



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 & Technology
Wednesday, February 15, 2023 at 2:00 p.m.

By

Debora Halbert

Vice President for Academic Strategy
University of Hawai'i System

HB 874 HD1 – RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on HB 874 HD1, 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.

JOSH GREEN, M. D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



BRENN A H. HASHIMOTO
CHIEF NEGOTIATOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR
KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA

STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
235 S. BERETANIA STREET, SUITE 1201
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-2437

Statement of
BRENN A H. HASHIMOTO
Chief Negotiator, Office of Collective Bargaining

Before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY
Wednesday, February 15, 2023
2:00PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 309

In consideration of
HB 874 HD 1, RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Chair Perruso, Vice Chair Kapela, and the members of the committee.

The Office of Collective Bargaining (OCB) appreciates the intent of HB 874 HD 1, which establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawaii and community college system. However, we must respectfully oppose this measure for the following reasons:

1. A lawsuit currently pending before the Hawaii Supreme Court may impact this measure.
2. Unlike other public employees, who are career, long-term employees for which collective bargaining is appropriate, graduate assistant employment is temporary, not a career or profession, and is secondary to their responsibilities and obligations as students, first and foremost. Similarly situated individuals are not included in any appropriate bargaining unit.
3. Establishing UH graduate assistants as collective bargaining unit 16 could have significant cost implications for the UH System and the State, since mandatory subjects of collective bargaining cover wages, hours, conditions of employment, and fringe benefits.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and comments on this measure.



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE, 2023**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. NO. 874, H.D. 1, RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING.

BEFORE THE:

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY

DATE: Wednesday, February 15, 2023 **TIME:** 2:00 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 309

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

Chair Perruso and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments.

The purpose of this bill is to allow graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawai'i and community college system to collectively bargain.

Section 1 of this bill indicates "[t]he legislature finds that the establishment of public employee collective bargaining units is a matter of statewide concern pursuant to article VIII, section 6 of the state constitution." The Department recommends replacing the reference to "article VIII" with "article X."

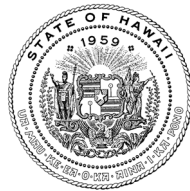
Article X, section 6, of the Hawai'i State Constitution gives the Board of Regents of the University of Hawai'i "exclusive jurisdiction over the internal structure, management, and operation of the university." Section 6 further provides: "This section shall not limit the power of the legislature to enact laws of statewide concern. The legislature shall have the exclusive jurisdiction to identify laws of statewide concern." Article VIII, section 6, on the other hand, authorizes the Legislature to enact laws of statewide concern on matters related to local government.

If the Committee decides to pass this bill, we recommend amending section 1 of the bill on page 1, lines 1-4, as follows:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the establishment of public employee collective bargaining units is a matter of statewide concern pursuant to article [VIII,] X, section 6, of the state constitution.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



LUIS P. SALAVERIA
DIRECTOR

SABRINA NASIR
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
Ka 'Oihana Mālama Mo'ohelu a Kālā
P.O. BOX 150
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT DIVISION
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT

TESTIMONY BY LUIS P. SALAVERIA
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 874, H.D. 1

February 15, 2023
2:00 p.m.
Room 309 and Videoconference

RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

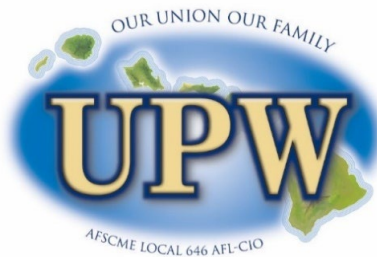
The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

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 are 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 ever increasing numbers of BUs.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THE THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2023**

Committee on Higher Education & Technology

Rep. Amy A. Perruso, Chair
Rep. Jeanne Kapela, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 15, 2023, 2:00 PM
Conference Room 309 and via Videoconference

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB874 HD1– 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. The UPW also represents 1,500 members in the private sector.

UPW **supports** HB874 HD1, 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

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

Kalani Werner
State Director



The House Committee on Higher Education & Technology
February 15, 2023
Room 309, Videoconference
2:00 pm

RE: **HB 874, HD1 Relating to Collective Bargaining**

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

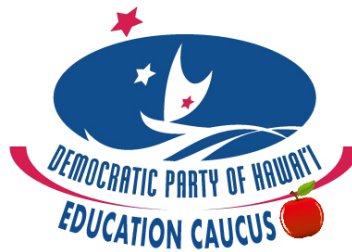
The University of Hawaii Professional Assembly (UHPA) recognizes the bill's intent of allowing graduate student assistants to be entitled to the State's collective bargaining law by creating a new bargaining unit (16) under HRS, Chapter 89, §89-6, and other enabling statutes under HRS, Chapter 89 as outlined in HB 874, HD1.

UHPA supports all public employees' right to organize and collectively bargain. Such a right is consistent with the historical labor tradition for public employees in our State and is compatible with an academic environment whereby the majority of our public employees have the ability to organize for the purposes of collective bargaining.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support.

Respectfully submitted,

Christian L. Fern
Executive Director
University of Hawaii Professional Assembly



HOUSE BILL 874, HD1, RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

FEBRUARY 15, 2023 · HOUSE HIGHER EDUCATION
AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE · CHAIR REP. AMY
PERRUSO

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus supports HB 874, HD1, 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.

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.”

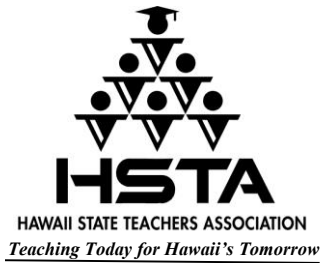
Unsurprisingly, decreasing American middle-class incomes and the rapidly widening wealth gap in our country parallel a significant decline in union membership. It is imperative, then, that we promote higher productivity by strengthening labor-management relations. Through a union, employees have a means 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 student assistants at the University of Hawai‘i have earned the right to demand respect from university management. 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.**

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



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Ann Mahi
Executive Director

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
& TECHNOLOGY

RE: HB 874 HD1 - RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2023

OSA TUI, JR., PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Perruso and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association **supports HB 874, HD1**, relating to collective bargaining. The bill establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistance employed by the University of Hawai'i and community college system.

The Hawaii State Teachers Association supports workers' rights to become a union and gain bargaining rights. According to Article 23(4) of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, "everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests." Likewise, the International Labor Organization, the UN agency responsible for safeguarding international labor standards, states in its Constitution and Declaration of Principles that the freedoms to associate and bargain collectively are fundamental rights of workers worldwide.

Graduate student assistants at the University of Hawai'i must no longer be denied their fundamental worker's rights. We just join other states who have allowed graduate assistants to unionize. Besieged by budget cuts over the past decade, graduate students have borne increased class sizes and workloads, while suffering the same low pay of \$17,500 since the 2003-2004 academic year. Like educators throughout Hawai'i, they have seen their purchasing power crushed beneath our state's highest-in-the-nation cost of living.

Graduate student assistants are vital to education in the university community, performing instruction, research, and administrative work. Their labor, like all labor, should be publicly recognized by guaranteeing the right to bargain for fair wages and work conditions.

To give graduate student assistants the ability to protect their interests and promote higher education, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.



Academic Labor United

academiclaborunited.org

Testimony from Academic Labor United

Attention: House Committee on Higher Education and Technology
Representative Amy Perusso, Chair
Representative Jeanne Kapela, Vice Chair

Re: Strong Support of HB874 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 1500 plus graduate assistants employed at the University of Hawai‘i (UH) and gain recognition for the work we do. Academic Labor United is our stop gap measure to advocate for our union rights while we are unable to legally exercise them.

HB874 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. **This bill does not seek or require any additional appropriations. It offers public employees the opportunity to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement.**

Graduate assistants work in many roles at the university. Graduate teaching assistants provide education to undergraduates by teaching their own classes, teaching discussion sections, lectures, and labs. As well as meeting with undergraduate students during office hours to offer guidance and tutoring that benefits students greatly with personal attention from an instructor. Many teaching assistants are in charge of teaching their own classes. They do all the grading and lecturing, as well as design the syllabus and manage the classroom and often, teach more classes than the faculty of their department. Research assistants are often working on multiple independent projects, and performing the cutting-edge research that has recently seen UH named in the top 1% of research institutions worldwide. Research assistants are responsible for the ground breaking research done by the UH Cancer Research Center, as well as the currently ongoing Red Hill water sample testing, that is being done no where else in the islands. Their research brings in millions of dollars in grants for the university, money and recognition these workers rarely receive. Other graduate assistants (GA), like myself are working in administrative offices and running key facilities, like student support services such as Native Hawaiian Student Services and the Center on Disability Studies, services which make our university more accessible and better serve our community. Without the 1500 Graduate workers 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.

Supporting Graduate Assistants at UH would dramatically improve the quality of education for students at the university. In certain departments, students may take different



Academic Labor United

classes from the same GA multiple times as GA's are often employed for over 5 years or as long as it takes for them to complete their degrees. Many undergraduates can attest to the benefit that GA's are to their education.. 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 leave, make the University of Hawaii uncompetitive when it comes to recruiting and retaining graduate students. This has led to an ongoing TA crisis which sees the university having to cancel, in some cases like the Physics department, over 25% of the classes that semester due to not having enough teaching graduate assistants to fill those courses. This department is far from alone, across departments this crisis is causing class cancellations and thereby, delaying students from graduating on time due to the necessary courses not being offered. Unionization would enable us to bargain for better working conditions, which would in turn make the university a more attractive place of study for students who would have instructors who are more able to teach to their best abilities.

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). Graduate assistants, in every role, meet the common-law test's criteria for employment as well as the so-called ABC test's criteria. Graduate Assistants do not control their own hours and have employment taxes withheld from their State of Hawaii issued paychecks. Graduate assistants are required to attend trainings and undergo periodic evaluations. A graduate assistant's supervisor, often a University recognized employee, controls the means and manner in which a graduate assistant carries out their work. Graduate assistants further qualify as employees under HRS 377-1 and HRS 377-4.6(C). They are recognized as employees by the National Labor Relations Board, the State of Hawaii, and the University of Hawaii. It is clear that graduate assistants have a constitutionally guaranteed civil right to organize for the purposes of collective bargaining (Hawaii. Const. art XIII, sec. 2).

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has affirmed again and again that Graduate Assistants are workers, they are employees. There are currently graduate assistant unions at public universities in 18 states in the United States. They include several of UH Mānoa's peer and benchmark institutions including the entire University of California System, the University of Iowa, the University of Washington, the University of Illinois Chicago, and most recently, the University of New Mexico Albuquerque. The NLRB found that disallowing Graduate Assistants from unionizing “deprived an entire category of workers of the protections of the Act without a convincing justification” (National Labor Relations Board, 2016). There are now over 80 graduate assistants unions in the United States.

