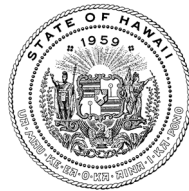


JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR



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 LABOR & GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS  
ON  
HOUSE BILL NO. 874

**February 7, 2023**  
**9:00 a.m.**  
**Room 309 and Videoconference**

RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

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

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

The long-term cost implications of allowing graduate student assistants to collectively bargain 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.

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



**BRENNA 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  
**BRENNA H. HASHIMOTO**  
Chief Negotiator, Office of Collective Bargaining

Before the  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS**  
Tuesday, February 7, 2023  
9:00AM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 309

In consideration of  
**HB 874, RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

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

The Office of Collective Bargaining (OCB) appreciates the intent of HB 874, 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**

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**ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**

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

**BEFORE THE:**

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

**DATE:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023                      **TIME:** 9:00 a.m.

**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 309

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

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Chair Matayoshi 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 Hawaii and community college system to collectively bargain.

Section 6 of article X 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: "[t]his section shall not limit the power of the legislature to enact laws of statewide concern. The legislature shall have the exclusive jurisdiction to identify laws of statewide concern." If the Committee decides to pass this bill, we recommend an amendment that adds a statement identifying this bill as a law of statewide concern.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/2/2023 6:44:34 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Sasha Kovacs	Academic Labor United	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Graduate students are employees because they are performing paid work. In addition they are highly skilled with a bachelors degree in their field, they should not be making less than half of what regular UH employees with bachelors degrees are making, Almost all graduate students are required to work greater than 20 hrs per week without any compensation for overtime. A graduate students job can be terminated without notice at any time and they will not be eligible for unemployment insurance, for graduate students with families this is especially precarious as the amount they make is already very low (\$22,000/year)with very little savings possible. This happened to three international PhD students at the College of Pharmacy at UHH in 2020. Many graduate assistants had to find and work other jobs throughout the pandemic as their positions were abruptly terminated and they were left without pay or eligibility for unemployment insurance. I personally had to go from being a TA at the College of Pharmacy to a student job, digging potato crops at the College of Agriculture for the two years of the pandemic, this hard manual labor made it very difficult to continue my doctoral studies but was the only job I could find during the pandemic while regular employees were isolating themselves safely in their homes.

In addition to graduate student, international postdoctoral scholars are highly skilled workers with doctoral degrees who are taken advantage of by the faculty at UHH. They are often made to work overtime, six to seven days a week and have no worker protections, or such as sick days or compensation for overtime. In my lab the postdoc from Thailand was made to work while she was sick with COVID. The entire lab also contracted COVID from this. She had no protection or representative of UHH to insure that she was not unfairly exploited by faculty.

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
LABOR & GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

RE: HB 874 - RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2023

JASON BRADSHAW, CHAIR  
DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII LABOR CAUCUS

Chair Matayoshi and Members of the Committee:

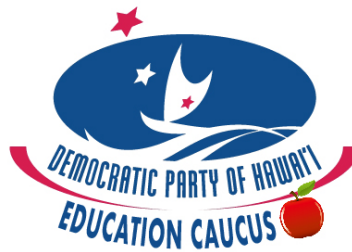
The Democratic Party of Hawaii Labor Caucus **supports HB 874**, relating to collective bargaining. This bill establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawaii and community college system.

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.



## HOUSE BILL 874, RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

FEBRUARY 7, 2023 · HOUSE LABOR AND  
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE · CHAIR  
REP. SCOT Z. MATAYOSHI

**POSITION:** Strong support.

**RATIONALE:** The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 874, 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](mailto:kriscoffield@gmail.com)**



# Academic Labor United

academiclaborunited.org

Testimony from Academic Labor United

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

**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





# Academic Labor United

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 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



# Academic Labor United

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. 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. Unionization would enable us to bargain for better working conditions, which would in turn make the university a more attractive positino for prospective workers and thereby increase the amount of filled positions and roles needed by the university.

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



# Academic Labor United

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.

