a single-year contract or arrive with no funding but with the supposed promise of abundant GA-ships that can take months or multiple semesters to materialize. These experiences have shown me that we do not need to accept the conditions at UH and that our union, Academic Labor United, is equipped and ready to receive recognition and go to the bargaining table. A collective bargaining unit would allow us to negotiate the terms of our employment and reduce the precarity produced by single-year contracts and lack of representation.

HB 2720 would create a pathway for graduate student workers to address the concerns across the university schools and colleges. It would create a bargaining unit that allows us to bargain directly with our employers. Doing so would enable us to improve our living and working conditions, improving our capacity as educators, mentors, and engaged community members.

Graduate Assistants are public employees, as classified by the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board. We deserve the right to collectively bargain and to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature will grant us this opportunity to do what many other unionized graduate assistants across the US have been doing for the past 50 years. I appreciate your consideration.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:49:54 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shree Deshpande	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:51:29 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michelle Harangody	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the House Higher Education Committee:

My name is Michelle Harangody, I am a PhD candidate at UH in Geography and I support HB 2720. I have worked on four separate research and programmatic support projects as a graduate assistant at UH. None of these graduate assistant positions were linked to my personal doctoral research, but as a qualified professional I was hired to i) support a federally mandated report on impediments to fair housing in Hawai‘i and conduct research on impediments to fair housing with a focus on housing vouchers, ii) conduct collaborative and independent fieldwork on ridge-to-reef resource management in Palau as it relates to food security in a changing climate, iii) lead community outreach for an investigation into the mechanisms of successful ecosystem-based adaptation in Kaua‘i, and iv) serve as an academic coach for college student with disabilities. These are all UH-based projects that rely on the time, expertise, and labor of graduate students to be successful, and, in many cases, are completely separate from the work that gets us to graduation. Graduate students are clearly state employees that make the daily operations of UH possible. Graduate student workers like me also present our findings through national and international conferences, invited talks, and peer-reviewed journals, all of which contribute to UH's competitive ranking a insitution of higher education. While GA positions align with and rely on our research and professional skills, I have never been able to cover the cost of rent, food, gas, and parking (two of my GA positions required regular travel across O‘ahu and a car is necessary to complete work assignments and make it to class on time) on a GA salary without my partner's help.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit to finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai‘i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai‘i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:51:38 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aya Shirayama	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm Aya Shirayama, a graduate student worker, and I support HB 2720 in its current form.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:52:08 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ming Li Yong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the House Higher Education Committee,

My name is Dr. Ming Li Yong and I am a Research Fellow at the East-West Center. I live in Waikiki and I am represented in the House by Rep. Adrian Tam, and Sen. Sharon Moriwaki in the Senate. I am writing in support of HB2720 that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of UH and the community college system.

I work closely with and play a mentoring role to University of Hawai‘i’s graduate students. Graduate student workers play a critical role in keeping various academic operations and events on campus running and organized. In a summer field school program in Southeast Asia that I ran with the Department of Geography and Environment, our graduate student worker played a leading role in designing curriculum, logistical arrangements, and providing on-the-ground support for the program. As an educator and former graduate student myself, I know that universities can only be successful because of the labor put in by graduate student workers who play a key role in teaching and grading for university courses.

Having worked closely with UH graduate student workers, especially those who part of our center’s education program, I have heard first-hand about the struggles they face in securing funding to support the entire course of their graduate programs, and their struggles in coping with the high costs of living in Honolulu. The circumstances for international graduate students are even more precarious as funding options are limited, and their working hours are also limited by their visa conditions. When faced with a raise in housing rates, many students fell into food insecurity and had to be provided with additional food donations.

I strongly believe that student workers should be able to collectively and directly bargain with their employers, the State of Hawai‘i and the Board of Regents to improve their working conditions and to take ownership of their contract negotiations. I hope that the legislature will grant them the opportunity to bargain for their rights, which their counterparts in the mainland have been doing for decades. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Ming Li Yong, Ph.D.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:54:41 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noah Paoa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Noah Paoa. I'm a graduate student worker at UH Manoa and I support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:56:57 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zachary Nachod	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Zachary Nachod, I'm a graduate student worker, and I support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:58:03 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Gunsch	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support the right of grad students at the University of Hawai'i to collectively bargain.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:59:32 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michaela Setzer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Michaela Setzer, I'm a PhD candidate and graduate assistant in the Oceanography department, and I support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:03:02 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Austin Davis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the House Higher Education Committee,

My name is Austin Jay Alika Keaupuni Davis, an MA Sociology candidate at the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM). I am 28 years old, from Wailuku, Maui, and I am represented by Senator Angus L.K. McKelvey and Representative Troy N. Hashimoto. I'm writing in support of HB 2720, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