Graduate assistant unions have existed for 50 years. We are not seeking to depart from the norm. Collective bargaining for graduate assistants has become the norm. Honorable representatives, before you is a chance for Hawai'i to catch up to the rest of the states and correct a decades long denial of rights. Graduate assistants start at \$19,686 for a 9-month contract at UH Mānoa. ([University of Hawaii at Mānoa Graduate Division](#), [University of Hawaii at Hilo](#)). Last



Academic Labor United

year hundreds of GA's mobilized and marched on our bosses offices to demand a pay raise after not receiving one since 2016. Our bosses were not obligated to give us one and so they didn't despite the fact that GA's are one of the main reasons the university was able to transition online during COVID. Gaining the right to collectively bargain for a contract would ensure we never again have to rely on the charity of our bosses to ensure we can make rent and put food on the table.

Executive administration has also consistently testified before this legislature that they can and will improve poor employment conditions which could be resolved through the collective bargaining process by working "in house" with our Graduate Student Organization, but again have failed to do so for many years. For example, two years ago at the start of the pandemic, graduate assistants began actively advocating for a paid sick leave policy that would allow GAs to protect their health and that of our community by staying home when sick. This led to hundreds of GA's catching COVID and not being able to call out sick, otherwise they would risk termination or loss of income. No worker should have to continue working while ill with a dangerous and deadly, pandemic causing disease. Such conditions lead to severe impacts on quality of work, and on the health of our community. Despite two years of promises, a paid sick leave policy was only implemented last year, again when hundreds of GA's demanded better and several even confronted President Lassner on stage at graduation with a petition demanding change.

Another example is that executive administration has failed to mitigate sexual harassment on campus. According to a recent campus climate survey 1 out of 6 graduate students experiences sexual harassment (including nearly 1 in 4 women and 1 in 2 people identified as transgender or gender nonconforming) (Loui et al. 2019). UH Mānoa, harassers were significantly more likely to be bosses or supervisors than at other campuses (Loui et al. 2019). In the three years since the previously published survey, sexual harassment rates did not decrease. Sexual harassment at these levels is not the result of a few bad apples, but rather the result of extreme power imbalances between faculty, administrators, and graduate assistants. Faculty and administrators not only have complete control over a graduate assistants' current employment, but also control their academic work, and whether or not a graduate receives a positive recommendation from their supervisor plays a significant role in their future employment prospects as well. Over the past 4 years, surveys have shown that the offenders of female graduate students were twice as likely to be faculty or staff than offenders of female undergraduate students.

Graduate assistants lack recourse when faced with administrative decisions that jeopardize their wellbeing and safety in the workplace. They have no formal protection guaranteeing their right to free inquiry and expression. These are issues that unions have had success resolving. And are issues that could be resolved at UH by simply passing this bill which enables us as workers to negotiate with our employer so that we may come to a solution that benefits not only us but all of our students.



Academic Labor United

In the Governor Ige's 2015 Veto Message, he stated the three flaws with the bill produced were that it 1) lacked a bargaining unit, 2) failed to identify the appropriate employer group, and 3) did not contain an impasse resolution mechanism. HB874 assigns graduate assistants to bargaining unit 16, identifies the employer group as the Governor, the President of the University of Hawai'i, and the Board of Regents in a manner consistent with bargaining units 7 and 8. Additionally HB874 includes an impasse resolution mechanism consistent with bargaining units 5 and 7. Revisions to the structure of the bill address all of the former governors substantive concerns and are consistent with concepts of collective bargaining as practiced in Hawai'i.

There has been discussion regarding the fact that Graduate assistants are also students at the university, or that we receive a tuition waiver as a part of our employment. These are standard benefits of working at the university. Faculty and other non-tenure staff, such as those in the Native Hawaiian Student Services office, also receive a tuition waiver allowing them to take credits free of charge at the university, as a benefit of their employment. Critically, both of these groups have their own unions, and there is no controversy on whether or not they, as public employees, deserve the right to collectively bargain because they take classes at their place of employment. Tuition waivers are also a standard practice at many universities as a way of making higher education affordable, and attracting employees to the institution. Many graduate assistant unions that exist within the United States, also retain the tuition waiver benefit, the same as healthcare or any other benefit of employment.

Some have additionally expressed concerns about the fiscal implications of workers gaining the ability to bargain for a better standard of living. Specifically mentioned is the impact on the Employee Retirement System (ERS). **It is our understanding that that Graduate Assistants are already excluded from the ERS and this bill would not change or modify that.**

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 1500, indicating an increasing reliance on our labor to make the university run. In our experience talking to other GAs, more and more GAs are being employed in support offices attending to an increasingly diverse array of duties. These include positions not just teaching classes, but also working in the Athletics department, in Dean's offices, other various positions around the university, which if staffed by any other worker than a graduate assistant, would be a member of a bargaining unit. While attending UH, GAs constitute a committed learning community, conduct important research, and perform a substantial proportion of teaching and administrative duties. Unfortunately, we are poorly compensated and are vulnerable to capricious and arbitrary behavior by our employer. As individuals, we stand little chance of success in demanding better treatment and compensation, and 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 to act in our best interest, they must be contractually obligated to do so. Our best hope for improving our own situations, then, is to come together and collectively bargain for a better university. For these reasons, we strongly urge that HB874 be passed



Academic Labor United

Respectfully Submitted,

Kawena‘ulaokalā Kapahua
Academic Labor United



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 Higher Education and Technology

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 15, 2023

H.B. 874, H.D. 1 — RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO supports the purpose and intent of H.B. 874, H.D. 1 which allows graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawaii system the right to collectively bargain.

As Hawaii's largest public sector union, we represent public employees across the State, Counties, the Judiciary, Department of Education, and the University of Hawaii system. We believe graduate assistants should be afforded the right, like many other public employees, to collectively bargain.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of H.B. 874, H.D. 1.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director



February 14, 2023

Committee on Higher Education & Technology
Representative Amy Perruso, Chair
Representative Jeane Kapela, Vice Chair

Testimony in **strong support of HB874**

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

UNITE HERE Local 5 represents working people throughout Hawaii's hotel, food service and health care industries. **UNITE HERE Local 5 is in strong support of HB874.**

We believe that all people deserve dignity in the workplace, living wages, affordable healthcare, financial security and peace of mind. These basic human needs start with workplace conditions.

There was overwhelming testimony submitted by graduate students who are in support of this bill. Their stories show how the conditions graduate students are forced to work in are exploitative, unhealthy and most of all, unnecessary.

Public policy makers have an easy decision to make to give these educators the financial security and workplace protections they deserve. When we invest properly in the passionate people who choose academics, we are bringing out the best in our community. We will see dividends through more fulfilled and empowered students, educators, researchers and future citizens who will improve our world. When we fail to invest in our passionate graduate assistants, we are undermining our community's future.

Concerns about complicated bargaining processes or payroll costs are shortsighted and exaggerated. The beauty of collective bargaining agreements is that they are *agreements* that are *bargained* by both parties to address concerns. A path can be found to address any idiosyncrasies in graduate student work. Failing to invest in our education system because of payroll concerns would be a terribly shortsighted position for public policy makers to take. Investing in our higher education system, in which the graduate student role is a fundamental piece, will pay dividends. Failing to do so and letting this group of workers continue to suffer by not passing HB874 will weaken our future.

Mahalo,

Joli Tokusato
UNITE HERE Local 5

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 1:52:09 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aree Worawongwasu	Academic Labor United	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Areeerat Worawongwasu. I am a Graduate Teaching Assistant, Instructor, and PhD at the University of Hawai‘i. I support HB874] to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

As a PhD student and a worker, I am specializing in research on decolonization movements which is a vital contribution to genuine security. I also am teaching two writing-intensive classes with 37 students in total. Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor integral to UH’s continued existence, as well as the educational work of faculty, undergraduate students, and the broader society.

For many years, Graduate Assistants have been denied the ability to exercise their right to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union. Academic Labor United has found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual salaries of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000. Workers have barely any time to find additional employment to meet the Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year before taxes. Further, in 2021 the UH campus climate survey found that over the past 4 years, survey results have shown that offenders of sexually harassed female graduate students are twice as likely to be faculty or staff than offenders of female undergraduate students, consistently above 50% of these graduate students’ reports. Faculty advisors of graduate students and work supervisors of graduate assistants often overlap in specialized fields, making many positions of workplace abuse difficult to escape without compromising degree progress. Many graduate assistants also report being overworked beyond their contract requirements, sometimes to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation. The University of Hawai‘i is not incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully, or guarantee workplace protections, on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes.

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 HB874] to enable workplace

negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.



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, Waiuku, Hawaii 96793 • **KAUAI DIVISION:** 4154 Hardy Street, Lihue, Hawaii 96766
HAWAII LONGSHORE DIVISION: 451 Atkinson Drive, Honolulu, Hawaii 96814

LOCAL 142

February 14, 2023

The Thirty-Second Legislature
Regular Session of 2023

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Committee on Higher Education & Technology

Rep. Amy A. Perruso, Chair
Rep. Jeanne Kapela, Vice Chair
State Capitol, Conference Room 309 & Videoconference
Wednesday, February 15, 2023; 2:00 PM

STATEMENT OF THE ILWU LOCAL 142 ON HB 874 – RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 142 (ILWU 142) is a labor union comprised of approximately 18,000 members in the longshore, tourism, pineapple, and general trades industries. Our core principles include taking steps to better the lives of the people in the communities in which we live and to support whenever possible other unions and our hardworking community who serve as the backbone of our State. As such, the ILWU stands **in support of HB 874** Relating to Collective Bargaining, which if passed would create a new appropriate bargaining unit for Graduate Assistants employed by the University of Hawaii and our community college system.

As you know, Article XIII 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). Every public worker has a right to collectively bargain, and the legislature has a duty to provide every person in public employment a legal means to pursue their constitutionally protected collective bargaining rights.

Graduate Assistants are “Persons in public employment” and have fought for years to be recognized as a bargaining unit. In an article written by various graduate assistants and published by Civil Beat in 2018, they explained:

“UH’s over 1,250 graduate assistants are, without a doubt, workers. Our work makes the university run.

We teach classes, run labs, do field research, grade homework and tests, hold office hours, develop websites and databases, conduct groundbreaking experiments, produce media, run key facilities, mentor and counsel our undergraduate students, write letters of recommendation, train interns, manage departmental administrative work and produce and disseminate cutting-edge research. UH would not function without the significant contributions made by graduate workers.



