



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education and Technology
Friday, January 27, 2023, at 2:00 p.m.

By

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

HB 390 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII PROMISE PROGRAM

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 390, which expands the University of Hawai'i (UH) Promise program, currently only at the community colleges, to qualified undergraduate students enrolled at a four-year campus of the UH.

It remains the case that a college degree is a critical method for increasing an individual's ability to enhance their earning potential over the course of their career. As the costs of higher education have been shifted to the individual, it has become essential to rethink how we ensure that college remains accessible to those in the lowest socioeconomic income brackets. Hawai'i Promise is an important tool directly benefiting Hawai'i's families otherwise least able to afford higher education.

Expanding the program will have multiple positive impacts. It will significantly enhance the ability for Hawai'i Promise community college students to transfer to a four-year program. Expanding the program to qualified students in four-year degree programs at the UH would greatly assist students pursuing their bachelor's degree. It will be a notable step forward in expanding access to economic opportunity for Hawai'i's students and preparing the educated workforce the state will need to grow in the coming decades.

The program has effectively proven its impact for students in the community colleges, where participation in Hawai'i Promise has increased student success in their chosen areas of study. In academic year 2021-2022, Hawai'i Promise recipients earned more credits, received better grades, and had higher persistence rates than their peers. Part-time students receiving a Hawai'i Promise scholarship also had higher graduation rates than their peers.

A survey to gather student feedback on Hawai'i Promise was emailed to all 2,139 students that received Hawai'i Promise in Academic Year 2021-2022. The large majority of survey respondents reported that the Hawai'i Promise Scholarship provided positive benefit and impact to their ability to afford, decision to enroll, and likelihood to persist in

the University of Hawai'i Community College System.

- **91% of respondents** Strongly Agreed or Agreed that the Hawai'i Promise Scholarship helped them decide that college was affordable this year;
- **87% of respondents** Strongly Agreed or Agreed that the Hawai'i Promise Scholarship helped them to make the decision to enroll in college this year;
- **91% of respondents** Strongly Agreed or Agreed that returning to college next semester depends on continuation of their financial aid including Hawai'i Promise Scholarship.

Students transferring from the UH Community Colleges are often surprised to find that, due to the higher tuition rates at four-year universities, Pell grants and other scholarships may not completely cover their direct cost of attendance (tuition, fees, books, supplies, and transportation). A four-year version of Hawai'i Promise will help these transfer students afford the continuation of their education. Additionally, a four-year Hawai'i Promise can extend benefits to additional Hawai'i residents in need of support to pursue their higher educational goals. We would have the potential to impact 4,320 additional students at the baccalaureate level.

Additionally, the community colleges have found that more students qualify for Hawai'i Promise than the recurring General Fund appropriation is able to support. The community colleges have awarded \$4,884,829 in Hawai'i Promise scholarships to 2,139 students for the 2021-2022 academic year.

As a "last dollar" initiative, Hawai'i Promise ensures that the State of Hawai'i can maximize federal support in the form of Pell grants while at the same time ensuring that our most vulnerable students can pay for the cost of education. It is important to extend Hawai'i Promise to the four-year campuses because currently Pell grants do not cover the full cost of tuition for these campuses, and as a result, Hawai'i Promise can play a critical role in meeting their higher education financial needs with a combination of federal and state funding.

The extension of Hawai'i Promise to students attending four-year campuses in the UH System will help the state achieve its statewide goal to increase educational attainment of Hawai'i residents to help them thrive in our communities. Additionally, we know that four-year college degrees are critical for many jobs across the state and for support of Hawai'i's innovation and entrepreneurial efforts.

Therefore, having the Hawai'i Promise program available to all eligible undergraduate students at the University of Hawai'i will provide a critical investment in Hawai'i's present and future.

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



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January 26, 2023

TO: Chair Perruso and Members of the HET Committee

RE: HB 390 RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII PROMISE PROGRAM.

Support for a Hearing on Jan 27

Americans for Democratic Action is an organization founded in the 1950s by leading supporters of the New Deal and led by Patsy Mink in the 1970s. We are devoted to the promotion of progressive public policies.

Americans for Democratic Action Hawaii supports this bill as it would provide scholarships for the unmet direct cost needs of qualified students at any four-year University of Hawaii campus who meet certain eligibility criteria. For years we have argued for the expansion of the Hawaii Promise program to qualified students in four-year degree programs at the UH.

