



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

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

Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Higher Education  
Thursday, February 6, 2025 at 3:05 p.m.

By

T. Samuel Shomaker, MD, Dean,  
Lee Buenconsejo-Lum, MD, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs  
John A. Burns School of Medicine

And

Michael Bruno, Provost  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

### SB 1217 – RELATING TO POSITIONS AT THE JOHN A. BURNS SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

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

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today. The John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) **strongly supports SB 1217** which seeks funding for three (3) faculty positions in cardiovascular biology, tropical medicine and quantitative health biostatistics and one (1) environmental health and safety officer staff position. The amount requested is \$763,000 for each of fiscal years 2025-2026 and 2026-2027.

#### 1. Faculty Positions

Advancement of JABSOM's research mission enables the healthcare community to better understand potential health disparities across a wide spectrum of conditions and diseases commonly experienced by many in Hawai'i who are already at higher risk for disease or who suffer disproportionately. The basic science position in cardiovascular biology will help further the foundational knowledge that can then be used by our clinicians, researchers in our Department of Native Hawaiian Health, and community partners to develop better risk reduction strategies or new interventions that could reduce cardiovascular diseases. A senior faculty member in JABSOM's Tropical Medicine program will advance the department's education and research of globally significant infectious diseases of vital interest to Hawai'i and the Asia-Pacific region. The department's importance in addressing diseases of far-reaching consequences became known during the COVID-19 Pandemic when it was vital to develop diagnostics and vaccines to preserve the health of Hawai'i's residents efficiently and effectively, given our remote location and isolated communities. Biostatisticians play a pivotal role in providing required education to medical students, residents, and other trainees, enriching the academic environment and facilitating student success. They are also critical members of research teams, especially in this era of big data sets and utilizing artificial intelligence tools to perform analyses more quickly, which means that the data

can be used to drive policy, program, or new strategies more quickly. Together, all three faculty positions enable JABSOM to further innovate and fulfill long-term goals to improve health in Hawai'i and the Asia-Pacific region.

## 2. Staff Position

Since the Kaka'ako health and wellness medical school buildings opened in 2005, the City and County of Honolulu Board of Water Supply (BWS) provided JABSOM's chilled water service operations, equipment maintenance and injection well testing, and fulfilled reporting requirements. The BWS 20-year contract will expire in September 2025, and the BWS has elected not to renew the contract. JABSOM must therefore contract a chiller plant-cooling system servicer to maintain uninterrupted operations and emergency services twenty-four hours, seven days per week. An environmental safety officer is needed to perform all the required daily, quarterly, semi-annual and annual testing of the injection wells and reporting duties. The environmental safety officer is crucial to the continuous operation of JABSOM's chiller plant-cooling system which supports all of its buildings.

We support SB 1217, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.



The Committee on Higher Education  
February 6, 2025  
Room 229  
3:05 PM

RE: **SB 1217, Relating to Positions at the John A. Burns School of Medicine**

Attention: Chair Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Michelle Kidani and Members of the Committee

The University of Hawaii Professional Assembly (UHPA) **supports SB 1217**, relating to positions at the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM).

SB 1217 establishes three full-time positions in cardiovascular biology, tropical medicine, and quantitative health biostatistics. To ensure the recruitment and retention of the positions, it is essential for the FTE appropriation to have a recurring, general funded designation.

UHPA respectfully requests the Committee to **support passage of SB 1217**.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Christian L. Fern  
Executive Director  
University of Hawaii Professional Assembly