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 Labor and Government Operations

Testimony by  
Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 7, 2023

H.B. 874 — RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

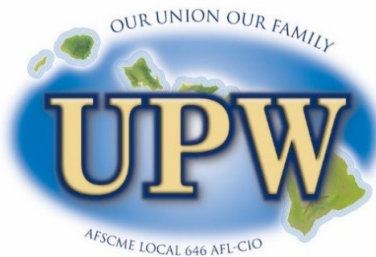
The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO supports the purpose and intent of H.B. 874 which allows graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawaii system the right to collectively bargain.

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.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira  
Executive Director



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

**Committee on Labor & Government Operations**

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

Tuesday, February 7, 2023, 9:00 AM  
Conference Room 309 and via Videoconference

**Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB874 – 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, 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,

Kalani Werner  
State Director



The House Committee on Labor & Government Operations  
February 7, 2023  
Room 309, Videoconference  
9:00 AM

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

Attention: Chair Scot Matayoshi, Vice Chair Andrew Garrett and members of the Committee

The University of Hawaii Professional Assembly (UHPA) supports the concept of allowing graduate student assistants to be included in an appropriate collective bargaining unit as outlined in HB 874.

While UHPA is unable to represent graduate assistants, UHPA supports the rights of graduate assistants to organize and collectively bargain. Such a right is consistent with the labor tradition in our state and is compatible with an academic environment whereby the majority of employees have access to representation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of HB 874.**

Respectfully submitted,

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

Christian L. Fern  
Executive Director  
University of Hawaii Professional Assembly

**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/2/2023 5:50:02 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jaehyung Kim	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Jaehyung Kim. I am a Graduate Assistant and PhD 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 PhD student and a worker, I am specializing in research on North Korea-China relations. 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**

Submitted on: 2/2/2023 6:20:04 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Daniela Escontrela	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Daniela Escontrela. I am a Graduate Assistant/PhD Student at the University of Hawai'i in the School of Life Sciences 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 Student and a worker, I am specializing in research on coral predators and coral reef conservation, which is a vital contribution to maintain the health of Hawaii's coral reef which greatly support the 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. 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



**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/2/2023 8:07:03 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
bruce watson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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**

Submitted on: 2/3/2023 3:48:20 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Bjarne Bartlett	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB874. I was a teaching assistant in the fall of 2021 and resigned 2 weeks into the semester for a different UH position with more flexible hours and higher pay after trying to discuss an appropriate deal with my supervisor to stay, however the faculty who hired me as a teaching assistant were unwilling to negotiate. They even reached out to my dissertation advisor in an attempt to compel me to stay on, making me feel like an indentured servant while making the decision to leave much less difficult. Because of how I was treated, it was best for me, my family, and my education to leave the students and department suddenly without a teaching assistant.

I believe that the resignations of future TAs at UH can be averted if the terms of our jobs are governed through a collective bargaining process. For UH to continue as an excellent school, graduate students must have the time and resources to make family, school, and research their sole focus. A collective bargaining agreement, in this way, could improve graduation rates and time to graduation for graduate students at UH. Graduate students require considerable resources to adequately train, including: faculty and staff hours, lab and office space, specialized equipment, research funds, travel funds, salaries, and benefits. A collective bargaining agreement could help ensure that graduate programs at UH do not admit more graduate students than they can adequately support, raising both the quality of the degree programs and work done.

I have now graduated, I enjoyed my time at UH, I received a great education. I also think I would have been better positioned to serve the university with a collective bargaining agreement.

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**

Submitted on: 2/3/2023 9:03:12 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Olivia Carter 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**

Submitted on: 2/3/2023 9:18:01 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Benjamin Strauss	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Benjamin Strauss. I am a PhD student and Graduate Assistant 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. I am also on food stamps/SNAP/EBT, and my rent alone takes up over 50% of my monthly paycheck.

As a PhD student and a worker, I am specializing in research on protein behavior, which is a vital contribution to drug development. 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.

My name is Leif Salvesson. 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**

Submitted on: 2/3/2023 10:51:13 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
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.



My name is Matt Miller. I am a graduate assistant and MS student 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.

As an MS student, I'm specializing in research on the impacts of climate change on Kona Lows. If you remember December of 2021, a little over a year ago, then you might recall the huge amounts of rain and subsequent flooding across all of the islands. Hanalei flooded, Kaupō flooded, Waikīkī and Pearl City flooded, and the storm caused millions of dollars in damages in total. Kona Lows are a very real severe weather threat for the islands, with the potential to cause huge amounts of damage and displace communities, and we still don't know if they will be stronger or happen more frequently in the future! Our research has the potential to save lives and millions of dollars.