Strengthening access to college is essential to delivering the promise of a higher education to all Hawai'i residents. Too often, the cost of college tuition remains unattainable to working families, many of whom are experiencing financial hardship. Making community college free for our state's residents would likely cost less than \$20 million at a time when Hawai'i has a record \$1.9 billion budget surplus. At such a low price, this is an investment that our community cannot afford to miss.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Bickel, President

John Bickel, President



The House Committee on Higher Education and Technology
Friday, January 27, 2023
Room 309, 2:00 p.m.

RE: **HB 390, Relating to the University of Hawaii Promise Program**

Attention: Chair Amy Perruso, Vice Chair Jeanne Kapela and members of the Committee

The University of Hawaii Professional Assembly (UHPA) appreciates the opportunity to **support the intent of HB 390**, Relating to the University of Hawaii Promise Program, and **offers amendments**.

UHPA supports increased access to education and closing the educational attainment gap, however requests that HB390 adopt the proposed language in SB1151, to read as follows:

“(5) Has been determined by the campus to have unmet direct cost needs[.]; provided that a student who enrolls in a certificate program shall not be required to submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid each academic year.”

The Hawai`i Promise Scholarship Program is a “last dollar” scholarship, meaning that it covers financial needs not met by other forms of financial aid, such as federal grants and scholarships from UH, employers and other private sources. One qualification of eligibility for students pursuing certificate programs is completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Assistance (FAFSA). Exclusion of the FAFSA submission requirement for students in certificate programs will enable more families the opportunity to enroll in community college and acquire the skills necessary to enter the workforce.

Certificate programs assist individuals to attain practical experience focused on the skills and knowledge needed for a specific job, opening the door to gainful employment. The absence of general education courses required in degree programs mean it takes less time and money to complete certificate programs. This impactful movement enables families to enter the workforce with practicable training that can be built on to advance in the workplace and further educational opportunities.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Fern'.

Christian L. Fern
Executive Director
University of Hawaii Professional Assembly

Chair Amy Perruso
Vice Chair Jeanne Kapela

House Committee on Higher Education & Technology

Friday, January 27, 2023
2:00PM

**TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB390 RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY
OF HAWAII PROMISE PROGRAM**

Aloha Chair Perruso, Vice Chair Kapela, Members of the House Committee on Higher Education & Technology,

My name is Jun Shin. I am a graduate of the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa and a current member of the Hawai‘i State Youth Commission, testifying as an individual in **STRONG SUPPORT** of **HB390**, Relating to the University of Hawaii Promise Program.

The existing Hawaii Community College Promising Program is an amazing program that opens the door to higher education for a lot more members in our community, especially members of both working class and low-income families who couldn’t handle both the cost of higher education plus having to pay the bills and meet other basic needs due to how unaffordable it is to live in Hawai‘i.

This program meets direct costs not covered by federal and state aid, grants, scholarships, and other funding sources that don’t need to be paid back by a student, as long as the student meets academic and residency requirements. It allows the student to focus a lot more attention toward their studies and other aspects of community college life like networking and recreational activities on campus. However, for those students who were thinking of going on to a 4 year university in Hawai‘i after taking care of some general academic requirements at community college and/or whose careers goals will require or be greatly assisted by a 4 year degree, they or their families currently would not be eligible for further assistance from the program.

It's a big issue to have that assistance cut off because a 4-year university/college is a lot more expensive than community college. As of right now, 1 credit in the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa would cost you around \$907 in tuition and fees as a resident and would cost around \$201 max at Kapiolani Community College in the Fall & Spring, and around \$318 max in the Summer. That’s a big difference in cost, and that’s not even factoring in the other costs involved in going to a 4-year university.

With there being a total of a 4% tuition increase at UH Mānoa coming in the 2025-2027 academic years, going to a 4 year university will become harder and harder for the children of working families, which is why this bill, which would continue the Promise Program from community college to a 4-year university/college is so important in helping current and future

students to meet their dreams and goals with much of the financial burden lifted from their shoulders and the shoulders of their loved ones, hopefully leading to more thinkers, innovators, creators, and leaders who will carry our future.

Please pass **House Bill 390** out of your committee, and help to shape a better future for students and potential students, young and old here in Hawai'i, we now also have a \$1.9 billion budget surplus to do so.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Jun Shin,
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