Graduate assistants are a net positive for the university, often teaching over hundreds of students per semester, bringing in outside funds and grants that financially benefit the university, and producing world-class research that uplifts Hawaii as a place of innovation and discovery. Additionally, many graduate assistants are occupying roles previously filled by better-compensated and unionized faculty and administration.

Despite the indispensable role that graduate assistants play in the day-to-day operation of the university, our precarious positions are the first to be threatened by funding cuts.

Despite incredibly low salaries, Hawaii's skyrocketing cost of living, and the increasing cost of education, graduate assistants have not seen a proper raise since 2004. On the other hand, UH executives have routinely given themselves raises most every year.

When a student has to take on a second or third job, as many do to get by, they are hindering their own academic productivity. However, unions are about more than just pay and costs. They are about having the ability to work with dignity. For graduate assistants and UH, unionization would lead to better educational and research outcomes, improved graduation and publication rates, and protections in the workplace.”

See <https://www.civilbeat.org/2018/04/let-uh-graduate-workers-unionize/>.

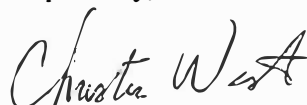
We sympathize with our Graduate Assistants and support their right to collectively bargain to have a say in their wages, hours, and working condition.

Graduate Assistants are a unique classification, and they constitute a community of shared bargaining interests that are significant to them and distinct from other workers at the university and colleges who are not included in the proposed unit. In our experience, the proposed bargaining unit meets any current legal standard for appropriateness of a bargaining unit.

Collective bargaining is essential for democracy, equality, and a just society. HB 874 will give Graduate Assistants a seat at the bargaining table to work with their employers to address the injustices and inequality they face, and to instill valuable lessons of solidarity, democracy, and collective responsibility.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in **support of HB 874** Relating to Collective Bargaining.

Respectfully,



Chris West
President



HAWAII WORKERS CENTER

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

Defending and Respecting the workers of
Hawaii'i

(503) 967- 5377
hawaiiworkerscenter@gmail.com
hawaiiworkerscenter.org

February 15, 2023

Hawaii State House of Representatives
Committee on Higher Education and Technology
Rep. Amy A. Perruso, Chair
Rep. Jeanne Kapela, Vice Chair

Executive
Committee of the
Board

RE: Strong Support for H.B. 874 RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING.

Rev. Sam Domingo
Board Chair

Dear Chair Rep. Perruso, Vice-Chair Rep. Kapela, and Members of the Committee on Higher Education and Technology:

Mary Ochs
Vice President

The Hawaii Workers Center envisions a Hawaii 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 low-wage and immigrant workers.

Dr. Arcelita Imasa
Secretary

John Witeck
Treasurer

The Hawaii Workers Center stands in strong support for H.B. 874 to establish a collective bargaining unit for over 1,500 graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawaii and community college system.

Board Members

Yoko Liriano

Academic Labor United notes that salaries for graduate assistants range from \$24,912 to \$21,288 or lower which is well below the \$47,195 per year needed for a living wage in Honolulu. Without the ability to exercise their right to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union, these wages will continue to be below a living wage.

Nanea Lo

Innocenta
Sound-Kikku

Ray Catania

Justin Jansen

Marites Uy

Leyton Torda

Robyn Conboy

As the recent Hawaii State Supreme Court oral arguments in ALU v. UH Board of Regents, Hawaii Labor Relations Board, & State of Hawaii highlighted, the nature of work and expectations for graduate assistants, have dramatically changed since the administrative rules governing graduate assistants were set. Currently, graduate assistants report being overworked beyond their contract requirements, sometimes to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation.

Co-Executive
Directors

Tony Doroño

Without the Legislature's help, graduate assistants are at the mercy of the University of Hawaii system as it has no reason to raise minimum salaries meaningfully or guarantee the needed workplace protections on contracts that it unilaterally imposes. Graduate assistants deserve the right to collectively negotiate their contracted working conditions with one of the largest public employers in the state.

Sergio Alcubilla III,
Esq.

We need to live up to Hawaii's strong history of supporting the labor movement and worker organizing. We need to support graduate assistants as they rightfully fight for better wages, better protections, and better treatment. We need to hold the state's flagship university to the highest standards, including how it treats its graduate assistants. To do any less is a disservice to the many proud U.H. alumni who take pride in their school. The Hawaii Workers Center asks that you please pass H.B. 874 and bring a much needed resolution to this issue.

Sincerely,

Sergio J. Alcubilla
Executive Director

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
HIGHER EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY

RE: HB 874 HD1 - RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2023

JASON BRADSHAW, CHAIR
DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII LABOR CAUCUS

Chair Perruso and Members of the Committee:

The Democratic Party of Hawaii Labor Caucus **supports HB 874, HD1**, relating to collective bargaining. This bill establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawaii and community college system.

According to Article 23(4) of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, “everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.” Likewise, the International Labor Organization, the UN agency responsible for safeguarding international labor standards, states in its Constitution and Declaration of Principles that the freedoms to associate and bargain collectively are fundamental rights of workers worldwide.

Graduate student assistants at the University of Hawai’i must no longer be denied their fundamental workers’ rights. Besieged by budget cuts over the past decade, graduate students have borne increased class sizes and workloads, while suffering the same low pay of \$17,500 **since** the 2003-2004 academic year. Like educators throughout Hawai’i, they have seen their purchasing power crushed beneath our state’s highest-in-the-nation cost of living.

Graduate student assistants are vital to the university community, performing instruction, research, and administrative work. Their labor, like all labor, should be publicly recognized by guaranteeing the right to bargain for fair wages and work conditions.

To give graduate assistants the ability to protect their interests and promote higher education, the Democratic Party of Hawaii Labor Caucus asks your committee to **support** this bill.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2023 10:29:40 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Golojuch Jr	Stonewall Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Representatives,

The Stonewall Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai‘i; Hawai‘i’s oldest and largest policy and political LGBTQIA+ focused organization fully supports HB 874 HD1.

We hope you all will support this important piece of legislation.

Mahalo nui loa,

Michael Golojuch, Jr.
Chair and SCC Representative
Stonewall Caucus for the DPH

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 4:15:11 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

My name is Abigail Flom. I am a Graduate Assistant and PhD student at the University of Hawai‘i and live in zip 96826. I support HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor integral to UH’s continued existence, as well as the educational work of faculty, undergraduate students, and the broader globalizing society. For many years, Graduate Assistants have been denied the ability to exercise their right to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union.

Academic Labor United has found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual

salaries of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000. Workers have barely any time to find additional employment to meet the Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year before taxes. Further, in 2021 the UH campus climate survey found that over the past 4 years, survey results have shown that offenders of sexually harassed female graduate students are twice as likely to be faculty or staff than offenders of female undergraduate students, consistently above 50% of these graduate students’ reports. Faculty advisors of graduate students and work supervisors of graduate assistants often overlap in specialized fields, making many positions of workplace abuse difficult to escape without compromising degree progress. Many graduate assistants also report being overworked beyond their contract requirements, sometimes to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation. The University of Hawai‘i is not incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully, or guarantee workplace protections, on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes.

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 HB874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 4:11:17 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Luis Dasilveira	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

My name is **Luis Dasilveira**. I am a **student/PhD** [Graduate Assistant + MA student/PhD student/PhD candidate/etc.] at the University of Hawai‘i and live in **Haleiwa, Hi 96712**. I support **[SB394/HB874]** to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

As a **Student/PhD** [MA student/PhD student/PhD candidate/etc.] and a worker, I am specializing in research on **Geochemistry/spectroscopy**, which is a vital contribution to. Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor integral to UH’s continued existence, as well as the educational work of faculty, undergraduate students, and the broader globalizing society. For many years, Graduate Assistants have been denied the ability to exercise their right to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union. Academic Labor United has found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual salaries of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000. Workers have barely any time to find additional employment to meet the Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year before taxes. Further, in 2021 the UH campus climate survey found that over the past 4 years, survey results have shown that offenders of sexually harassed female graduate students are twice as likely to be faculty or staff than offenders of female undergraduate students, consistently above 50% of these graduate students’ reports. Faculty advisors of graduate students and work supervisors of graduate assistants often overlap in specialized fields, making many positions of workplace abuse difficult to escape without compromising degree progress. Many graduate assistants also report being overworked beyond their contract requirements, sometimes to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation. The University of Hawai‘i is not incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully, or guarantee workplace protections, on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes.

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 **[SB394/HB874]** to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 12:20:31 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Henry Severino Osborne	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

My name is Henry Osborne. I am a Graduate Assistant and PhD student at the University of Hawai'i and live in Mo'ili'ili. I support HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

As a PhD student here and a worker, I am specializing in research on the languages of Polynesia and Oceania which is a vital contribution to the UH Linguistics Department's continued standing as one of the highest rated departments in the nation. Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor integral to UH's continued existence, as well as the educational work of faculty, undergraduate students, and the broader globalizing society.

While teaching and performing research for the university's benefit, I live off of a salary of less than \$20,000 a year and often am only a paycheck or two away from needing government assistance to continue living where I do. I know that my colleagues and coworkers are often in even more precarious situations, particularly those with children or other dependents who are barely scraping by. Why are workers at the state's preeminent University system expected to scrape by as if it's an acceptable state of affairs? A union would guarantee my voice is heard when negotiating for a living wage. I have been blessed with a good advisor, but many GAs do not have this luxury and have to deal with assault, abuse and worse with little to no recourse. I want my colleagues and coworkers to be able to file grievances that are taken seriously, with a union lawyer behind them instead of being beholden to the University's own whims. We are routinely assigned to jobs with little to no training, no job descriptions and no way to petition for any kind of recourse. A union would provide the structure for us to protect ourselves as workers and make sure all of us are given adequate compensation and good working conditions for our role in performing many of the jobs that keep UH running.

