



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

---

**ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**

S.B. NO. 2970, RELATING TO ACCESS TO EDUCATION.

**BEFORE THE:**

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**DATE:** Thursday, February 1, 2024      **TIME:** 3:00 p.m.

**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 229 and Videoconference

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

---

Chair Kim and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments.

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

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

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

Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Higher Education  
Thursday, February 1, 2024 at 3:00 p.m.

By

Erika Lacro

Vice President for Community Colleges  
University of Hawai'i System

### SB 2970 – RELATING TO ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of SB 2970, which provides support and resources to assist the University of Hawai'i – Leeward Community College (LCC), Wai'anae Moku Education Center (WM) students, that are under twenty-four years old and that are unable to submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid application due to their inability to retrieve parents' tax information.

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

At present, 69% of WM students are recipients of the Pell Grant, while 70% of the student body is aged 24 years and under. Given the WM enrollment, about 50 students would be potentially eligible under this program. It is important to note, that for eligibility, LCC students enroll at the College and not at WM, and therefore defining a WM student will be based on residence zip code OR course section enrollment at WM.

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of SB 2970, as long as its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 2970.

University of Hawai'i

## **LEeward COMMUNITY COLLEGE WAI'ANAE MOKU**

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sincerely

Rick Kang  
ATE Program Coordinator  
Leeward Community College Waianae Moku  
rlkang@hawaii.edu

**SB-2970**

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 10:04:49 PM

Testimony for HRE on 2/1/2024 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lynette Cruz	Testifying for Malama Makua	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strongly support

Cady Gaspar

**Senate Bill SB2970: Relating to Access to Education**

**In Support**

Aloha, my name is Cady Gaspar and I am a peer mentor at Leeward Community College Waianae Moku for the G2FO and ATE programs. I am writing this testimony in support of Senate Bill SB2970. From my understanding, this Bill dedicates funding for the LCC Waianae Moku campus to support individuals 24 or younger that are ineligible for Financial Aid due to lack of access to their parents tax information. As a peer mentor I have witnessed many enthusiastic students who are dedicated in the pursuit of their education become discouraged. When they are unable to receive financial support from FAFSA due to lack parental information or support it makes it hard for them to persevere.

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

With that being said, I offer my full support in regards to Senate Bill SB2970. It will be an incredible resource for students at Leeward Community College Waianae Moku. With this Bill we will be able to change the lives of students in our Waianae community in pursuit of a college degree.

Cady Gaspar

Leeward Community College Waianae Moku

G2FO and ATE Peer Facilitator

Phone: (808)724-5074

Email: [cgaspar8@hawaii.edu](mailto:cgaspar8@hawaii.edu)

**SB-2970**

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 2:01:56 PM

Testimony for HRE on 2/1/2024 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Katherine Burke	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SUPPORT

Sara Gaspar

**Senate Bill SB 2970: Relating to Access to Education**

**DATE:** Thursday, February 1, 2024 **TIME:** 3:00 PM **PLACE:** Conference Room 229

**State Capitol: 415 South Beretania Street**

**In Support**

Aloha, My name is Sara Gaspar and I am a Peer Facilitator for the Access to Education and Going to Finish on Time Programs at Leeward Community College Wai‘anae Moku. I am writing in support of Senate Bill 2970 which will support appropriating funds to Leeward Community College Wai‘anae Moku to assist students who are twenty-four years old or younger that are ineligible for financial aid due to lack of access to their parental information.

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

With that being said, I am in full support of Bill 2970. I know that it will do wonders for our community when it is approved. This will be an incredible resource for Leeward Community College Waianae Moku students.

Sara Gaspar

Leeward Community College Waianae Moku

G2FO and ATE Peer Facilitator

**Phone:** (808)208-6259

**Email:** [gaspars@hawaii.edu](mailto:gaspars@hawaii.edu)

January 31, 2024

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

Subject: Testimony Supporting SB 2970 - Funding Allocation for Leeward Community College Waianae Moku regarding Access to Education

To whom it may concern,

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

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for Senate Bill 2970, which seeks to allocate funds to Leeward Community College Waianae Moku. This legislative initiative is crucial for providing financial assistance to students aged twenty-four and under who face challenges applying for federal financial aid through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) due to their inability to access their parents' tax information.

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

The appropriation of funds outlined in SB 2970 will empower Leeward Community College Waianae Moku to establish and sustain programs specifically designed to address the financial needs of these students. By doing so, the college can ensure that a broader range of individuals has access to quality education, enabling them to realize their full potential and make meaningful contributions to our community.

Investing in the education of these students represents an investment in the future of our state. By endorsing SB 2970, we are creating an environment where all young individuals, regardless of family circumstances, can access the educational resources essential for personal and professional growth. This not only benefits the students directly involved but also enhances the overall well-being and prosperity of our community.

I respectfully urge you to consider the lasting impact of supporting SB 2970 and the positive outcomes it can bring to the lives of many young individuals striving for a better future. Your commitment to providing equal educational opportunities will undoubtedly contribute to the continued success and vibrancy of our community.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this matter. I sincerely hope you will lend your support to SB 2970 for the improvement of our community and the future success of its youth.

Sincerely,  
Tammy A. Aiwohi  
Peer Facilitator  
Leeward Community College- Waianae Moku





Alaysia Kyle  
87-380 Kulaaupuni St. Waianae, HI 96792  
[alaysiak@hawaii.edu](mailto:alaysiak@hawaii.edu) | (808) 454-4747  
01/31/24

Senate Committee on Higher Education and Ways and Means  
Chair, Vice Chair, and Members  
415 S Beretania St. Honolulu, HI 96813

Subject: Testimony in Support of SB2970 - Appropriation of Funds to Leeward Community College Waianae Moku

To whom it may concern,

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

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 2970, which aims to appropriate funds to Leeward Community College Waianae Moku. This bill is crucial in providing much-needed financial assistance to students who are twenty-four years old or younger and are ineligible to apply for federal financial aid through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) due to their inability to access their parents' tax information.

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

The appropriation of funds outlined in SB2970 will enable Leeward Community College Waianae Moku to establish and maintain programs that specifically address the financial needs of these students. By doing so, the college can ensure that a broader spectrum of individuals has access to quality education, empowering them to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to our community.

Investing in the education of these students is an investment in the future of our state. By supporting SB2970, we are fostering an environment where all young individuals, regardless of their family circumstances, can access the educational resources necessary for personal and professional growth. This not only benefits the students directly involved but also contributes to the overall well-being and prosperity of our community.

I urge you to consider the long-term impact of supporting SB2970 and the positive impacts it will have on the lives of many young individuals striving for a better future. Your commitment to providing equal educational opportunities will undoubtedly contribute to the continued success and vibrancy of our community.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I sincerely hope you will support SB2970 for the betterment of our community and the future success of its youth.

Sincerely,  
Alaysia Kyle  
G2FO/ATE Peer Facilitator III  
Leeward Community College Waianae Moku