Since the Fall of 2022 to today, I currently worked as a Teaching Assistant for various sociology courses and most of the time it would be for a methodology course. My role is very important as I assist the professors in the course through grading and reviewing assignments, allocating time for students to meet (at least designating 4 hours a day), proctoring exams, consulting with the professor on student progress and lesson planning, and the role I have to commit when I am assigned a methodology course is teaching the lab course, which I don't get paid as a lecturer though I prepare my courses with lesson plans, give consultation hours both on and off the clock, and teach the subject like a lecturer or professor would. The lab courses I teach are SOC 476L Social Statistics Lab and SOC 605L Regression Analysis Lab. These courses, also accompanied by the general SOC 476 and SOC 605, are the most difficult courses in my department, especially when SOC 605 and SOC 605L are a requirement for PhD sociology students to graduate. That course typically holds 10 to 20 students. In other semesters I would be placed in two courses to assist, which typically range from 35 to 40 students each course. I would oversee 70 to 80 students. One semester I had 190 students because one course had 150 students. I'm also assisting the SOC 475 Analysis in Survey Research this semester, another methodology course. An undergraduate sociology student is required to take one 400-level methodology course, which there are only 3 courses students can choose from (SOC 475, SOC 476/L, SOC 478). It is more likely that in 2 of those 3 courses, I will be the designated Teaching Assistant, and in one of those courses I will be more likely to lecture. I get paid for the required 20 hours, but because I have a lot of assignments and exams to grade and I meet with my students off my work hours, especially the difficult courses, I would exceed my hours and be ineligible for overtime pay. I refuse to turn away a student and I grade every assignment and exam carefully because these courses I oversee are required for the students to get their sociology degree and it is difficult content to master; I need to make sure students understand the content and to be able to apply it.

Besides my work as a Teaching Assistant, I'm also overwhelmed with side work as an on-call lecturer and program consultant for the UHM CSS International Cooperation Program as my job doesn't pay enough for me to go school on Oahu, my participation in community engagement and service as it relates to my academic research, leading an indigenous/pacific islander student organization as Pacific Island students like me need a voice at UHM, a graduate student having commitments to my research and to attend my courses, and a son who lives close to home and travel when there are family emergencies. I feel so overwhelmed as I have to work constantly just to live here as about 80% of my Teaching Assistant income goes to living expenses (rent, utility bills, food, etc.). It becomes so difficult to put in the time for my research as a graduate student, especially when my research reflects on addressing food issues here in Hawaii covering the high cost of living, food imports, destruction of the ecosystem, food sovereignty, and other related topics. These are important topics that could help Hawaii and the people who reside. If I'm not succeeding because of zero ability to voice work concerns, then Hawaii is not succeeding its people, especially Hawaiians like me who already have a much more difficult success rate in obtaining a higher education degree.

This bill opens a pathway for working graduate students, like me, to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawaii, and the Board of Regents. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. I come from a family of carpenters, especially my father who has benefited from his union (The Hawaii Carpenters Union Local 745). I know and experience the importance of having a bargaining unit at the table to negotiate one's livelihood. I want to have the ability to alleviate the concerns I have as a Teaching Assistant. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts on the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:05:31 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noah Perales-Estoesta	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Graduate students play crucial roles in the education of nearly 75% of the university's undergraduate population. Their labor provides invaluable value to the university and the state, and is deserving of full recognition. I strongly support HB2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:06:20 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Monica Orillo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Monica Orillo, I'm a graduate student, and I support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:07:00 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kyle Conner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:07:51 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Gilliland	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a UH Manoa faculty member, I fully support HB 2720, the bill to allow graduate student employees to unionize. Teaching and research assistants are most definitely workers, although they also receive the benefit of tuition waivers to support their studies. Their work supports some of the most fundamental purposes of the university, including teaching and research, as well as other academic services. Without the work of graduate assistants, the UH system would have to hire a vastly larger number of employees to do these jobs and would likely also lose a large number of graduate students, as they would choose to attend other programs in the US or elsewhere that still support graduate students financially. The state would be much worse off if we did not have the high quality of graduate students that we do at UH.

Unlike undergraduates, whose education is primarily delivered through their classes, graduate students learn their discipline equally as much through their teaching and research experiences. They deserve to be paid and supported with benefits in the same way as someone doing those jobs who is not concurrently studying.

I urge you to pass HB2720 for the good of our state.

Mahalo.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:08:37 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ruge Zhao	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Ruge Zhao, I am a graduate student worker at the University of Hawaii at Maona, and I support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:09:56 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ryan Roden	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Ryan Ahn Roden. I am a Graduate Student with the Political Science Department at UH Manoa. I am writing in support of HB 2720, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system. This is my first year with the program, and I am already attending three separate conferences, utilizing a fellowship award that has fully covered the costs of my tuition and provided travel funding that facilitates the work I will continue to do here at UH Manoa. However, my fellowship award will not last the full of my time with this program. The ways in which I will be able to support myself and be able to fulfil the work I have begun will be shaped by the environment that graduate assistantship and teaching assistantship has found itself at this institution.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:11:57 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Felicidy Phimmasone	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Felicidy Phimmasone and I am currently an undergraduate student studying public health. I live on the Kona moku side of O‘ahu in Kapahulu. Senator Les Ihara, Jr. and House Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto represent my district. I have been continuing my education within the University of Hawai‘i system for 3 years. As a public health student, I have witnessed the systemic inequities that have impacted my colleagues, whom I have had the honor to learn alongside. Having a union will tremendously address the obstacles that the majority of our graduate student body has endured.