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 HB874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 12:13:37 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Neil Tupas	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Hello! I use to work at a fish processing plant in Kalihi and I know how it feels to want a union. This is specially true when you and your coworkers have legitimate concerns or improvements you need done to continue doing your job. The Graduate Assistants in UH are facing the same problem. The problem that there are concerns that management is not properly addressing, and if where you work the management doesn't address the problems at your workplace, workers don't have any other recourse. And this problem is no longer on an individual basis or special case basis, because almost all of the Graduate Assistants are voicing that there is a problem where they work. And that's why the Graduate Assistants want to form a union because management is not fixing the problems where they work, and the problems are becoming an obstacle to properly complete their job. The Graduate Assistants in UH should be able to for a union if they want in order to improve the conditions of their jobs and also the quality of their work just lke other states in the USA.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 12:53:46 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leif Salveson	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

My name is Leif Salveson. I am a Graduate Assistant and MA student at the University of Hawai'i and live in Manoa. I support HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

One of the primary goals of our union is an improved grievance process. Our current workplace abuse reporting system is ineffective, designed to protect guilty faculty and administration while brushing aside harms done to students. This has impacted me personally. I reported a UH faculty member for harassment in the Fall semester of 2021. I was not alone in filing a grievance against this individual. Multiple other students that I spoke to had also reported this person to the administration or to senior level faculty in the same time period I did for related offenses. Despite the numerous testimonies and reports, this faculty member faced no repercussions for their abusive behavior. This is outrageous, and a threat to both graduate assistants and students. Academic Labor United would work to ensure that graduate assistants have a transparent, fair, and accessible means of reporting such problems. The university administration does not support us. Our union is necessary. I would urge you to pass HB874, and by doing so help protect the many graduate assistants who might otherwise face such harassment in the future.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 1:55:42 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alex Miller	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

I strongly support this bill. I will offer full comments in oral testimony at the hearing. Mahalo.

Written Testimony for HB874

Meagan Harden, PhD Candidate in Geography at UH Manoa

Aloha, and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 874, 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.

Aloha, my name is Jason Mark Alexander. I am a Graduate Assistant and a PhD student at the University of Hawai‘i and live in Mānoa. I support HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain. As a 5th year PhD student in Sociology and a worker, I am specializing in research on the wellbeing of societies and collective pathways democratic justice, and work alongside a range of impressive colleagues who all contribute to policy development.

This bill does not allocate money or subvert the conditions of other collective bargaining units. It is more simple and fundamentally effective, as it integrates graduate assistants as a category of legitimate public employee into the existing systems of collective bargaining and negotiations. Once this adjustment is made, with a unit specifically for the particular set 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 dignity in resolving the means by which we survive the costs of 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. 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 are people need to pursue independently of academic standing in their enrolled programs.

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 statements, 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.

Trying to get details about my contract conditions from my supervisor, HR, and deans is like asking questions into a void — there won't be any meaningful workplace conditions and 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 HB874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.



UNIVERSITY
of HAWAII®
MĀNOA

Department of Sociology

April 7, 2021

Dear

This is an offer for a graduate assistantship with Department of Sociology, College of Social Sciences, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Details of the assistantship are noted below and required documentation, eligibility information, and benefits associated with this graduate assistantship are attached.

Reappointment is contingent upon continued eligibility, satisfactory performance of your job duties and continued funding. In addition, all reappointees must meet any criteria established for new appointees. Your Faculty Supervisor should meet with you periodically to evaluate the performance of your job duties.

Type of Position: 9 month	Rank-Step: TA Step 10	FTE: .50
Monthly Stipend: \$1,706	Annual Compensation: \$20,472 Actual compensation to be adjusted if less than full year appointment.	
Appointment Period: 08/01/2021–07/31/2022	Faculty Supervisor: TBD	
Job Duties: Assistance with Sociology department courses, including grading, student help, logistics, and/or other duties depending on the needs of the department and on qualifications/experiences. Estimated workload: 20 hours per week		
Additional information for Teaching Assistant Positions: All TAs serve under the direction and supervision of a regularly appointed member of the faculty.		
Work Environment: Work each week may vary in time and effort as the term progresses. From time to time, working slightly over or under the 20 hours per week may occur. If you are consistently working more than 20 hours per week, your supervisor should either adjust your duties or submit a petition for approval for you to work more than 20 hours. Supervision, instruction, and feedback by your GA supervisor should be appropriate and commensurate with the work being performed. Responsibilities and duties of this assistantship should be clearly communicated and directly related to your academic duties and responsibilities. If you have concerns or feel uncomfortable about your GA duties and responsibilities, please contact your Graduate Chair and/or Graduate Division.		
Actual Duty Period: 08/16/2021–05/16/2022	Course Assignment (for TA positions): TBD	

Additional UH employment (in addition to your graduate assistantship) on any UH campus requires written approval in advance by your department chair, the Dean, and Graduate Division. Please consult with your supervisor to begin the review and approval process prior to considering additional UH employment.

My name is Cuong Tran. I am a recent graduate student at the University of Hawai'i and live in Makiki. I **support HB874** to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain. As a MA student and a worker, I specialized in Resilience Hub and community resilience research, which is a vital contribution to Hawai'i's fight against global climate change.

Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor integral to UH's continued existence, as well as the educational work of faculty, undergraduate students, and the broader globalizing society. For many years, Graduate Assistants have been denied the ability to exercise their right to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union. Academic Labor United has found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual salaries of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000. Workers have barely any time to find additional employment to meet the Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year before taxes. Further, in 2021 the UH campus climate survey found that over the past 4 years, survey results have shown that offenders of sexually harassed female graduate students are twice as likely to be faculty or staff than offenders of female undergraduate students, consistently above 50% of these graduate students' reports. Faculty advisors of graduate students and work supervisors of graduate assistants often overlap in specialized fields, making many positions of workplace abuse difficult to escape without compromising degree progress. Many graduate assistants also report being overworked beyond their contract requirements, sometimes to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation. The University of Hawai'i is not incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully, or guarantee workplace protections, on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes.

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 them 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 [SB394/HB874] to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 11:40:32 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

My name is Daniela Escontrela. I am a Graduate Assistant + PhD candidate/etc at the University of Hawai‘i and live in Makiki. I support HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

As a PhD candidate/ and a worker, I am specializing in research on coral reef predators, which is a vital contribution to coral reef conservation. Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor integral to UH’s continued existence, as well as the educational work of faculty, undergraduate students, and the broader globalizing society. For many years, Graduate Assistants have been denied the ability to exercise their right to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union. Academic Labor United has found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual salaries of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000. Workers have barely any time to find additional employment to meet the Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year before taxes. Further, in 2021 the UH campus climate survey found that over the past 4 years, survey results have shown that offenders of sexually harassed female graduate students are twice as likely to be faculty or staff than offenders of female undergraduate students, consistently above 50% of these graduate students’ reports. Faculty advisors of graduate students and work supervisors of graduate assistants often overlap in specialized fields, making many positions of workplace abuse difficult to escape without compromising degree progress. Many graduate assistants also report being overworked beyond their contract requirements, sometimes to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation. The University of Hawai‘i is not incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully, or guarantee workplace protections, on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes. 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 HB874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 12:06:40 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marceline Kanaiaupuni-Naff	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Solidarity forever. UH Manoa barely pays its graduate students a survivable wage, and often leaves them in sub-par housing without appropriate access to food, medical funding, or other necessities of modern life.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 1:13:21 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

my name is Shannon McClish and I am a graduate student at UH Manoa. I urge you to support the right for graduate students to organize. Graduate workers produce cutting-edge research, teach essential courses, and support administration. We are denied the rights workers are entitled to. Many graduate students are exploited through overwork, low pay, and or harassment. Please pass HB874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 2:14:42 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Anna Ezzy and I am co-State Director of Every Voice Hawai‘i, a student coalition advocating for policy reform to address campus sexual violence as well as a Graduate Assistant + MS student at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo. I am testifying on my own behalf and I support HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

As a MS student and a worker, I am specializing in research on carbon storage in agroforestry which is a vital contribution to developing resilient conservation and agriculture strategies in Hawai‘i. Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor integral to UH’s continued existence, as well as the educational work of faculty, undergraduate students, and the broader society.

For many years, Graduate Assistants have been denied the ability to exercise their right to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union. Academic Labor United has found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual salaries of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000. Workers have barely any time to find additional employment to meet the Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year before taxes. Further, in 2021 the UH campus climate survey found that over the past 4 years, survey results have shown that offenders of sexually harassed female graduate students are twice as likely to be faculty or staff (50% of harassment is from faculty or staff) than offenders of female undergraduate students. Faculty advisors of graduate students and work supervisors of graduate assistants often overlap in specialized fields, making many positions of workplace abuse difficult to escape without compromising degree progress. Many graduate assistants also report being overworked beyond their contract requirements, sometimes to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation. The University of Hawai‘i is not incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully, or guarantee workplace protections, on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes.

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 HB874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and end the exclusion of this category of workers from this right.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 11:58:50 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alexandria Holthaus	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Alexandria Holthaus. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and live in Moiliili. I support HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain. I have worked as a teaching assistant for over two years teaching introductory physics labs. These labs are extremely understaffed, and every semester more have to be canceled due to lack of TAs. Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor integral to UH’s continued existence, as well as the educational work of faculty, undergraduate students, and the broader globalizing society.

For many years, Graduate Assistants have been denied the ability to exercise their right to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union. Academic Labor United has found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual salaries of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000. Workers have barely any time to find additional employment to meet the Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year before taxes. Further, in 2021 the UH campus climate survey found that over the past 4 years, survey results have shown that offenders of sexually harassed female graduate students are twice as likely to be faculty or staff than offenders of female undergraduate students, consistently above 50% of these graduate students’ reports. Faculty advisors of graduate students and work supervisors of graduate assistants often overlap in specialized fields, making many positions of workplace abuse difficult to escape without compromising degree progress. Many graduate assistants also report being overworked beyond their contract requirements, sometimes to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation. The University of Hawai‘i is not incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully, or guarantee workplace protections, on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes.

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 HB874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 4:18:49 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Guillaume Huber	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Guillaume Huber, I am a graduate assistant in Astronomy at UH Manoa. I've dedicated my life to science and trying to make society better. After all the efforts I've put to pursue these goals, my current salary barely allows me to go home and see my family once a year.

These living conditions obviously do not correspond to the amount of work I provide. Allowing GAs to collectively negotiate their working conditions is the decent minimum.

Thank you for hearing my voice.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 5:35:15 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michaela Nuesser	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a PhD student specializing in language research on bilingualism, multilingualism, and language learning, also in Hawaii.

As a teacher of undergraduate courses, I am paid \$19,686 before taxes. The Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 is per year before taxes.

Living in Kakaako, I am required to be able to afford transportation to and from campus that allows me to work long hours and to be on campus quickly, if needed, even after hours. Like for many graduate assistants, over 50% of my work is uncompensated. The University of Hawai'i is not incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully, or guarantee workplace protections, on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes.

Chair Amy Perruso
Vice Chair Jeanne Kapela

House Committee on Higher Education & Technology

Wednesday, February 15, 2023
2:00PM

**TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB874 HD1 RELATING TO
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

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, a son of the working class, and a member of the Hawai‘i State Youth Commission, testifying as an individual in **Strong Support** of **HB874 HD1**, Relating to Collective Bargaining.