I love my Kona Low research, and I love even more that my skills and my work are focused on helping my community. I love what I do, but I'm scared for my capacity to be able to continue. My fellow grad students, my coworkers and colleagues and friends, we all make **at least \$11,000 under** the Honolulu county livable wage with some of my friends making **\$25,000 under** the livable wage. It is scary and disheartening to know that one rent hike, one period of higher food costs, or one visit to the emergency room would be the end of my personal and scientific dreams. If we cannot support ourselves, all the work we do in severe weather, disaster management, and future climate prediction will disappear. I want to help prepare my community for the future, and I cannot do that if I cannot survive.

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. I need your help to pass HB874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right. We want to pursue our dreams and help our communities with dignity, and we need your support to make that happen. **Please pass HB874.** Thank you for your time.

My name is Tatsuki Kohatsu. I am a PhD student working as a Graduate Assistant 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,

Tatsuki Kohatsu

**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/3/2023 1:16:14 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nandita Sharma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a Professor in the Sociology Department at UH Manoa. I strongly support

SB394/HB874 which will secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

Graduate Assistants are students and they are workers. All workers should have the right to organize and collectively bargain the terms of their employment with their employer. Currently Graduate Assistants are denied this fundamental labor right. This results in their poverty-level wages as well as in unchecked abuse in their employment, including overwork, sexual harassment, and punitive actions against them by their direct supervisors.

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.

Sincerely,

Nandita Sharma

My name is Abigail Flom. I am a PhD 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.

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**

Submitted on: 2/3/2023 3:07:04 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Michaela Nuesser	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Michaela Nuesser and I am a PhD student and graduate assistant at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I live in Kaka'ako. I do research on language learning and my contribution is vital to my department's work. With that, I deserve the right to negotiate, collectively with all GAs, my working conditions and pay. My current salary of 19k is not livable in Kaka'ako or anywhere on the island. I support this bill to secure the right for all graduate assistants at UH to collectively bargain.

**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/3/2023 4:31:56 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Katy Hintzen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Katy Hintzen and I am faculty at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa and a resident of Nu‘uanu. I strongly support this bill and encourage you to allow Graduate Assistants the right to collectively bargain. Our current system which does not allow Graduate Assistants collective bargaining rights hurts students and the University of Hawai‘i system in many ways. I have seen first hand as faculty at UH that our Graduate Assistants do not have the ability to work collectively to advocate for safe and fair working conditions. For example in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic Graduate Assistants felt they had to come in person to teach even if they were sick or family members were sick because they had no established system of paid sick leave or collective ability to advocate for their safety. I have also seen Graduate Assistants afraid to bring complaints for sexual harrasment forward because they don‘t have enough job security and others afraid to excercise their first ammendment rights to criticize the University and it’s policies for fear of loosing their jobs. Lastly I have seen many prospective graduate students struggle with the decision to pursue an education at the University of Hawai‘i where the cost of living dramatically outpaces their pay. They cannot make a living wage here and it discourages local students and Native Hawaiian students from pursuing advanced degrees here at home close to their families and leaves graduate education at UH only accessible to those with the wealth and privledge to accept a below survival level wage.

Thank you for your time and attention.

**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/3/2023 5:43:39 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Clemens Mayer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha kākou,

My name is Clemens Mayer. I am a Graduate Assistant and PhD Student at the University of Hawai‘i and live in Kaimukī. 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 language documentation and revitalization, which is a vital contribution to underdocumented and underserved language communities. 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, or are legally not allowed to have, 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.

Mahalo nui loa,  
Clemens Mayer



**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/4/2023 8:12:34 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kerry Long	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Garrett and members of the House Labor and Government Operations Committee.

I am testifying in strong support of HB 874, which would recognize Graduate Assistants at the University of Hawai'i's right to collective bargaining and provide them a distinct bargaining unit.

I have held a number of GA'ships myself as a student at UH. I also worked full time as temporary faculty for six years at UH until 2021, when I changed careers to work full time as a professional union representative for a bargaining unit in the public sector.