I care about HB2720 because I am a prospective graduate student. This bill opens pathways for prospective graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai‘i, and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions.

On January 4, 2024, the Hawai‘i Labor Relations Board classified graduate students as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. The best path forward is for graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

I support HB2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:12:04 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ani Kawada	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha! My name is Ani Kawada and I am a 2nd year Master's Student in the American Studies and Library and Information Science Program. I live in 'Ewa Beach, O'ahu. I am represented by House of Rep. Rose Martinez and Sen. Kurt Fevella in the Senate. I am writing to **support** bill HB 2720, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

For the past three semester and this current semester, I have/am a Teaching Assistant for a course called AMST 150 (America and the World). Part of my job includes reviewing and grading students assignments, papers, and exams, holding two recitation sections, and more. I am in charge of about 40 students each semester. These teaching assistantships pay fo 20 hrs of work a week, but there are and have been times where I would spend work beyond those hours, yet I am inelligible to get any type of ovetime pay. In addition to this, the salary that we are given is very difficult to manage living in Hawai'i. I fortunately live with my 'ohana, but my father doesn't make as much money since he has lost his job multiple times due to changes made during or after covid. I try to support my parents as much as possible, so I have gotten a second job on top of my GAsip, in hopes of being able to help provide for my 'ohana. Balancing two jobs and being a full time student can be a lot but sometimes it is what needs to be done to survive in Hawai'i.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate stuents workers to create a bargaining unit for us, so that we can bargain with our employers to improve ou living and working conditions. I hope that the legislature will grant us this opportunity. Mahalo nui loa.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:12:28 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rachel Hong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello, My name is Rachel Hong and I am employed as a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. I have worked as a graduate assistant for four years, and during this time, I would have benefitted immensely from the ability to collectively bargain for better wages, benefits, and overtime.

I am in support of HB2720 in its current form.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:14:34 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brandy Nalani McDougall	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha kākou,

I am writing in full support of HB 2720 in establishing a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants throughout the UH system.

I am an associate professor of American Studies at UHM and live in Kalaepōhaku, O‘ahu (St Louis/Kaimukī). I am also a single parent, a survivor of childhood trauma, and the poet laureate of Hawai‘i. I strive to be a force for healing and support in my teaching, my scholarship, and poetic work. As part of my job at UHM, I have had the privilege of mentoring many graduate students for the past 12+ years and have seen them struggle financially and academically with the stress and anxiety of needing to make ends meet with the high cost of living in Hawai‘i (esp on O‘ahu). As graduate assistants, they work full-time for the university by teaching vital lower-division courses for undergraduates. These courses are truly the lifeblood of each department and the entire university, and yet their labor is exploited. GAs are grossly underpaid for their work, often undertrained, and are not given crucial benefits and labor protections that other teachers (faculty) and specialists have at UHM by virtue of our being of a different rank and unionized.

Prior to my hire, I was a GA for the University of Oregon for my MFA (1998-2001) and for the UHM's English department for 4 years (2005-2009) for my PhD. At UO, GAs were unionized which meant that I had healthcare and sick days, and i got paid enough to live modestly but comfortably on just my GA stipend and a scholarship I had via financial aid. I completed my degree on time and with only the typical stress that comes from pursuing a degree.

At UHM, I was grateful for the tuition waiver and the small stipend I received, it was no where near a living wage for Hawai‘i and I ended up needing to take out loans because the scholarship and financial aid I received along with the GAship still was not enough to support me. I also worked 30 hours a week at another job to pay for my housing, food, etc and thankfully, healthcare benefits. I was working 50-60 hours/week in those days on top of being a full-time student and it nearly broke me. It certainly had a negative impact on my work in all areas and it delayed my time to completion of my PhD. I chose UHM for my PhD because I wanted to study the Hawaiian language and work with Hawaiian literature and archives, yet the financial stress, along with seeing my peers experience the same or much worse was really horrible.

Nearly 20 years later, it's unconscionable to see that UH's GAs are still being exploited and are not even given the basic ability to advocate for themselves via collective bargaining. As a result, the university is not held accountable and our graduate students can do very little to fight for basic rights. GAs teach courses that serve all of the undergraduate students at UHM--they are invaluable and essential workers--and yet they receive so little compensation and recognition for their labor. Faculty and specialists have had a union that protects us, and GAs should be afforded the same rights and protections, especially as they are the most vulnerable university workers given the academic hierarchy. Collective bargaining for our GAs is long overdue. I urge you to support HB2720 and support Hawai'i's hardworking teachers and emerging scholars in the UH system.

Mahalo nui, me ka ha'aha'a,

Brandy Nālani McDougall

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:21:45 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dylan Alvarenga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a current UH graduate student in math. Having the ability to bargain my wage would make a tremendous jump in my ability to survive financially. We are currently suffering a lot with the limited amount of pay we receive and have a lot of evidence to support the fact that we do not make a livable wage based on the UH living costs. Being able to bargain would give us the ability to use the evidence we have to support why we need more pay.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:23:23 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Udani Ranasinghe	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

My name is Udani Ranasinghe, I'm a graduate student worker, and I support HB 2720.