The National Labor Relations Board's current decision to not restrict graduate assistants' rights to organize in private universities should be factored into the struggle for graduate assistants here in Hawai‘i’s public university system. If the current federal administration has decided that it is alright to proceed, Hawai‘i should also follow suit. Casting graduate assistants as just “students” in order to try and weaken their fight for collective bargaining rights ignores the labor, seen and unseen, paid and unpaid, that generations of graduate assistants have done and continue to do for the University of Hawai‘i system.

Graduate assistants are very much the backbone of UH. They are notably instructors, some of the more passionate instructors in our UH system, exemplified by the fact that they are completing higher education in these subjects. They are also tutors, researchers, administrative assistants, unofficial counselors and so much more, working very hard in a field that shapes the education and future careers of Hawai‘i’s people, both young and old.

Alongside fighting for better pay and benefits, a union will allow graduate assistants to be able to have a protected voice in how their workplace, the University of Hawai‘i is being run, and actually create steps to address critical issues in the workplace like equal pay, sexual harassment, abuse of authority, and discrimination in its many forms. It will expand further democracy into this public space. Please **PASS House Bill 874 HD1** out of your committee and take a stand for Hawai‘i’s working class today!

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

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

My name is Cecile Vimond. I am a Graduate Assistant + MS student at the University of Hawai‘i and live in Mānoa. I **support** HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

As a Master of Science student and a worker, I am specializing in research on population genetics of rare and endangered marine species, which is a vital contribution to the field of marine biology and successful conservation. UH Graduate Assistants, like myself, who instruct undergraduate laboratory classes, are solely responsible for teaching laboratory material, applied scientific concepts and hands-on skills. As Graduate Assistants, we help lay critical building blocks for their future STEM careers, and yet we as graduate students are struggling to support ourselves in our own pursuit of STEM careers. Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor integral to UH’s continued existence, as well as the educational work of faculty, undergraduate students, and the broader globalizing society.

For many years, Graduate Assistants have been **denied the ability to exercise their right** to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union. Academic Labor United has found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual **salaries** of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000. Workers have barely any time to find additional employment to meet the Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year before taxes. Further, in 2021 the UH campus climate survey found that over the past 4 years, survey results have shown that offenders of sexually **harassed** female graduate students are twice as likely to be faculty or staff than offenders of female undergraduate students, consistently above 50% of these graduate students’ reports. Faculty advisors of graduate students and work supervisors of graduate assistants often overlap in specialized fields, making many positions of workplace abuse difficult to escape without compromising degree progress. Many graduate assistants also report being **overworked** beyond their contract requirements, sometimes to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation. The University of Hawai‘i is not incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully, or guarantee workplace protections, on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes.

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** HB874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 7:36:05 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Graduate students are workers without whom the University of Hawaii could not function. They deserve the same labor protections as any other category of worker, including the right to form a union and collectively bargain. Please support HB874 HD1.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 6:29:13 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

My name is Olivia Meyer. I am a Graduate Assistant and Ph.D. student at the University of Hawai‘i and live in Honolulu. I support HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain. As a Ph.D. student and a worker, I specialize in geographic research on plastic waste in Thailand, which contributes to understanding environmental sustainability across the Asia-Pacific region. Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor integral to UH’s continued existence, as well as the educational work of faculty, undergraduate students, and the broader globalizing society.

Graduate Assistants have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union for many years. Academic Labor United found that Graduate Assistants are paid well below the Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year before taxes. In Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual salaries of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000.

As a graduate student, I support this bill because Graduate Assistants live in extreme precarity. We often rely on piecemealing together various funding sources without any long-term security. During my master’s, I worked as a graduate student at the University of Kentucky. Despite the dramatic increase in the cost of living in Hawai‘i, I was paid more than many graduate assistants at UH. At Kentucky, graduate assistants were automatically enrolled in healthcare and guaranteed two (master’s) to four (Ph.D.) years of funding. In contrast, GAs and TAs at UH usually have to reapply for assistantships each year. Additionally, due to the enrollment process, many at UH are placed in precarious situations where they are left without health care for extended periods of time. When graduate assistants such as a friend of mine must take a leave of absence due to mental health issues, they lose their funding altogether rather than simply pausing their funding clock. Another of my friends was awarded a prestigious grant, but when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, she was left without any funding, support system, health care, or security from the university. The UH system is built on graduate student labor, yet UH does not treat us as valued community members. Instead, the University treats us as expendable. Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai‘i could not run. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity.

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 HB874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 8:12:32 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kealohilani Minami	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a current undergraduate student at UH Mānoa and am writing in support of the collective bargaining bill for graduate student workers. I have had countless professors who are graduate students and I would not be able to graduate without their work an guidance. They deserve livable wages and the ability to bargain for better conditions such as that one. They work tirelessly to keep UH schools running and it's only right they have proper, equitable representation. Mahalo for the opportunity to share my thoughts.

Thomas W. Iwanicki, MSc - PhD Candidate
Zoology Graduate Program in the School of Life Sciences
College of Natural Sciences

Chair Perruso and the Committee on Higher Education and Technology,

My name is Tom Iwanicki. I am a PhD Candidate at the University of Hawai'i and live in Makiki. **I support HB874** to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

As a PhD Candidate and a worker, I am specializing in research on the genetics of vision and bioluminescence in marine animals, which is a vital contribution to our understanding of marine biodiversity. Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor integral to UH's continued existence, as well as the educational work of faculty, undergraduate students, and the broader globalizing society.

I would like to expand upon my written and oral testimony submitted to the Committee on Labor and Government Operations hearing on February 7, 2023. The Office of Collective Bargaining submitted testimony in opposition to this measure, on the grounds that graduate assistants at the University of Hawai'i are temporary workers. That is not only demonstrably false, but also insulting to the work we do to keep the university running. I have personally been in continuous employment at UH since August 2016. While my day-to-day job duties may have changed throughout the years, I have been an employee of the university longer than many unionized state employees. Masters degrees can take 2-3+ years and a doctorate can take 5-7+ years to complete. These are long term employment commitments and we should have a say in our work conditions through collective bargaining. Shame on the Office of Collective Bargaining for opposing our constitutionally enshrined rights.

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 HB874** to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

Thank-you for your consideration.



Sincerely,
Tom Iwanicki

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 10:25:52 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Megan McElligott	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Megan McElligott. I am a PhD candidate at the University of Hawai‘i, and I live in House District 23. I support HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

Throughout my 8 years with UH Manoa, I have earned my master’s degree, and I’m currently in the final years of my PhD studying the presence of Hawaiian spinner dolphins using underwater sound recorders. This research is vital to ensure that our management practices are successfully protecting spinner dolphins while they complete their daytime resting behaviors.

In order to support myself while conducting this research, I have worked as a teaching assistant with the School of Life Sciences for 9 semesters. However, the stipends of \$17,502 per year for my first 3 years, and \$18,930 once I received my M.S. are insultingly insufficient to support myself with Honolulu County’s high cost of living, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year before taxes. I’ve had to take out large student loans each year to supplement my income. I have never felt so devalued as I have by UH’s top administration.

This abysmal pay is a system-wide issue. Academic Labor United has found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual salaries of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000. Many graduate assistants also report being overworked beyond their contract requirements, sometimes up to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation. Personally, I have worked more than my contractual 20 hours/week without any additional compensation.

Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor integral to UH’s continued existence and prestige, as well as the educational work of faculty, and undergraduate students. 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 and other grievances. Please pass HB874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues and stop excluding this category of workers from their rights.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 11:08:56 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eri Leong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Eri Leong. I am an undergraduate student at Chaminade University and live in Kaimukī. I **support** HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

While only an undergraduate student, I see the impact of Graduate Assistants. Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor integral to UH’s continued existence, as well as the educational work of faculty, undergraduate students, and the broader globalizing society.

Graduate Assistants are essential components of the UH system. Through having friends and loved ones serve as Graduate Assistants, I have seen how despite their vital impact to UH, they end up in the position of struggling and suffering.

For many years, Graduate Assistants have been **denied the ability to exercise their right** to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union. Academic Labor United has found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual **salaries** of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000. Workers have barely any time to find additional employment to meet the Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year before taxes.

Further, in 2021 the UH campus climate survey found that over the past 4 years, survey results have shown that offenders of sexually **harassed** female graduate students are twice as likely to be faculty or staff than offenders of female undergraduate students, consistently above 50% of these graduate students’ reports. Faculty advisors of graduate students and work supervisors of graduate assistants often overlap in specialized fields, making many positions of workplace abuse difficult to escape without compromising degree progress.

Many graduate assistants also report being **overworked** beyond their contract requirements, sometimes to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation. The University of Hawai‘i is not incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully, or guarantee workplace protections, on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes.

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** HB874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 12:13:43 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

My name is Dorian Daimer. I am a Research Assistant and PhD student at the University of Hawai'i and I live in Kaimuki. I **support** bill HB874 for the right to Graduate Assistant collective bargaining.

As a PhD student and a worker, I am specializing in research on information processing, which is a vital contribution to the tech-based economy. Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor integral to UH's continued existence, as well as the educational work of faculty, undergraduate students, and the broader globalizing society.

Yet for many years, we Graduate Assistants have been denied the ability to exercise our constitutional right to collectively bargain as part of a union. We deserve the same right to bargain for fair pay, job security and harassment-free workplaces that are guaranteed to other public employees.

As a graduate assistant, I support this bill because the working and living conditions of graduate students in Hawai'i are currently extremely poor. Academic Labor United has found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual salaries of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000. The Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year before taxes is far out of reach. This makes it feel like our valuable contribution to the University of Hawai'i and our role in providing higher education to the citizens of Hawai'i is completely underappreciated. Collective bargaining rights would give us, the graduate assistants, a chance to remedy that injustice.

As an international graduate assistant I feel the financial hardship especially strongly since my Visa status doesn't allow me to work outside of the University. Consequently I am completely reliant on the graduate assistant stipend to cover my costs of living in Hawai'i and frankly that is hardly possible. I have contemplated leaving for a different university many times, just because of my strenuous financial situation.

Without graduate assistant labor, the University of Hawai'i could not run. Yet the University of Hawai'i is not incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully, or guarantee workplace protections, on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes.

As workers for a public employer, all Graduate Assistants 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 Graduate Assistant workers struggling with poverty wages, supervisor abuse, and other grievances. Like all workers, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Please pass HB874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues!