First I'd like to attest that Graduate Assistants themselves are critical infrastructure to the University system and for our local undergraduate students. For example, the English department at Mānoa would have no one to teach the 30 sections of fundamentals of writing and composition (Eng 100), were it not for Graduate Assistance who teach, on their own, the bulk of those courses. This can be seen at the University across departments.

Gone are the days when a Graduate Assistant was simply an understudy of a professor. They are a critical workforce at the University who teach our local students fundamentals in their disciplines and who carry out important research for our communities. University operations would be in crisis without them. And they share the same struggles around compensation, working conditions, and worker protections as all other working people in Hawai'i.

I support a unique bargaining unit for GAs as their duties, their working conditions, their relationship as workers to their graduate education, and their relationship to their supervisors is unique. It would be inappropriate to share a contract with the other bargaining units at the University and unfair to those bargaining as well.

Lastly, as a professional in the field, and as someone who has either been a member of, worked with, or worked for 3 different public sector BUs, I'd like to share my observation that while Hawai'i has a high union density as compared to states in the US, too many of our public sector workers are disengaged and uneducated about their union, their contract, and their rights. Even I was when I was a member of BU07. This is very bad for workers and contributes to the low morale and workforce shortages that Hawai'i is struggling with. It's wonderful to see a workforce hungry to take their rights to bargaining seriously and as these Graduate Assistants move to a

post-graduation workforce, they will be literate and practiced in the exercise of such. This is good for Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your consideration,

'Ilima Long

Mō'ili'ili

**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/4/2023 8:34:15 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nicholas Chagnon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Nicholas J Chagnon. I am a senior lecturer at the University of Hawai‘i and live in Kuliouou. I support HB 874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain. As a former PhD student and student worker, I specialized in research on police misconduct, which is a vital contribution to our community. 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 HB 874 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

**Chair Scot Matayoshi**  
**Vice Chair Andrew Garrett**

**House Committee on Labor & Government Operations**

**Tuesday, February 7, 2023**  
**9:00AM**

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

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

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**, 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. 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** 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](mailto:junshinbusiness729@gmail.com).

**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/5/2023 5:08:31 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alexa St Martin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Graduate assistants are public employees. We are paid salaries, receive benefits such as healthcare, and conduct meaningful work that significantly benefits the university. We are employees.

**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/5/2023 10:39:05 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Josephine Dianne Deauna	Individual	Support	In Person

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**

Submitted on: 2/5/2023 10:53:24 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
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. When you and your coworkers have legitimate concerns or improvements you want done, without a union, it's just you begging for promises from the managers that may or may not happen. 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 your concerns and they are legitimate, workers don't have any other recourse. And this concern is not just on an individual basis because it has come to a collective recognition question, and that is why the Graduate Assistans should be able to be recognized under a collective agreement. The Graduate Assistants are working collectively to solve a collective problem.



**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/5/2023 1:41:32 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Gabrielle Stedman	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

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. And quite frankly, 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. Graduate workers at UH, perform fundamental services to this state university including: executing administrative tasks, teaching, mentoring, contributing intellectual property, and publishing research. In return, we are exceptionally poorly compensated, and lack protections from abuse.

UH has some of the lowest-paid graduate assistantships relative to cost of living across the nation, with some departments, until recently, offering salaries below the poverty line. Too many of us can tell you a story directly affecting us or our colleagues regarding harassment, workplace violence, and unsafe or hazardous working conditions. To complicate this further, there is a power structure affecting graduate workers and retaliation is common in these abusive situations. We are dependent on our bosses 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. 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.

**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/5/2023 4:30:17 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

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**

Submitted on: 2/5/2023 4:37:25 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
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**

Submitted on: 2/5/2023 4:48:40 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

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

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**

Submitted on: 2/5/2023 5:31:06 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Shirley Gabber	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. 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 a member of Academic Labor United. 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.

My name is Lucas Ellison. I am a 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.



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. Graduate students employed as teaching assistants, like myself, are in fact solely responsible for instructing undergraduate laboratories. In this capacity we are charged with teaching applied scientific concepts and hands-on skills to undergraduate students, laying 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.

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.