Aloha nui,

My name is Alyssa ʻĀnela Purcell, a PhD student in Political Science. I live in Mānoa Valley, and I'm represented in the House by Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, and Senator Carol Fukunaga in the Senate. I'm writing in support of HB 2720, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

Graduate assistantships have funded me through my master's in Library & Information Science and now my PhD. I am currently the project leader of Hawaiian Ancestry – Moʻopono, a grant-funded project with nine undergraduate and graduate student researchers and five volunteer researchers. Since fall 2021, we have transcribed and translated over 7,000 pages of Hawaiian ancestral materials from multiple repositories into typewritten documents for easier accessibility.

As a former graduate research assistant at the Hawaiʻi State Archives (HSA), I engaged with Hawaiian ancestral materials in a range of projects: translation, transcription, indexing, digitization, research assistance, exhibitions, and more. As part of my work, I created item-level descriptions in Hawaiian and English for over 5,000 archival documents across collections like the M-93 Queen Liliʻuokalani Manuscript Collection.

Both of these archival projects have helped transform the research landscape in multiple disciplines including Hawaiian Studies, Library & Information Science, Indigenous Politics, and more.

Despite all the labor that I provide the University both in teaching and research, I often find it difficult to manage living in Hawaiʻi on the salary provided. This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawaiʻi and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawaiʻi Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years.

Thank you for your consideration

Mahalo nui loa me ka haʻahaʻa,

Alyssa ʻĀnela Purcell

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:24:11 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
River pruit	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello my name is River Pruitt, a Ph.D candidate in English.

I'm writing in support of HB 2720, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

This Spring, I'm a Teaching Assistant for a 200 level English composition course. I teach about 20 students a class for a writing and reading intensive workload. In a semester-- per class-- I read approximately 1000+ pages of work. I will teach a class every MWF or T/Th and lecture for a cumulative 3-3.5 hours a week per class. Prep time for the course can range from 1hr-2hrs per class, but often I will spend much more time over my allotted 20 hr work limit in order to meet the needs of my class and my students. Every other semester I teach two classes during the semester and I do not receive additional pay for the double load/time/prep.

These teaching assistantships paid for 20 hrs of work per week, but occasionally I will work beyond those set hours and yet I'm ineligible for any type of overtime pay. To fulfill my degree requirements (which is why I'm only paid for 20 hours per week, as I'm also a student), I'm working on my research which is focused on Indigenous literatures and futurisms, thinking about the ways we can all survive together in the future. Despite all my hard work and the labor that I provide the University both in teaching and research, I often find it difficult to manage living in Hawai'i on the salary provided by UH, where I spend over 65% of my monthly salary just on rent.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

To the House Higher Education Committee,

I am writing in support of HB 2720 regarding the right of University of Hawai'i (UH) graduate workers to collectively bargain. Currently, graduate workers of the UH system do not belong to any of the existing bargaining units, which are necessary for the protection of workers' rights.

Graduate workers produce the largest research and teaching output through experiments, data analysis, primary literature search/review, grading, exam proctoring, lecturing, and more. As a former graduate employee myself, I faced numerous issues regarding fair pay, access to healthcare, and affordable housing as undue burdens. Many current graduate workers at UH endure many of the same suboptimal conditions. Ensuring that graduate workers have a right to collectively bargain lifts these burdens and allows research and teaching efforts to thrive through the efforts of these workers.

Thank you for your time,

Samira Fatemi, Ph.D.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:24:36 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jesse Gray	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a Masters Graduate student in the Ocean and Resource Engineering program, I support the right to collective bargaining for all graduate students.

Graduate students bring a disproportionate amount of value to the university system in which they are poorly compensated. They teach courses with sometimes 100s of students (that are paying tuition). Some PhD students even create curriculums and tests, doing much of the same work a fully paid professor would perform. Those not teaching are usually perform research in which the full value of the intellectual property goes to the university and the funder.

Yet they make at a maximum \$35,000 a year and are expected to do their "20 hours" of work on top of their research and classes. I know some PhDs that have been working for 4 years and are still below \$20,000/year. This is simply not enough to achieve a standard of living in Hawaii.

Graduate students are not 'student help'. It's not the same as some undergraduate computer lab assistant. They perform real work that directly enriches the employers and interests above them. Yet they are barred from the right of every other state worker to negotiate their value in a collective bargaining unit.

We should at least be able to start the conversation, therefore I fully support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:25:07 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brigitte Leilani Axelrode	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the House Higher Education Committee:

My name is Brigitte Leilani Axelrode MA candidate in Political Science. I'm writing in support of HB 2720, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system. I myself am a GA at UHM am not paid a livable annual salary, which is supposed to support me while I am also a full time student. The graduate student workers at UHM should have the right to collectively bargain in order to continue our paths in education and have the same rights as our continental counterparts.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:25:13 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Joines	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Jennifer Joines. I'm a graduate student worker from the Department of Political Science at UH Manoa, and I support HB 2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:27:00 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nina Allan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Nina Allan, a graduate student worker at UH Manoa, and I support HB 2720 in its current form.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:27:02 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Casey Brinkman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, My name is Casey Brinkman and I'm writing in support of HB2720. I am a PhD Candidate in Astronomy and a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai'i, and I do not get paid a living wage.