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 8:44:31 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lilly Fisher	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, and thank you for the opportunity to express my **strong support** for House Bill 874, to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

My name is Lilly Fisher, and I am a Graduate Assistant and second year PhD candidate in the American Studies Department at the University of Hawai‘i. I live in St. Louis Heights, in House District 22. As a PhD candidate and a worker, I serve as the Managing Editor for the American Studies Association’s flagship academic journal, *American Quarterly*, which is a vital contribution to the American Studies department and to the university as a whole. I’ve worked for this journal for the past two years, and plan to continue serving as Managing Editor until the journal’s tenure at the university is completed at the end of 2024. In this role, I (along with two other graduate workers), oversee the production and publication process of this prestigious journal, which publishes some of the most rigorously peer-reviewed and cutting-edge research in our field. Graduate Assistants such as myself provide research, administrative, and teaching labor integral to UH’s continued existence, as well as the educational work of faculty, undergraduate students, our specific fields of study, and or broader society.

For years, Graduate Assistants have been denied the ability to exercise their right to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union. Academic Labor United found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual salaries of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000. In my experience, workers in the humanities departments consistently fall on the lower end of this spectrum (my starting salary was \$22,140 for an 11-month contract). Given the demands of our jobs, in addition to the expectations of schoolwork, it’s a huge burden to have to seek additional employment to supplement the income provided by the school, let alone to work another job, to try to meet the Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year before taxes. I know several classmates with children who are doubly stressed at the prospect of keeping up with multiple jobs in additional parenting to try to meet the needs of their family, as well as others who have had to take time off and/or abandon plans for their degree because the financial burden is too great. The loss of these brilliant scholars and their unique perspectives is a huge disservice to these graduate student workers, as well as to the students they teach, the university, and their fields at large.

Further, in 2021 the UH campus climate survey found that over the past 4 years, survey results have shown that offenders of sexually harassed female graduate students are twice as likely to be faculty or staff than offenders of female undergraduate students, consistently above 50% of these

graduate students' reports. Faculty advisors of graduate students and work supervisors of graduate assistants often overlap in specialized fields, making many positions of workplace abuse difficult to escape without compromising degree progress. Many graduate assistants also report being overworked beyond their contract requirements, sometimes to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation. The University of Hawai'i is not incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully, or guarantee workplace protections, on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes.

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 HB874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 1:33:59 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emma Stierhoff	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Perruso, Vice Chair Kapela, and members of the committee,

My name is Emma Stierhoff, and I am a Graduate Assistant and Tropical Conservation Biology and Environmental Science Master's student at the University of Hawai'i in Hilo, studying the long-term impacts of avian malaria on Hawai'i 'amakihi and what may facilitate their resilience to this devastating disease. I am writing to urge you to support HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor that is integral to the functioning of UH. Personally, I have done everything from teaching undergraduates to replacing computers for an entire classroom to managing the department website to running workshops for grades K-12. Colleagues of mine TA for as many as three classes per semester, and are often more present and involved than the primary instructor while paid a fraction of the salary.

Despite the crucial role we play in the UH system, for many years, Graduate Assistants have been denied the ability to exercise their right to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union. Academic Labor United found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual salaries of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000. Workers have barely any time to find additional employment to meet the Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year. I have gotten by through free meal programs and work exchanges to lower my rent, but UH should compensate us fairly for the work that we do rather than forcing us to depend on the generosity other entities to survive. Further, in 2021 the UH campus climate survey found that over the past 4 years, an alarming percentage of female graduate students were sexually harassed by faculty or staff. Many graduate assistants also report being overworked beyond their contract requirements, sometimes to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation. I have had many weeks during which I have had to work more than the agreed to 20 hours without any additional compensation. The University of Hawai'i is not incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully or guarantee workplace protections on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes.

As workers for a public employer, all GAs deserve the right to collectively negotiate their contracted working conditions to prioritize their quality of life and health. I urge you to listen to the voices of GA workers struggling with poverty wages, supervisor abuse, and other grievances. Please pass HB874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify,

Emma Stierhoff

My name is Jane Traynor. I am a former Graduate Assistant, international student, and PhD candidate at the University of Hawai‘i. I currently live in Kyoto, Japan but will be returning to Honolulu in the fall. I **support** HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

As a PhD candidate and a former graduate worker, I am specializing in research on Japanese theatre, which is a vital contribution to the diversification of the eurocentric fabric of contemporary theatre in North America. The University of Hawai‘i is the only North American, post-secondary institution in which I can pursue this research and I have moved internationally in order to do so. Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor integral to UH’s continued existence, as well as the educational work of faculty, undergraduate students, and the broader globalizing society.

For many years, Graduate Assistants have been **denied the ability to exercise their right** to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union. Academic Labor United has found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual **salaries** of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000. Workers have barely any time to find additional employment to meet the Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year before taxes. Furthermore, international students can only work a maximum of 20 hours per week during the semester due to visa restrictions. A full-time Graduate Assistantship requires 20 hours of work per week, meaning that the income of international students is the salary assigned to the position. International graduate assistants cannot simply “pick up additional work” to make ends meet during the semester and have severely limited opportunities to access additional funding to ensure they can make a living wage. Without the ability to bargain for livable wages, international students, such as myself, are essentially condemned living in poverty which creates an inequitable system in which the only international students that have access to one-of-a-kind programs at UH are the ones that have prior access to financial resources, regardless of academic and intellectual merit.

Further, in 2021 the UH campus climate survey found that over the past 4 years, survey results have shown that offenders of sexually **harassed female** graduate students are twice as likely to

be faculty or staff than offenders of female undergraduate students, consistently above 50% of these graduate students' reports. Faculty advisors of graduate students and work supervisors of graduate assistants often overlap in specialized fields, making many positions of workplace abuse difficult to escape without compromising degree progress. Many graduate assistants also report being **overworked** beyond their contract requirements, sometimes to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation. The University of Hawai'i is not incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully, or guarantee workplace protections, on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes.

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** HB874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 7:26:00 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

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 Hawaii and live in Makiki. I support HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate workers in the UH system to collectively bargain.

We, Graduate workers, are here to learn and give back to education. We perform fundamental services to this public university including executing administrative tasks, teaching, mentoring, contributing intellectual property, generating grants, and publishing research. We work at least 5 days a week, most of us for more than 40 hours a week, for more than 9 months of the year, and many still require second and third jobs to get by. We are much more than students and we are *not* short-term workers. In return, we are exceptionally poorly compensated, and lack protections from abuse, stretched thin from too many obligations at work and in life. The UH system has taken advantage of us 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.

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 not just for salary, but also for our data, publishing our intellectual property, writing letters of recommendation, and granting of degrees. The 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.

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 and ensure safe and fair working conditions. These conditions do not only benefit graduate workers, but they would enrich the experience of undergraduate students by ensuring we have adequate time to be involved relative to other work obligations, we can write enriching feedback and give educational support, and most importantly we can serve as better mentors and role models to future scientists, politicians, educators, and world leaders. Please pass HB874 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.

Testimony Before the House Committee on Higher Education and Technology
Re: HB 874 – Relating to Collective Bargaining

Aloha Chair Perruso and Committee Members,

My name is A.C. I am currently an English instructor at 'Iolani High School. Before coming to 'Iolani a few years ago, I was a lecturer and graduate assistant within the UH system.

As a graduate assistant, it was a monthly struggle to balance teaching and research with survival, as I often barely made enough to afford monthly housing and food and also could not afford adequate and consistent healthcare. I vividly remember going to classes and preparing lessons while ravenously hungry, knowing that I only had a jar of peanut butter and a small bag of pretzels to see me through the weekend.

Graduate assistants contribute valuable research and teaching to the UH system, and in return are offered minimal pay, inadequate benefits, and a lack of visibility and value within the institution. One of the most reliable ways to meaningfully change these taxing labor conditions is *unionization*. GAs who have been able to collectively bargain at their institutions in Florida and within the UC system in California have successfully been able to secure higher living wages, consistent medical coverage, and more recognition and visibility at their institutions. These achievements not only help to guarantee that graduate assistants can continue to make valuable contributions to their schools, but to do so without having to struggle to merely survive.

I strongly urge you to vote yes in support of HB 874.

Mahalo,
A. C.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 7:31:15 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Hi! I'm Dianne and I'm a PhD candidate working as a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa and I live in Manoa Valley. I support HB874 to secure the right of all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

I do research on the projections of climate change effects on the California Current System, and by extension on the North Pacific, which is a valuable contribution to the field of climate change adaptation. All Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor integral to UH's continued existence, and are directly responsible for the high ranking of UH among elite universities in the world.

For many years, Graduate Assistants have been denied the ability to exercise their right to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union. Academic Labor United has found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual salaries of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000. Workers have barely any time to find additional employment to meet the Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year before taxes. Further, in 2021 the UH campus climate survey found that over the past 4 years, survey results have shown that offenders of sexually harassed female graduate students are twice as likely to be faculty or staff than offenders of female undergraduate students, consistently above 50% of these graduate students' reports. Faculty advisors of graduate students and work supervisors of graduate assistants often overlap in specialized fields, making many positions of workplace abuse difficult to escape without compromising degree progress. Many graduate assistants also report being overworked beyond their contract requirements, sometimes to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation. The University of Hawai'i is not incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully, or guarantee workplace protections, on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes.

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 HB874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 10:21:21 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shirley Gabber	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am Shirley Gabber, I live in Honolulu, and I am a graduate assistant in the linguistics department at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. I am testifying today in strong support of HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500 plus graduate assistants at UH to collectively bargain. A union would greatly benefit myself and my coworkers, particularly around the issue of wages. The wages that we currently receive are so low, especially compared to the cost of living in Honolulu, that a large number of my coworkers receive food stamps. Many of us who do not receive food stamps, such as myself, are working additional jobs, on top of a 20 hour/week graduate assistantship and full-time graduate study. Without a union, we have no way of addressing issues such as this one. I strongly support HB874, and I implore you to pass it.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 9:07:39 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jaeho Kook	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Jaeho Kook. I am a PhD student at the University of Hawai‘i and live in Honolulu. I support SB394/HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

As a PhD student and a worker, I am specializing in research on digital technologies and its social implications, which is a vital contribution to social transformation and human freedom. Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor integral to UH’s continued existence, as well as the educational work of faculty, undergraduate students, and the broader globalizing society.

For many years, Graduate Assistants have been denied the ability to exercise their right to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union. Academic Labor United has found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual salaries of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000. Workers have barely any time to find additional employment to meet the Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year before taxes. Further, in 2021 the UH campus climate survey found that over the past 4 years, survey results have shown that offenders of sexually harassed female graduate students are twice as likely to be faculty or staff than offenders of female undergraduate students, consistently above 50% of these graduate students’ reports. Faculty advisors of graduate students and work supervisors of graduate assistants often overlap in specialized fields, making many positions of workplace abuse difficult to escape without compromising degree progress. Many graduate assistants also report being overworked beyond their contract requirements, sometimes to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation. The University of Hawai‘i is not incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully, or guarantee workplace protections, on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes.