<b>Type of Position:</b> 9 month	<b>Rank-Step:</b> TA Step 10	<b>FTE:</b> .50
<b>Monthly Stipend:</b> \$1,706	<b>Annual Compensation:</b> \$20,472 Actual compensation to be adjusted if less than full year appointment.	
<b>Appointment Period:</b> 08/01/2021–07/31/2022	<b>Faculty Supervisor:</b> TBD	
<b>Job Duties:</b> 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		
<b>Additional information for Teaching Assistant Positions:</b> All TAs serve under the direction and supervision of a regularly appointed member of the faculty.		
<b>Work Environment:</b> 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.		
<b>Actual Duty Period:</b> 08/16/2021–05/16/2022	<b>Course Assignment (for TA positions):</b> 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.

**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/5/2023 7:40:41 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Raymond Catania	Hawaii Workers Center volunteer Kauai rep	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee Chair and members,

I fully support grad assistants in the University of Hawaii system and the community colleges to organize a union for collective bargaining. It is their right and the State of Hawaii government and Legislature must finally recognize them. Grad Assistants across America are successfully organizing around this issue. The State of Hawaii is one of the most unionized states in the U.S. but has not yet fully appreciated the important intellectual labor of our grad assistants. Please support them.

Ray Catania Hawaii Workers Center volunteer rep Kauai

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**

Submitted on: 2/5/2023 8:50:40 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alejandra Rivas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Alejandra Rivas. I am an undergrad at the University of Hawai‘i and I live in Mānoa. I support HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

Graduate Assistants do the work necessary for UH as a university to operate. Without Graduate Assistants, I would not be able to get an education. Graduate Assistants do the reaserch that go into my classes. Graduate Assistants grade my work. Graduate Assistants are there for me when I need help with my work, when I need resources, when I need advice, and when I need to rant about my classes. The acedemic labor and the emotional labor that they do is so crucial to my education and my experience as a student. At least half of the classes I've taken in my one and a half years at UH Mānoa have been taught by Graduate Assistants. Because Graduate Assistants are also students as well as workers, educators, mentors, and researchers, they understand how mentally taxing being a student and working is. They connect with us Undergrads on a deeper, more personal level. One of my teachers, who is a Graduate Assistant, consistantly held space for us at the start of class to talk about how we were feeling and take time to breathe. These moments were really important for the whole class and the Graduate Assistant too, who had to come into work sick on multiple occasions because she would not be paid for taking the time she needed to recover. It is important to me that we get a quality education, and when my teachers who are Graduate Assistants don't get paid enough to afford rent, are living off food stamps, can't miss work even when they're sick, and don't get protection from sexual harrasment, the University of Hawai‘i is not providing a quality education. It also makes it hard for me as a student who wants to learn in a healthy and safe environment. A university that does not take care of their Graduate Assistants, pay them enough to thrive, or allow them to be able to collectively bargain, is not a healthy and safe environment. As an undergrad who plans to go to grad school and likely become a Graduate Assistant, I am deeply disturbed by the treatment of my seniors.

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 fundamental right.



**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/5/2023 9:31:40 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alexia Thrash	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill to allow UH grad students to unionize. Unions are so vital for working people to obtain and maintain proper compensation for their work. Grad students are working hard as part of their jobs, still learning & increasing their knowledge to better society as students, and trying to survive in this economy and other personal adversities.

If a reason is required other than simply because they are humans who are entitled to livable wages & conditions, being able to unionize would allow grad students to feel secure to work & learn to essentially better all the programs at UH.

**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/5/2023 10:07:21 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaiqing Su	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

**My name is Kaiqing Su. I am from Guangzhou, China, and I am a Graduate Assistant and MA student at the University of Hawai‘i. I am here to support SB394/HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.**

**I am currently pursuing an MA degree in the department of Political Science. Meanwhile, I am a worker in a different department. My job is vital for obtaining research funding and grants, classroom operation, and the institution’s relationships with the local community. I was hired as a graduate administrative assistant under a faculty to help facilitate grant writing, research projects, and class organization. I also help with classes and outreach to local community groups. However, sometimes I am expected to step in to plan and lead classes, in a discipline that is different from my own academic specialization. I am also expected to be flexible in answering my supervisor’s calls and emails since they sometimes miss the regular meeting, yet their instructions are necessary for me to complete my tasks on time. These are the things that I am capable of doing as a person, or as a student, but at times beyond what was expected from me as a worker. Though my estimated workload is 20 hours per week, I have to spend extra time and extra emotional effort to go through every week. Sometimes it’s so overwhelming that I forgot I am also a student, and I need time to write and think and produce work that is significant to me.**