Graduate Workers at UH are responsible for running UH. I've been the primarily instructor for multiple lab sections and the TA for many classes, I've published multiple papers under my UH affiliation, and I've brought in Fellowship money. The University loves to claim us when we bring renown and reflect positively upon UH, but not when it comes to naming us as Employees. This affects every single GA I know, and impacts the work we are able to accomplish because so much of our time is spent worrying about finding a new apartment if our rent goes up, how we're going to afford student fees, and if we can afford to buy lunch.

Myself and my colleagues are severely rent burdened and need SNAP benefits in order to feed ourselves. A necessary trip to the ER last year put me in debt, with no way to get out because we live paycheck to paycheck. Additionally, we can lose our jobs at any point with essentially no justification, and the process of raising an academic grievance comes at the cost of risking that employment. The worst part of my story is that we are one of the highest paid departments at the University, with many of my colleagues across UH making poverty wages.

This Bill would provide a new path for Graduate Workers to be able to address these concerns. We aren't asking for these changes to be handed to us, but simply for the chance to be able to achieve them ourselves. If we were able to advocate for ourselves through a union and collectively bargain, we would be able to improve our living conditions which would allow us to do our best work and bring more renown to the University. Graduate Workers are employees who deserve the same rights as any other state employees, as the HLRB have determined. Please support bill HB2720, thank you for your consideration!

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:27:14 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Petra Byl	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of graduate student unionization. We are hardworking public employees and deserve collective bargaining rights to negotiate with our employers. I believe this will benefit the university overall and help attract and retain talented graduate researchers to UH Manoa.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:28:13 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ashley Sanchez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai nō kākou,

My name is Ashley Hi'ilani Sanchez, and I am a graduate student working for the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I write to you today to voice my support for HB 2720.

At UH Mānoa, I am currently finalizing my Master's degree in Oceanography with research focusing on wave impacts and flooding at Pu'uhonua o Hōnaunau National Historical Park on Hawai'i Island. I'm able to do this work and get compensated for my time because of my Graduate Assistantship.

I am a through-and-through product of the University of Hawai'i System (not to mention, a proud K-12 Hawai'i State DOE alum). Soon after I graduated from Mililani High School in 2010, I attended Leeward Community College where I was able to explore many different educational pathways. My original degree was to be in English, but after a museum trip during a study abroad program with other Leeward, Spelman, and Morehouse students in Japan, I made the life-altering decision to forgo many of my previously earned credits toward my B.A. in English and instead enter the captivating field of ocean science.

It was an extremely arduous path, but after earning my A.A. and A.S.N.S. degrees from Leeward Community College (I had plenty of extra credits for both degrees by the end of my time there), I received my B.S. in Global Environmental Science from UH Mānoa, then was accepted into the Oceanography Department's graduate program.

My educational journey has been anything but traditional; however, because of my struggles and hard-fought battles, when I worked in 2018 as a Teaching Assistant to 30 incredibly talented

young Global Environmental Students in OCN310L, Global Environmental Change writing-intensive laboratory course, I felt I had a distinct advantage to help these students through the class because of the hardships I faced so that they might not be so affected.

One of these students was Korey Wong, who tragically passed away too soon in 2021. Korey was a motivated student and often asked for additional help to get his assignments polished. He and I would meet after class, during office hours, and were in steady communications over email about upcoming tests or written assignments. When I would provide highly detailed feedback to him on his essays, as I would do for all of my students, he would have follow-up questions to ensure his next submitted assignment was even better than the previous one.

Although my work week was supposed to be limited to 20 hours per week, between grading quizzes or tests, providing detailed feedback on short- and long-written assignments, organizing guest lecturers, and supporting students one-on-one, I would often exceed this time. As a Teaching Assistant, however, I was ineligible for overtime pay. Since I am also a student, the other 20 hours I worked were fulfilled by research, where I was analyzing buoy data around Hawai'i Island in preparation for my current work. This was in addition to the classes I was required to take to matriculate through the program.

Seeing students like Korey Wong develop and improve their skills was extremely rewarding, and the time and effort it takes to ensure we are doing our jobs effectively as TAs should be fairly compensated.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Mahalo piha for your consideration.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:29:23 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Samuel Eli Glickman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Samuel Glickman, and I am a fourth year Ph.D. student in the department of mathematics at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. I support a collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers and HB2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:29:35 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anna Ezzy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Garrett and honorable members of the Committee,

My name is Anna Ezzy, and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo in Tropical Conservation Biology and Environmental Science. I'm writing in support of HB2720, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

As a graduate worker at UH Hilo, I see firsthand how my colleagues who are research assistants struggle to find funding and scholarships to cover the cost of their tuition while research assistants at UH Mānoa automatically have the cost of tuition covered through tuition waivers. Even though my UH Hilo colleagues' work provides crucial insights into Hawai'i's ecology, to protect endangered native species, as well as prepare our islands for a changing climate, their funding remains precarious despite working for the same University system as folks at Mānoa. This inequity is one of many compelling reasons why graduate student workers across the UH system require a bargaining unit.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address our concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Mahalo for your consideration, please pass HB2720 favorably out of committee.