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 SB394/HB874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 10:35:56 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

My name is Madeline McKenna. I am a Ph.D. candidate/Graduate Assistant (GA) at the University of Hawai‘i and live in Honolulu. **I support HB874** to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

As a PhD candidate and a worker, I am conducting research on the jet streams, atmospheric blocking events, and extreme weather responses to tropical climate variations, which have significant socio-economic impacts around the globe. My department (within SOEST) is ranked 15th in the world for its discipline and hosts renowned climate and atmospheric scientists; however, the achievements of this department is due valuable contributions from undervalued and under-appreciated GAs like myself providing research, administrative, and teaching labor.

GAs have been repeatedly denied the ability to exercise their right to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union. Academic Labor United has found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total GAs were paid annual salaries of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all GAs were paid below \$36,000. Furthermore, GA salaries are capped at payment for only 20 hours per week, despite being pressured by supervisors and graduate programs to work above 40 hours per week. Many graduate assistants report being overworked beyond their contract requirements, sometimes to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation. Workers have barely any time to find additional employment to meet the Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year before taxes. Additionally, I would like to note that international students are not allowed to find additional employment due to their visa status. **I personally work an additional part-time job unrelated to my field in order to make ends meet, which is time I believe could have been better spent towards producing meaningful climate-related research that would have a greater impact on my community.**

As a female scientist, I am also concerned about workplace protections for myself and other GAs. In 2021, the UH campus climate survey found that over the past 4 years, survey results have shown that offenders of sexually harassed female graduate students are twice as likely to be faculty or staff than offenders of female undergraduate students, consistently above 50% of these graduate students’ reports. Faculty advisors of graduate students and work supervisors of graduate assistants often overlap in specialized fields, making many positions of workplace abuse difficult to escape without compromising degree progress.

In conclusion, 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. The University of Hawai'i is not currently incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully, or guarantee workplace protections, on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes. I plead you to listen to the voices of GA workers struggling with poverty wages, supervisor abuse, and other grievances. **Please pass HB874** to enable workplace negotiations that will resolve these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 11:06:35 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Andrew Meyer. I am a PhD student in Physics at the University of Hawai'i and live in Palolo. I support HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

For many years, Graduate Assistants have been denied the ability to exercise their right to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union. Academic Labor United has found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual salaries of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000. The most common salary for GA's has consistently been the minimum pay step allowed by the university, which has either remained stagnant or not risen fast enough to keep pace with inflation for many years. Many GA's, including myself, have no employment outside of the university, since we have barely any time to find additional employment to meet the Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year before taxes. Adjusted for cost of living, UH's GA salaries are the worst of any major research institution in the United States. I personally know many former GAs who dropped out of grad school or transferred elsewhere because they simply could not afford to live here, and have heard of many prospective students who refused to come here because of the poor salaries. The University's refusal to pay well enough to attract or retain the teaching assistants who do much of the work of teaching introductory courses at UH has led departments such as mine to cancel some sections of courses entirely and enlarge class sizes among remaining courses, or give TA's more sections to teach, harming the educational experiences for all, whether by making undergrads less able to get into the class sections they need, or by overloading the graduate TA's, making them both less effective teachers and less able to focus on their own studies.

Further, in 2021 the UH campus climate survey found that over the past 4 years, survey results have shown that offenders of sexually harassed female graduate students are twice as likely to be faculty or staff than offenders of female undergraduate students, consistently above 50% of these graduate students' reports. Faculty advisors of graduate students and work supervisors of graduate assistants often overlap in specialized fields, making many positions of workplace abuse difficult to escape without compromising degree progress. Many graduate assistants also report being overworked beyond their contract requirements, sometimes to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation. The University of Hawai'i is

not incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully, or guarantee workplace protections, on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes.

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 HB874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 11:25:21 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Support

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 11:27:27 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Clarice Handoko	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Clarice Handoko. I am a Graduate Assistant and an MA student at the University of Hawai‘i I support HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

As a MA student and a worker, I am specializing in research on democracies in Southeast Asia, which is a vital contribution to the global knowledge on democratic best practices, especially at a time when many countries that were once thought to be the gold standards of democracies are experiencing political trouble themselves. Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor integral to UH’s continued existence, as well as the educational work of faculty, undergraduate students, and the broader globalizing society.

For many years, Graduate Assistants have been denied the ability to exercise their right to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union. Academic Labor United has found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual salaries of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000. Workers have barely any time to find additional employment to meet the Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year before taxes. Further, in 2021 the UH campus climate survey found that over the past 4 years, survey results have shown that offenders of sexually harassed female graduate students are twice as likely to be faculty or staff than offenders of female undergraduate students, consistently above 50% of these graduate students’ reports. Faculty advisors of graduate students and work supervisors of graduate assistants often overlap in specialized fields, making many positions of workplace abuse difficult to escape without compromising degree progress. Many graduate assistants also report being overworked beyond their contract requirements, sometimes to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation. The University of Hawai‘i is not incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully, or guarantee workplace protections, on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes.

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. Addressing our needs will have have positive trickle-down effects to the educational infrastructure we serve, as well as the broader student community that gain essential lifeskills through the college education we help to provide.

Please pass HB874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 11:50:00 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sebastian Church	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To whom it may concern,

My name is Sebastian Church. I am a PhD student at the University of Hawai'i and live in Makiki, Honolulu. I support SB394 and HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

As a PhD student and graduate assistant, I am working toward food security and climate change mitigation in Hawai'i. In my department, and even in my own lab group, I've watched several graduate students with assistantships struggle with the economics of pursuing a graduate degree in Hawai'i. Many students often contemplate abandoning graduate school because of economic pressure, in addition to the stress that already comes with the experience. Low graduate assistant wages in the face of high costs of living puts the University of Hawai'i in a precarious position. Lab groups, departments, and the university itself is constantly at risk of losing strong, capable students while also unable to attract strong candidates for its programs.

As workers for a public employer, all GAs deserve the right to collectively negotiate their 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 SB394 and HB874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

Thank you,

Sebastian Church

Graduate Assistant

Tropical Plant and Soil Sciences

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 12:34:01 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leimaile Barrett	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Leimaile Barrett, I am a graduate of the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa and I live in Kaimukī, O‘ahu. **I support HB874** to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor integral to UH’s continued existence, as well as the educational work of faculty, undergraduate students, and the broader globalizing society.

For many years, Graduate Assistants have been **denied the ability to exercise their right** to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union. Academic Labor United has found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual salaries of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000. Workers have barely any time to find additional employment to meet the Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year before taxes. Further, in 2021 the UH campus climate survey found that over the past 4 years, survey results have shown that offenders of sexually **harassed** female graduate students are twice as likely to be faculty or staff than offenders of female undergraduate students, consistently above 50% of these graduate students’ reports. Faculty advisors of graduate students and work supervisors of graduate assistants often overlap in specialized fields, making many positions of workplace abuse difficult to escape without compromising degree progress. Many graduate assistants also report being **overworked** beyond their contract requirements, sometimes to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation. The University of Hawai‘i is not incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully, or guarantee workplace protections, on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes.

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 HB874** to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 12:39:10 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I strongly encourage the higher education committee to support Academic Labor United, graduate assistants, and the future of higher education in Hawai'i by voting in favor of this bill and working with the senate to ensure that this bill becomes law.

Graduate assistants are an integral part of the university. Without them, instructional, administrative, and research operations of the university would grind to a halt. Our jobs at the university provide stipends, access to medical care, and a tuition waiver, which allow us to ease the economic burdens of pursuing an advanced degree. However, the economic burden is still significant (and worsening) and a clear lack of definition between responsibilities as a student and responsibilities as a worker often leads to exploitation of us as workers (and correspondingly a negative impact as students). For example, as a Research Assistant I was responsible for carrying out the research on a grant that was provided by the national science foundation (a large chunk of which the university uses as "overhead" to help fund its operations). However, during that time my advisor also asked me to teach some of their class which distracted me from my other work responsibilities and, at least from my understanding, is not part of the job responsibilities of an RA. While this situation did not have any substantial impact, this pattern of behavior detrimentally affects many GAs at UH. Advisors often play a dual role: overseeing a GA's responsibility as a worker and mentoring that same GA in their academic pursuits. This leaves an ambiguity in how work should be divided and provides a mechanism for advisors to ask their GAs to do a lot of labor that is not within naive understandings of their job descriptions.

I firmly believe that collective bargaining is the only mechanism to provide substantial relief in perpetuity to this hardship and others that GAs face. Not only would a contract provide better understandings of job descriptions and duties, but also a functioning grievance process that would give GAs and their supervisors an opportunity to meet at the table and work out a solution to move forward.

Lastly, the recognition of a GA collective bargaining unit is nothing new. Many other states have recognized graduate student labor collective bargaining rights. Within Hawai'i, some part time employees are already given their collective bargaining rights. The precedent is there we are just

asking the legislature to put us on the same path. Like other workers at the university, we deserve a seat at the table so let's work together to make that happen! E ALU KĀKOU!

Aloha and terveh. My name is Sara Maaria Saastamoinen, and my pronouns are she and they. I am a Ph.D. student in my second year of working as a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, first as a research assistant and now as an instructor in the Department of Political Science. As a graduate student worker, I **fully support** House Bill 874 for our right as workers to collectively bargain, and I urge you to join me with your unequivocal support.

For years now, Graduate Assistants have been denied our right to collectively bargain our contracts as workers through a union. This impacts not only graduate students who are working in these roles but also the future leaders we educate, and so supporting Graduate Assistants should be one of the most serious issues for this legislature. This academic year alone, I am teaching more than 40 undergraduate students who will be the leaders of Hawai'i. What does being a Graduate Assistant who teaches her own class look like? For each semester 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. To do all of this, 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.

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 874 urgently** and to listen to the voices of Graduate Assistants who have been fighting for years to secure our right to unionize. Mahalo nui.

February 14, 2023

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF ACADEMIC LABOR UNITED

My name is Noenoe Silva and I am a faculty member of the Department of Political Science at UH Mānoa. I am writing on my own, and not on behalf of the Department or the University in any way. I fully support Academic Labor United (ALU) and their rightful pursuit as graduate students to collectively bargain for better wages, benefits, and working conditions.

The cascading consequences of former Governor David Ige's 2015 veto of the right for graduate students at the University of Hawai'i to create a public sector collective bargaining unit is felt deeply by our graduate students at the university at large. Any notion that graduate work must prioritize their roles as "students first and employees second" is untenable and unconscionable given that the increase in hiring Graduate Assistants correlates to the reduction of full time staff at the university. That is, crucial clerical and staff positions have been eliminated and graduate students have been hired at steeply lower salaries to do that work. ALU has further demonstrated that their organizing is a part of a larger graduate worker movement where over 80 public and private institutions have recognized this false distinction and supported graduate students' legal right to organize. Such organizing remains in historical continuity with Hawai'i's economically vulnerable making progressive social change through unionization.