**I am also speaking here as an international student. I have been studying in the U.S. for more than 5 years, it has been a privilege to pursue a degree and my academic passion. I cherish and worked hard for this opportunity. It was economically challenging enough just to arrive in the U.S. I know some international graduate assistants had to sell their houses and borrowed from families in order to get here. Meanwhile, as a J-1 status student, I am prohibited from working and earning an income outside of the university, and/or the position is unrelated to my intended program. This means that internationals don’t get to legally have other forms of employment, so our graduate assistantship at UH is our only source of income to get by in Honolulu. This makes our situations especially precarious and the ability to negotiate and navigate the conditions, expectations, and pay of our job is extremely important.**

**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**

Submitted on: 2/5/2023 10:12:21 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Noel Shaw	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Collective bargaining for grad students now!!! They provide essential support to faculty and staff and deserve to negotiate for the resources they need, not only to survive but to thrive.

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.

**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/5/2023 11:08:53 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

**My name is Hannah and I am a PhD student at the University of Hawai‘i. 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 graduate instructor, I am specializing in research on political theory, which is vital to understanding ideas of justice, rights, and the core of the political system- all things students must understand in order to be politically informed and engaged. My fellow Graduate Assistants and I 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 of us were below \$36,000. Barely anyone that I know has time to find more work to provide for themselves, leaving us all well below the cost of living calculated by MIT of \$47,195 per year before taxes. This becomes even harder to deal with when dealing with medical expenses- even with insurance, they can be prohibitively expensive. I know several GAs who have forgone medical care simply because they cannot afford it. I couldn’t put off needed care this past year, and in order to pay for it, I had to make the extremely difficult decision to take out a personal loan. This is on top of my pre-existing student loans. Graduate assistants barely scrape by as it is- we should not be forced into even more severe economic precarity in order to take care of our health.**

**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.**

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

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Chair Matayoshi and the Committee on Labor and Government Operations,

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.

As a founding member of Academic Labor United, I have heard of countless examples of abuse, stolen intellectual property, harassment, and unsafe work conditions from colleagues over the years. At every step, the university administration has demonstrated that they are unwilling to address these issues meaningfully. I have many brilliant, hardworking colleagues holding second, sometimes third jobs just to get by. Most are many thousands of dollars in debt while providing vital teaching and administrative work that keeps the university running. In spite of this, they continue to publish their amazing work, engage the community through outreach, and take care of their families. Furthermore, international GAs are in a precarious position as they do not have the luxury of securing off-campus employment.

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**

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 2:23:30 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johanna Stone	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Johanna K Stone. I am a Phd Student and an instructor at the University of Hawai‘i and live in Kailua, Koolauapoko. I support HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain. It is appalling that while I have the right acknowledge in unionize with UHPA as an instructor, my colleagues who are graduate assistants are denied this fundamental right. UNACCEPTABLE!

As a PhD student and an instructor, I am specializing in research on KAPU and KĀNĀWAI, which is a vital contribution to LIFE ON EARTH. 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**

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 6:14:56 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Noenoe Silva	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

February 5, 2023

**STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF HB874**

My name is Noenoe Silva and I am a faculty member of the Department of Political Science at UH Mānoa. I am testifying on my own behalf and not on behalf of the University. Along with the majority of my department, 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 and more, I fully support ALU in their movement for collective bargaining.

**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 7:24:54 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Colleen Rost-Banik	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Colleen Rost-Banik and I am an instructor at the University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa. I urge you to support the effort of graduate assistants to form a union for collective bargaining rights. Without graduate assistants, UH, Mānoa simply could not run. Their intellect, their labor, and their creativity is needed to help teach the next generation. Due to decreased public funding and nation-wide drops in college enrollment, UH departments have experienced smaller budgets. This has resulted in the need and expectation for graduate assistants to work well over the hours deemed by their contracts. Because they do not have the collective support of a union, they have little power to do anything to change these conditions. On top of being over-worked, they earn way less than the living wage required to meet basic needs in Honolulu. Graduate assistants need the collective bargaining rights that other employees of public institutions are granted.