Sincerely,

Anna Ezzy

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 9:29:58 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Megan McElligott	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 2720. Please help graduate assistants with their right for collective bargaining

Katherine Ackerman
Graduate Student
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Subject: Testimony in Support of Graduate Students' Right to Form Collective Bargaining Units

Dear Members of the Labor and Government Operations Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for the rights of graduate students to organize and form their own collective bargaining unit. As a graduate student and advocate for fair labor practices, I believe that acknowledging graduate students as a significant and distinctive part of the UH System workforce is crucial for fostering a fair and equitable academic environment.

Graduate students play a vital role in the academic community, contributing significantly to research, teaching, and the overall mission of higher education institutions. Graduate students are the foundation of research processes, which ultimately bring money, resources, people, and prestige to universities. However, despite their essential contributions, many graduate students face challenging working conditions, including low stipends, lack of benefits, and limited job security. There are large pay discrepancies across graduate students within the UH system, of which we currently have no power to address. Departments with exceptionally low graduate student stipends (< \$20,000 annually) are experiencing minimal to no graduate student enrollment.

Collective bargaining provides graduate students with a platform to negotiate fair wages, reasonable working hours, and improved working conditions. Currently, the bargaining units available for graduate students to enter are not sufficient, and do not allow for the ability to voice our concerns and collaborate with university administrators effectively. By acknowledging the right to collective bargaining, we empower graduate students to actively participate in the decision-making processes that directly impact their lives and academic careers, as well as strengthening the work force at UH.

I urge this committee to consider the importance of graduate students' right to form their own collective bargaining unit and to take the necessary steps to ensure that these rights are protected and respected within our higher education institutions. By doing so, we can foster a collaborative and supportive academic environment that benefits not only graduate students but also the entire educational community.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this critical issue. I trust that you will act in the best interest of graduate students and the principles of fairness and justice.

Sincerely,

Katherine Ackerman

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 10:02:55 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stacy Prellberg	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 10:30:25 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marceline Kanaiaupuni-Naff	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 2720 in its current form.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 10:44:38 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Graham Crookes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair and Members of the House Legislative and Government Operations Committee,

My name is Graham V. Crookes. I am a faculty member (full professor), University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. I have worked with and supervised many Graduate Assistants over the past 30 years. They are dedicated, extremely hard-working individuals; most of them have instructional responsibilities and teach in inspiring ways. They deserve the protection of a union.

I support HB 2720.

Respectfully,

Graham V Crookes

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 10:53:56 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chavella M.K. Mainaupo Espinosa- Ramos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 11:05:08 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
L Basha	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Lawrence Basha and I am a PhD student at the University of Hawai'i, I am also a retired US Army officer, and I support HB2720.

The economics of the university system has changed in the last 20 years and continues to evolve with the advent of new technology like Artificial Intelligence. The state university system must change and adapt to the realities of the world we live in today, rather than the one we knew when we first entered college years, and in some cases, decades ago. Allowing collective bargaining for graduate students will be an enticement to those applying to graduate school to attend the UH school system, and might be the deciding factor for many locals and native Hawaiians to choose UH and remain here at home.

Lawrence Basha

Kailua, HI 96734

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 11:26:29 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leslie Lopez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in absolute support of the creation of a 16th bargaining unit for graduate assistants, so they may participate in collective bargaining as public employees.

Leslie Lopez

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 11:29:15 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cameron Ahia	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

I am Cameron Mahealani Ahia and I'm a PhD candidate in English. As a graduate assistant who has taught over 15 courses in English and Women, Gender & Sexuality studies departments as the instructor of record, and who has been involved with ALU since 2017, it is time and we are fully prepared to create our own collective bargaining unit. I fully support HB2720.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 11:36:05 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ma'alaea Collier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2720

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 11:50:11 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jordan Nakamura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support wholeheartedly measure HB2720 which will help provide a path toward hardworking graduate workers receive the living wage and bargaining power and protections they utterly deserve.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 12:30:04 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ia Maranon	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou, I am Ia Marañon and I am a second year PhD student in the Sociology Department at UH and the Co-Vice Chair of Academic Labor United. Thank you for this opportunity to provide a testimony and to show my support for fellow GAs who have worked tirelessly to show that we are ready and that there is popular support for unionization at UH. I am in full support of HB2720 in its current form. I am an international student from the Philippines, and before coming here to pursue my graduate studies, I was a labor organizer based in Manila.

I think about the narrative of Hawai'i being a 'melting pot' of cultures. While we can argue about the ways in which this isn't true, narratives, while may be often imprecise at times, they usually point to certain truths. In many respects, Hawai'i's tradition of strong labor movements inspired me to go to grad school here. Since before the establishment of the of the plantations, immigrant labor from Japan, China, the Philippines, Portugal, and many other places, it has been the heartbeat that keeps Hawai'i going. In fact, in 1841, Hawaiian sugar workers at Kōloa walked off their jobs to win wage increases. This is the first documented labor dispute in Hawai'i. This long tradition of workers organizing and participating in collective action is the very fabric that we are trying to build our union on. To me and according to history, the melting pot with which we pride this place out to be is based on the solidarities built by labor.