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 exorbitantly 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, colleges like Hawai'inuiākea have established funds to prevent student hunger. Our own department offers graduate students nonperishable food, an initiative founded and sustained by faculty 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 I fully support ALU in their movement for collective bargaining.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 1:39:10 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mason Harry Russo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Mason Russo. I am a PhD student at the University of Hawai‘i and live in Kaimuki. I support SB394/HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

As a PhD student and a worker, I am specializing in research on invasive insects, which are vital for safeguarding Hawaii's ecosystems and cultural practices. Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor integral to UH’s continued existence, as well as the educational work of faculty, undergraduate students, and the broader globalizing society. For many years, Graduate Assistants have been denied the ability to exercise their right to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union. Academic Labor United has found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual salaries of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000. Workers have barely any time to find additional employment to meet the Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year before taxes. Further, in 2021 the UH campus climate survey found that over the past 4 years, survey results have shown that offenders of sexually harassed female graduate students are twice as likely to be faculty or staff than offenders of female undergraduate students, consistently above 50% of these graduate students’ reports. Faculty advisors of graduate students and work supervisors of graduate assistants often overlap in specialized fields, making many positions of workplace abuse difficult to escape without compromising degree progress. Many graduate assistants also report being overworked beyond their contract requirements, sometimes to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation. The University of Hawai‘i is not incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully, or guarantee workplace protections, on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes.

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 [SB394/HB874] to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

My name is Tatsuki Kohatsu. I am a Graduate Assistant/PhD student at the University of Hawai‘i and live in Mānoa. I **support** SB394/HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

As a PhD student and a worker, I am specializing in research on geopolitics and islands, which is a vital contribution to people’s security and everyday lives. Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor integral to UH’s continued existence, as well as the educational work of faculty, undergraduate students, and the broader globalizing society.

For many years, Graduate Assistants have been **denied the ability to exercise their right** to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union. Academic Labor United has found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual **salaries** of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000. Workers have barely any time to find additional employment to meet the Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year before taxes. Further, in 2021 the UH campus climate survey found that over the past 4 years, survey results have shown that offenders of sexually **harassed** female graduate students are twice as likely to be faculty or staff than offenders of female undergraduate students, consistently above 50% of these graduate students’ reports. Faculty advisors of graduate students and work supervisors of graduate assistants often overlap in specialized fields, making many positions of workplace abuse difficult to escape without compromising degree progress. Many graduate assistants also report being **overworked** beyond their contract requirements, sometimes to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation. The University of Hawai‘i is not incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully, or guarantee workplace protections, on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes.

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** [SB394/HB874] to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right. Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tasuki Kohatsu

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 1:32:17 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kim Coco Iwamoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am submitting testimony in Strong Support of HB874 HD1, which establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawai'i and community college system.

Graduate students are state employees, compensated for the services they provide to their employer group, University of Hawaii. As such, they should be permitted to collectively bargain for fair wages and working conditions like all other state workers. In fact, Article XIII, Section 2 of the Hawaii State Constitution, explicitly protects this right: "Persons in public employment shall have the right to organize for the purpose of collective bargaining as provided by law," The "provided by law" section should not be read to deny or block a subset of public employees from this protection; it only qualifies that the legislature has the right to make additional provisions.

Attorney General Anne E. Lopez's testimony on this bill to the Committee on Labor and Government Operations does not offer any legal arguments for denying this protection to graduate students as public employees - she only ask that there be clarification that this bill pertains to a "statewide concern."

The other executive branch directors oppose because of costs, but fair wages and working conditions always impact our budget. Under this reasoning, the legislature would deny all public employees the opportunity to collectively bargain.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 2:51:28 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Samuel Kei Takazawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Samuel Kei Takazawa, and I am a 4th year PhD student and graduate assistant at the University of Hawai‘i. I live in Mō‘ili‘ili and I support HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

Over half of the UH graduate assistants at UH make less than \$26,000. This fails to meet the required income to sponsor a spouse for a green card based on poverty guidelines set by the department of health and human services. Most graduate students are in their mid 20s to 30s, many who are married or engaged. Personally, as someone that was engaged to a Japanese person at the time of applying to graduate schools, I was in distress. I wasn’t sure if I would be able to sponsor my future spouse. Fortunately, my offered salary was just above the required minimum, and I am happily married and living with my spouse here in Hawai‘i. However, to think that for more than half of my peers that is not a possibility, this boils my blood. Being able to live with your loved one shouldn’t be up to a flip of a coin. The graduate assistants are extremely underpaid, and this is just one of the consequences. Living costs have been skyrocketing and rent is more than half of my pay. Things cannot stay the same, yet the University refuses to increase our wages in any meaningful ways. The graduate students need leverage to negotiate with the University to improve our working conditions and pay. We need a collective bargaining unit.

As a graduate assistant at UH, I urge you to pass HB874. I reiterate, the graduate assistants need and 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.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 4:20:24 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

My name is Sarah Popenhagen. I am a 3rd year PhD student and graduate assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and live in Mō‘ili‘ili. I support HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

For many years, Graduate Assistants have been denied the ability to exercise their right to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union. Academic Labor United has found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual salaries of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000. Coming up with money for basic needs like groceries and rent can become difficult under these conditions.

Personally, when I first moved to Hawai‘i in August of 2020, finding a place to live that I could afford was extremely difficult. I ended up renting a room in a shared house with a cockroach infestation, a landlord twice my age who sexually harassed me, and a roommate who made death threats during and after his stay there. The police had to be called multiple times and I felt extremely unsafe, but I couldn’t afford to move until three months later. Even then, it was only because I found another graduate student to share an appartement with, and my parents agreed to cosign on our lease for us, as we would have been rejected otherwise due to our income. As a first-generation student with multiple siblings, I try not to ask my parents for help with things like this, but I had no other way to get out of a dangerous living situation. Although I’ve been able to stay in a safe place since, rent in the area is going up and I might not be able to afford living here in the future as over half my income already goes towards rent alone. As my research often requires extra hours of work, I don’t have time to get another job for supplemental income, and since coming to UH more than two years ago, I have not received a raise, despite high inflation and rent increases in the area.

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 HB874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

My name is Lucas Ellison. I am a 3rd Year PhD student at the University of Hawai'i and live in Moiliili. I support HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

As a PhD student and a worker, I am specializing in research on climate science and the future of drought, which is a vital contribution to understanding the future of water resources in the United States. Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor integral to UH's continued existence, as well as the educational work of faculty, undergraduate students, and the broader globalizing society. For many years, Graduate Assistants have been denied the ability to exercise their right to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union. Academic Labor United has found that in Fall 2022, 1,079 of around 1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual salaries of \$24,912 or lower, with 502 of those paid annual salaries of \$21,288 or lower; all were below \$36,000. Workers have barely any time to find additional employment to meet the Honolulu County living wage for a single person, calculated by MIT, of \$47,195 per year before taxes. Further, in 2021 the UH campus climate survey found that over the past 4 years, survey results have shown that offenders of sexually harassed female graduate students are twice as likely to be faculty or staff than offenders of female undergraduate students, consistently above 50% of these graduate students' reports. Faculty advisors of graduate students and work supervisors of graduate assistants often overlap in specialized fields, making many positions of workplace abuse difficult to escape without compromising degree progress. Many graduate assistants also report being overworked beyond their contract requirements, sometimes to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation. The University of Hawai'i is not incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully, or guarantee workplace protections, on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes.

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 HB874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 4:59:31 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Josiah Murphy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Josiah Murphy. I am a PhD student and Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai'i. I live in the 96815 zip code, share an apartment with another graduate student, and use public transit to commute to campus. I **support** HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

As a doctoral student, my work for the university involves directing a public-facing program which matches graduate students with community members who speak endangered and under-documented languages; these partners then go through a semester-long training program to learn about and begin their own documentation projects. This program is solely run by a graduate assistant as director with graduate student volunteers; there is no faculty work involved. I direct, administer, plan the programming, find presenters for the trainings, recruit participants, search & apply for funding, manage finances, host every session, assess results, archive the data & projects, and coordinate with like-minded programs at other institutions. What's more, I did all of this during COVID by switching to an online model without precedent, then ran it for a semester on the hybrid model, and now I'm running it in person – three different models in three years. This program that I direct is one of the main reasons why people around the world know about my department, and a major draw for recruiting graduate students. It consistently receives excellent press, and is a direct component of our Quacquarelli Symonds university ranking of #12 in the US and #34 in the world. Despite the fact that my professional work as a Graduate Assistant is arguably an integral part of the success of my department, the university has chosen to classify me as just a student.

For many years, Graduate Assistants have been **denied the ability to exercise our right** to collectively bargain over the terms of our contracts as part of a union. We have a legal right and moral imperative to negotiate for a living wage, among other contractual points. Academic Labor United has found that in Fall 2022, 1,079/1,500 total Graduate Assistants were paid annual salaries of \$24,912 or lower. I myself make \$20,472 gross per year, but only have a take home pay of \$1,476 per month. **My housing cost alone is 79% of my income**, leaving me \$300 for other utilities, transportation, food, medical coverage, clothing, school supplies, and other necessities. Because I am a full-time student with a full class load as well as working for the department, and then conducting my own required research for the graduate program, I have no time at all for additional employment.

Further contractual issues also need to be negotiated. For example, in 2021 the UH campus climate survey found that female-presenting graduate students are twice as likely to be sexually

harassed than undergraduate students. There is also an uncomfortable power dynamic in that a graduate student's faculty advisor (determining whether the student may progress and/or graduate) also serves as their work supervisor (determining whether the student may be hired or fired); this faculty member effectively controls both the academic and economic entirety of a graduate assistant's life, thereby also controlling their personal life in relation to housing, health insurance, number of hours worked, and more. Any workplace abuse is difficult to escape without compromising degree progress or losing housing. Many graduate assistants also report being **overworked** beyond their contract requirements, sometimes up to 60 hours per week, with no system in place for overtime regulation or compensation. The University of Hawai'i is not incentivized to raise minimum salaries meaningfully or guarantee workplace protections, on any contracts that it unilaterally imposes.

As workers for a public employer, **all Graduate Assistants 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 Graduate Assistant workers like myself who are struggling with poverty wages, supervisor abuse, and other grievances. **Please vote to pass HB874** to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right!

HB-874-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2023 10:12:50 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/15/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB874. Please pass this bill.

Mike Golojuch, Sr.

Member, Labor Caucus, DPH