I urge you to please pass HB 874.

Respectfully,  
Colleen Rost-Banik, PhD  
University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa  
Department of Sociology

**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 8:13:29 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
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. 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.

**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 8:13:46 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
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**

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 8:29:17 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Keoni DeFranco	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Keoni DeFranco, I reside in Waimānalo and I am writing in favor of HB 874. Graduate workers deserve the opportunity to unionize and collectively negotiate their contracted working conditions to determine the quality of their lives, health and well-being.

**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 8:32:19 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

**I am a PhD candidate at the University of Hawai‘i and live in Mo‘ili‘ili. I strongly support HB874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain. As a graduate student and a worker, I am specializing in research on invasive grasses, which is a vital contribution to conservation of Hawaiian ecosystems. Graduate Assistants [GAs] 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.**

**It is unconstitutional and unethical that GAs have been denied our rights to collective bargaining for this long and it is essential that this legislation be passed to place us on our own bargaining unit so that we can negotiate with the university to improve our working conditions. Without a union to support GAs (due to the lack of collective bargaining rights that allow a union to function), the university has no incentive to improve our working conditions or our salaries, which are the lowest GA salaries across the entire country when adjusted for cost of living.**

**I personally have struggled to find housing which I can afford while working full time at UH on both research and teaching over the 2.5 years I have attended the university. There are also chronic problems at UH caused by lack of graduate students to fill certain roles as candidates choose other schools which have better working conditions and salaries. I strongly encourage you to support this bill which will help fix these systemic problems at UH.**



**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 8:53:43 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Leimaile Barrett	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Leimaile Barrett. I am a graduate of the University of Hawai‘i and 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 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 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**

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 8:54:33 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alexa Deike	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair and Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Alexa Deike and I am writing in **support of HB874**. As a recent graduate of the William S. Richardson School of Law at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, I have been following the graduate assistance's plight to collectively bargain for several years now.

On January 19, 2023, the Hawai‘i Supreme Court heard oral arguments in case dealing with the graduate assistance's right to collectively bargain. Now, the legislature has the opportunity to step in and clarify this right of the graduate assistants by amending Hawai‘i Revised Statutes section 89-6 to expressly include graduate assistants.

Please support HB874.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,

Alexa Deike

REPRESENTATIVE SCOT MATAYOSHI  
CHAIR OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND GOVERNMENT

HB 874

February 7, 2023  
9:00am

**IN SUPPORT**

My name is Dean Itsuji Saranillio and I live in Mānoa, O'ahu. I am faculty in the Department of Political Science at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Previous to teaching here, I was tenured faculty at New York University where I worked for a decade. And previously worked at the University of California, Riverside; University of Michigan; and the University of California, Los Angeles. I have worked as and with graduate students for more than 25 years. I was born and raised on the island of Maui.

*I am testifying in favor of graduate students at the University of Hawai'i, 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 and 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. Academic Labor United (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 are full of potential, courageous and brilliant, and are facing financial constraints that will have long-term consequences. Graduate workers need to have the capacity to speak these truths and collectively bargain as a means to shape the material implications for their futures. For these reasons and more, I fully support the collective bargaining of Graduate Assistants for wages, benefits, and workplace conditions.

Thank you, Representative Scot Matayoshi and the other members of the House Committee on Labor and Government for reading my testimony.

Dean Itsuji Saranillio  
[dean.saranillio@gmail.com](mailto:dean.saranillio@gmail.com)

**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 9:53:39 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Luis Dasilveira	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

My name is Luis Dasilveira, and I am a 3 rd year PhD student and graduate assistant at the University of Hawai‘i. I live in Haleiwa 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**

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 9:56:56 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Leslie Lopez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I write in strong support of HB 874 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain. As public workers, they are entitled to their own bargaining unit. Graduate Assistants in multiple other universities and states have recently won the right to collective bargaining which has resulted in a structured grievance processes, participation in institutional decision-making, and sick leave. Graduate assistants are especially vulnerable to the high cost of living in Hawaii, and provide critical services and stability, and require the same protections and benefits as any other public employee.