So getting here, I was more than disappointed to see that at UH, there is no graduate student union. I knew that living in Hawai'i was at the very least precarious, but having to work tooth and nail to get ourselves unionized shouldn't weigh on us this heavily. As an international student, I know that my presence itself is precarious. I can only be tethered to the university. Even getting here, I was warned by peers in the department to at least plan for two months without my salary. I found myself needing the support of *something* but that something didn't really exist yet. This is one among the many stories of international students in UH, who accounts for 17% of the student population, with most of us given student visas. In Hawai'i, we are always proud of that aloha spirit, but that was something I didn't feel when I got here. The contradiction of expressing a desire to invest in the future while simultaneously hindering professionals, scientists, and researchers from unionizing and shaping their own course should not align with the values of any self-respecting statesperson.

Our strength is not drawn from how many bargaining units there are in the university. Our strength is drawn from our capacity to organize and to work with each other. We have seen that the multiplicity of organizations does not mean that we are fractured, but that we are finding more and more solidarities to build upon with each other. ALU has been organizing within the university and outside for years, despite not being a properly recognized union. Our relationships

with other unions in the island, despite of the several barriers to unionizing, demonstrates our capacity to show solidarity with each other despite not being in the same bargaining unit. One thing about labor that is universal and true in all contexts is that we will always recognize labor. Our solidarity with the nurses who went on strike in Kapi'olani Medical Center for Women & Children just over a week ago is a clear sign of our cross-cutting fidelity to labor.

I hope that we see not just the economic merits of having a union, but the hope and the desire that comes along with labor organizing. It is more than just money, or rights, or grievance mechanisms. It is about the ability to organize in the way we want to, together. Other unions in the university have also expressed that they support the graduate students in having our own bargaining unit. If we are to be put in an awkward position alongside them, knowing their stances, wouldn't that bring about more fissures and fractures? We operate differently in the university. We have different tasks and capacities. We must be organized according to that.

When we see flowers blooming, do we dare to be the feet that stomps on them?

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 12:41:55 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Imaculata kurniasanti	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am an international graduate student. I have 2 children that I cannot bring here. Having a poor background family, I cannot rely them to support me during my study. I don't want to accept the odd that higher education is only for the rich. Here I am as a student at UH Manoa and work as a GA to support my education. In reality, my GA income which is \$23.000 per year is not only for me, it is also supporting my two children back home.

I left my home for school when my daughter was 2 years old. It has been hard for me. The only reason for not able to bring my kids because my income will not be enough to rent two rooms apartment and feeding 3 people. Not to mention the education fee that I must bear for my little kids.

Leaving my children back home force me to hire a maid to take care of my children because my sister is not 24/7 ready at home. She is a teacher.

Having student union is important for me. As GA I don't have sick leave, so if I don't go to office because of not healthy enough, I will not get my salary that day. With all the responsibility that I have for my kids back home and my expenses living here, I cannot miss any of my working day.

My Salary is below the proper amount to survive in Hawaii. With additional responsibility back home, it makes it worse. I grow vegetables on the back of my dorm and some available areas on campus. I collected food that dropped from trees on campus and I line up to get food distribution on campus.

I believe Student worker union understand my feeling and my experiences. Student union bring my voice to be heard. It is very different when I tell the same story to faculty members. My voice just like a wind.

Students Worker Union keep bringing the voice of student who cannot speak directly to the university beurocracy. Student worker union really think of my well being. I strongly support Student worker union.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 1:00:49 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tracy Wiegner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill (HB2720). It is important to give graduate students a voice and to ensure equity in GAs among campuses in the system. All students at Manoa are hired as GA and are provided a tuition waiver. This is not the case at UH Hilo. Thus, it costs students more to attend Hilo, even if that is the school they prefer to attend. Also, GAs at Manoa make much more money and are guaranteed salary increases, this is not the case at Hilo. People should be paid the same and have the same benefits for the same job.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 1:21:25 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Grace Tytus	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Grace Tytus, I'm a graduate student at UH Manoa, and I support HB2720. I have lived in Hawaii for the last year and I plan to reside in Hawaii for at least 5 more years. I own property in Hawaii, pay taxes here, vote here, and have residency, and it is for this reason that we are dependent on the legislature of Hawaii to address our rights. I currently am a teaching assistant for a physics 2 lab on the topic of electromagnetism, as well as a grader for a physics lecture. I work a minimum of 25 hours a week on these tasks. I have 42 students in lab and over 100 in the lecture that I grade for. Last semester I only made \$8000, and over the course of 2023-2024 school year my salary is only \$22k, which is a fraction of the median income and well below what is livable per the cost of living in Honolulu. Because of our affiliation to the university and a salary which isn't high enough to afford cars, graduate students like myself are often forced to live in the most expensive areas of O'ahu and are unable to afford a car which would allow us to live in more cost effective areas. This is a problem. Additionally, health insurance is not included in our benefits. The student health plan from UHM costs ~\$2000, 9% of our entire salary.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 3:06:09 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sarah Jung	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Sarah (Jiyeon) Jung, and I'm a graduate student who supports HB2720 because as graduate employees we have the right to collectively bargain. University of Hawai'i at Manoa depends on the labor of graduate employees who serve as teaching assistants, instructors, researchers, and in other academic and administrative positions. While we find the work fulfilling and meaningful, we also frequently face challenges such as inadequate compensation and limited access to essential benefits.

