



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 Ways and Means
Wednesday, February 26, 2025 at 10:03 a.m.

By

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Vice President for Research and Innovation
University of Hawai'i System

SB 1622 SD1 – RELATING TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i (UH) strongly supports SB 1622 SD1 which appropriates funds to establish an artificial intelligence (AI) institute within UH. As AI is rapidly transforming almost every aspect of daily life worldwide by enabling computers to simulate human learning, comprehension, problem solving, decision making, creativity, and autonomy, it is important for the state to stay ahead of this unprecedented evolution in technology.

The intent of this measure is to formalize and integrate the efforts, expertise, activities and approaches across UH's ten-campus system to serve as a resource for UH and the broader community to encourage economic development that is aligned with the state's needs. The AI institute will take a unified approach for AI insertion within activities involving UH, the state, and the greater community to address guidelines and policy, workforce development and training, and research and development in services, industries and clusters. These areas, where both UH and the state have capacity and have made investments, include: clean/renewable energy, climate resilience, space sciences and engineering, health, sustainable agriculture, additive manufacturing, creative media, and cultural preservation.

The University of Hawai'i intends to invest in the AI institute from revenue generated by its research activities and is asking the state to make an investment as a partner in this important initiative for the benefit of Hawai'i.

The University of Hawai'i supports SB 1622 SD1 provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in UH's BOR Approved Budget.

Thank you.



The Committee on Ways and Means

February 26, 2025

Room 211

10:03 AM

RE: **SB 1622, SD 1, Relating to Artificial Intelligence**

Attention: Chair Donovan Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee

The University of Hawaii Professional Assembly (UHPA), the exclusive bargaining representative for all University of Hawai'i faculty members across Hawai'i's statewide 10-campus system, **supports SB 1622, SD 1**, Relating to Artificial Intelligence.

SB 1622, SD 1 establishes and appropriates funds to establish the aloha intelligence institute within the University of Hawaii, thereby enabling the State to stay ahead of the ongoing evolution of technology. Included in SB 1622, D 1 is the establishment and funding of faculty positions to develop, support, and advance artificial intelligence initiatives statewide.

To ensure the recruitment and retention of the positions, it is essential for the FTE appropriation to have a recurring, general funded designation.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. L. Fern", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Christian L. Fern

Executive Director

University of Hawaii Professional Assembly

University of Hawaii
Professional Assembly

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**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair**

**Wednesday, February 26, 2025, at 10:03AM
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference**

RE: SB1622 SD1 Relating to Artificial Intelligence

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports Senate Bill 1622 Senate Draft 1 (SB1622 SD1), which establishes and appropriates funds to establish the Aloha Intelligence Institute within the University of Hawai'i to develop, support, and advance artificial intelligence initiatives statewide. Requires reports to the Legislature.

SB1622 SD1 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Business Services. This bill promotes policies that drive economic growth, enhance workforce opportunities, and improve the quality of life for Hawaii's residents.

Artificial intelligence is transforming industries, creating opportunities for innovation, workforce development, and economic growth. This bill establishes the Aloha Intelligence Institute at the University of Hawaii to advance AI research, education, and ethical development tailored to the state's needs. The institute will focus on climate resilience, sustainable agriculture, healthcare, renewable energy, advanced manufacturing, creative media, and cultural preservation. By fostering interdisciplinary research and partnerships with government, businesses, and nonprofits, it aims to position Hawaii as a leader in AI-driven innovation while ensuring ethical and community-centered applications.

The institute will also support workforce development through AI-related degree programs, faculty training, community outreach, and career pathways in partnership with the Department of Education. Led by a director and an advisory board from academia, industry, and cultural sectors, it will seek funding through legislative appropriations, federal grants, and private partnerships. The bill provides funding for faculty and administrative positions and AI initiatives statewide. The Chamber supports this bill as it drives technological innovation, strengthens the workforce, and boosts economic growth by ensuring AI advancements benefit local businesses and communities.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.

We respectfully ask to pass Senate Bill 1622 Senate Draft 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

SB-1622-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 8:33:56 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacob Wiencek	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

I am glad to see this bill work through the legislative process. Artificial intelligence has rapidly emerged as a critical technology that we MUST get right. This bill helps us advance to getting artificial intelligence right.

I strongly urge the Committee to SUPPORT this bill!