Leslie Lopez

**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 11:39:24 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Paolo Marra-Biggs	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Paolo Marra-Biggs . I am a Graduate Assistant + MA student/PhD student at the University of Hawai‘i and live in Kaneohe. 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 endangered marine species, which is a vital contribution to the global coral reef ecosystem. 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**

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 12:02:40 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Meagan Harden	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

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 “student help” 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 (virtually, I should add, via FaceTime through my younger brother’s shirt pocket); if my supervisor had been a less compassionate person, or if she’d woken up in a bad mood and asked me to deliver a lecture that day, I would have missed my only opportunity to say goodbye to my grandma alongside my family. I was lucky to have a kind supervisor, but not everybody does; 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 aged out of my family’s health insurance last year, it took three months –*three months!*—for my employee health insurance paperwork to be properly processed. Perhaps this was simply a bureaucratic shortcoming, or perhaps the person in charge of processing my paperwork was overwhelmed, or perhaps I goofed and checked the wrong box somewhere along the way. But the point is that 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. No matter how many emails I sent, or how many phone calls I made to figure out why I didn’t have health insurance, I couldn’t get a clear answer and I didn’t know who to turn to; again, a collective bargaining unit will help ensure that employees have support in situations like these, and that we can feel valued by the institution that employs us.
- I now work as a lecturer, which means that I have a TA assigned to me for support in my World Regional Geography class. So I’m on the other side of things now. And there have



been many days where *I* have woken up cranky, or have been overwhelmed by my various responsibilities as a student, instructor, and so on. And it falls entirely on me to make sure that my own personal baggage does not result in an unsafe, unsupportive, or hostile work environment for my TA. This shouldn't be the case; my TA should have someone who is not her supervisor looking out for her wellbeing on the job; she should have a formal avenue to address her concerns, and that avenue should be permitted and supported by the state that employs her.

I think it should be overwhelmingly obvious by now to everyone here that GAs and TAs are grossly undervalued for the labor that we provide. There are 700 students out there right now whose lectures I have delivered, whose essays I have graded, and who have already or will soon be moving into the global work force. The state of Hawai'i needs to support TAs, so that we can continue to support our students. Thank you.



# 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

(508) 967-5377  
hawaiiworkerscenter@gmail.com  
hawaiiworkerscenter.org

February 6, 2023

Hawaii State House of Representatives  
Committee on Labor and Government Operations  
Rep. Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair  
Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice Chair

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Directors

Tony Doroño

Sergio Alcubilla III,  
Esq.

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

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

Without the Legislature's help, graduate assistants are at the mercy of the University of Hawaii system as it 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.

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. 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

**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 6:17:55 PM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
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.

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.

## **2023 Legislative session testimony template - Academic Labor United**

### **Instructions**

*Fill in the blanks with your specific details! The details in the first and last paragraph are very important; otherwise feel free to add, delete, and modify with your own specific story and experiences. You can use the same text for each hearing, so save into your own document before pasting into the Capitol website's form for online testimony 24hrs before the hearing.*

<https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/account/>

*Registration only requires your name and email! Write "Individual" in the "Organization" field unless you are submitting on behalf of an entire organization.*

*For Zoom and in-person testimony, [more conditions apply](#).*

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

As a MA student [MA student/PhD student/PhD candidate/etc.] and a worker, I am specializing in research on Quantum Information Science, which is a vital contribution to Machine Learning for Earth and Ocean Sciences. 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.

# How to give online testimony

- Create an account at [www.capitol.hawaii.gov](http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov)
- Log in and click 'submit testimony' under 'participate'
- Put in the bill or measure number
- Check that you support the bill
- Check if you are giving testimony in person, over Zoom, or only written testimony.
- Fill out the text box and submit!

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- Attachments will NOT be saved and must be attached at time of submission

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Enter Bill or Measure and click Continue

Examples: HB100 or SBI23 (not case sensitive)

Your position on SB2857 SD2 HD1 CDI

Support


Oppose

Comments Only

Testifying:

As an individual citizen

On behalf of an organization (name of government agency, organization, or business you are representing)



**HB-874**

Submitted on: 2/7/2023 3:33:46 AM

Testimony for LGO on 2/7/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello,

My name is Nanea Lo. I'm born and raised in the Hawaiian Kingdom a Kanaka Maoli.

I'm writing in SUPPORT of HB874.

me ke aloha 'āina,

Nanea Lo, Mō'ili'ili