The ability to collectively bargain will provide graduate employees with a platform to communicate these challenges and negotiate for a fair and equitable working conditions. This will also allow us to engage in constructive conversations with university administrators, which will benefit all stakeholders.

I urge you to please consider the importance of collective bargaining for graduate students and to support efforts towards fair and supportive working environments that will strengthen our academic community and contribute to the overall success of UH Manoa.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 3:47:38 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carolina Funkey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm in support.

LATE

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 3:49:06 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jael Alexander	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Jael Alexander. I am a student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and I support HB2720.

LATE

LATE

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 5:11:21 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anna Stirr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Anna Stirr and I'm an Associate Professor of Asian Studies and Director of the Center for South Asian Studies at UH Manoa. I live in Kapahulu and am represented in the House by Rep. Bert Kobayashi and in the Senate by Sen. Stanley Chang. I'm writing in support of HB 2720, to create a new bargaining unit for graduate workers in the UH system.

In my position at UH Manoa I supervise graduate assistants whose jobs include:

- Serving as the Coordinator for the Center for South Asian Studies, which entails communications, technology maintenance, event planning, and other work as required by the Center
- Assisting in teaching and grading for large undergraduate classes
- Creating content and strategies for department and/or Center communications through the website, social media, and traditional media.

Our Graduate Assistants are extremely professional and hard working, and have my full respect and support. They do these jobs in addition to the demands of graduate training, but are paid much less than they would be for the same jobs outside of the university system. Also, in some cases, their jobs assign them more than the allotted 20 hours of work per week; they cannot make overtime pay. For these reasons and more, they require a mechanism through which to exercise their right to collective bargaining.

On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified graduate workers as public employees with the right to collectively bargain. Creating a new bargaining unit that will represent their unique needs and position will provide them with that mechanism.

As a professor and mentor to many graduate students, I want to see them empowered to negotiate a beneficial contract that will help them thrive professionally and as part of our community. For these reasons, I request that you vote in support of this bill.

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 6:03:33 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Naomi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of HB 2720!

LATE

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 6:26:00 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James Hildenbrand	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 2720

LATE

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 6:27:56 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joyce Y Neeley	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 2720.

LATE

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 7:12:09 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carolyn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 2720 in its current form.

LATE

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 8:34:09 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mahina Kaomea	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a future graduate student at the University of Hawai'i, I unequivocally support HB2720. I have seen friends overworked and underpaid, teaching unprecedented courseloads while also struggling to keep up with assignments and readings for their own degree programs. If we really believe that education is a priority for the youth of Hawai'i, we need to support grad students—who are at once students and teachers for many of our undergraduates. We deserve bargaining power and the ability to demand a more sustainable future for graduate students now and into the future. Thank you for your kind consideration of this testimony.

LATE

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/2/2024 6:22:20 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carissa Chew	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:



To the House Higher Education Committee,

My name is Carissa Chew, I am a third year PhD student in the History Department at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, where I am currently employed as a Graduate Assistant. Living in Manoa Valley, my House Representative is Andrew Takuya Garrett and my Senate Representative is Carol Fukunaga. I am writing in support of HB 2720, which would provide an essential bargaining unit for graduate workers like me.

As an international student on an F-1 visa, I have been a graduate worker at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa for three consecutive years now. Taking up a graduate assistantship is the only way I've been able to legally support myself through my PhD whilst meeting my visa requirements. I teach three sections of 20 students per semester (60 students) for World History classes, and my responsibilities include preparing and leading lab sessions, grading coursework and exams, and holding office hours. I am paid for 20 hours of work a week, but often work beyond these hours during mid-term and finals weeks. On my current contract, I'm ineligible for any type of overtime pay, yet I earn below the living wage in Hawai'i for a single person. This makes it very difficult to afford rent, food, and medical expenses despite spending most of my time studying and working. My PhD research explores mixed-race identity in colonial East Africa in the period 1940-1980, making an essential contribution to mixed-race studies in a transnational and decolonial context whilst bringing African history into perspective within Hawai'i's academic circles.

I therefore urge you to pass HB 2720, which would allow UH graduate workers to take ownership of their contract negotiations and bargain directly with the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents to improve their working and living conditions. This would give us the same rights as other graduate student unions in the US continent.

Best,
Carissa

HB-2720

Submitted on: 2/2/2024 8:38:06 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/2/2024 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chad Shomura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Chad Shomura and I am writing in support of HB2720. I am a former graduate student of the University of Hawai'i and currently am an Assistant Professor at the University of Colorado Denver. During my time at UH, I saw that graduate student labor was integral to the educational mission of the institution. Graduate student workers are essential workers. They deserve to be able to collectively bargain for their rights. Please support this bill. Thank you for your consideration.

LATE