



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
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By

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HB 2384 HD2 – RELATING TO STUDENT-ATHLETE COMPENSATION

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Athletics at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM Athletics) supports HB 2384 HD2. Since July 1, 2025, collegiate institutions have been permitted to use funding to provide additional scholarships and share revenue with student-athletes under a new national Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) framework. NIL opportunities are important to college sports because they recognize the real economic value that student-athletes create while preserving their ability to benefit from their own work and identity.

UHM Athletics currently provides NIL opportunities in accordance with its primary objectives to create an outstanding student-athlete experience, recruit and retain elite student-athletes, and achieve competitive success at the top of the Mountain West and Big West conferences. For this reason, UHM Athletics has requested \$5 million for NIL and \$10 million for operations in the 2026-2027 budget. UHM Athletics is currently relying on private fundraising to meet the current NIL obligations to student-athletes. Additional funding would create a certain revenue source that will allow the department to fully pursue its goals.

As UHM Athletics manages this new phase of college athletics, HB 2384 HD2 provides appropriate structure around NIL programming in the state. The department supports the establishment of student-athlete rights, reasonable education and reporting requirements, protections for student-athletes, and a thoughtful framework to move forward in a transparent manner.

UHM Athletics supports HB 2384 HD2 and encourages the committee to pass the bill.

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2384
FROM UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MANOA
COACHES AND STUDENT-ATHLETES**

COACH TESTOMINY

WAHINE BASKETBALL HEAD COACH LAURA BEEMAN

I was not born in Hawaii, but I call it home. I have spent 14 amazing years as the head coach of the Rainbow Wahine Basketball program. I must say it is one of the greatest honors of my life.

That feeling is not due to the success we have seen over the past 14 years on the court. It is because of the impact the community has had on me and me on the community. The aloha spirit is a living breathing emotion. You want to be a part of it and share it with others. You want to share this aloha by representing the community, the university and the state with pride. You feel a sense of responsibility to give back. You want to see the university, the student-athletes served, and the keiki that aspire to wear the H across their chest, have amazing success. We are the pro sports program for the entire state. The pride the community feels when they watch our teams play is indescribable. When we win the emotion and humility knowing our impact is beyond words.

Our programs make people happy. The stories of the student athletes make people happy. I truly believe we give people hope. We give people something to believe in.

Sports in general changes people's lives. Whether it is providing an opportunity for an education, or merely creating happiness by being a fan, nothing unites people like sports. As we venture into a different era of collegiate athletics remaining transformative in nature does not need to change. At the University of Hawaii our athletics department will hold fast to the core values that shaping our student-athletes lives is and will always be the number one goal. Hawaii has always been different. It is time for the university to lead in the area where college sports can remain a positive and impactful influence on our student athletes and our community. Let people see and feel what aloha is and why Hawaii is a place to call home. I support HB2384.

MEN'S VOLLEYBALL HEAD COACH CHARLIE WADE

As the head coach of the University of Hawai'i Men's Volleyball program, I have witnessed our team become a point of immense pride for this state, built on a foundation of embracing Hawaiian culture and striving to be our best in everything in our control. However, following the House v. NCAA settlement, the landscape of college athletics has fundamentally shifted toward a professionalized revenue-sharing model.

As you know, in this new era, schools are permitted to provide up to \$20.5 million annually in direct payments to student-athletes. For a program like ours—which annually leads the nation in attendance, proudly represents Hawaii on the global stage, while consistently competing for NCAA championships, institutional NIL support is no longer a luxury; it is a baseline requirement for survival. Without state-backed NIL funding, we risk our most talented players being lured away by programs with deeper

pockets, effectively turning our championship-caliber program into a "feeder system" for mainland universities.

Our recruitment and retention efforts are now dictated by the financial reality of the market, where agents and the transfer portal have changed the terms of engagement. The request by the UH Manoa athletic department to establish a sustainable institutional NIL fund ensures that we can provide competitive opportunities for our student-athletes. This funding is crucial for men's volleyball, an "equivalency sport" where scholarships are limited and NIL resources are the only way to help our players manage the high cost of living in our state. By investing in this fund, you are not just supporting a sports team; you are protecting a vital source of pride and enjoyment to our state and ensuring that Hawaii remains the premier destination for the world's best volleyball talent. I support HB 2384.

BASEBALL HEAD COACH RICH HILL

The world looks at winners differently than losers. EVERYTHING that goes into winning, the PROCESS of what it takes to win is the focus! Effort, enthusiasm, grit, preparedness, self-discipline, and working together to achieve the common goal are a few of the traits we are hammering at UH Baseball.

This is the pro team here in Hawaii. A program that has a storied past and means so much to so many people. Giving our guys the resources to compete for championships and play in the NCAA tournament are life changing experiences.

Let's teach our young people to climb the mountain. In the words of Queen Kapiolani - *"Strive to reach the summit!"*

FOOTBALL HEAD COACH TIMMY CHANG

As the Head Football Coach at the University of Hawai'i, I have the privilege of working with student-athletes who represent our university and our state with pride. UH athletics is uniquely tied to Hawai'i's sense of family and community, and our program serves as a point of connection between families, alumni, and fans across all eight islands and beyond.

Many of our student-athletes choose the University of Hawai'i because it allows them to pursue a high-level athletic and academic experience while remaining connected to their culture, their families, and the communities that support them. Hawai'i is unique in its own way, and that attracts people to want to be a part of what we have here.

When student athletes make the decision to come be a part of the University of Hawai'i, they make the decision to represent something bigger than themselves. In today's collegiate landscape, NIL directly impacts the current and future success of our programs. Support for the University of Hawai'i and NIL is essential to retaining and recruiting our top student athletes who make the decision to come represent the State of Hawai'i. I appreciate the opportunity to share this perspective as the Legislature continues its discussion on NIL and its impact on higher education and college athletics in Hawai'i. I support HB 2384.

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL HEAD COACH ROBYN AH MOW

My name is Robyn Ah Mow, and I am the Head Coach of the University of Hawai'i Women's Volleyball Team. I was born and raised on O'ahu, surrounded by volleyball. I began playing in the gym with adults at age seven, and by age ten, after joining a kids' club, I fell in love with the game.

Volleyball taught me far more than how to compete. Under my coach, Mr. "O" Okamoto, I learned humility, discipline, and a never-quit mindset. My family wasn't wealthy, and college wasn't financially realistic for us, but volleyball opened doors for me to attend college after graduating from McKinley High School. Without the opportunity to excel in volleyball, my life would have gone in a very different direction.

I had chances to attend colleges on the mainland, but having Hawai'i was never truly an option. I grew up watching Wahine Volleyball, and choosing to attend the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa meant representing my home, my culture, and my community. Being part of a program bigger than myself taught me leadership, accountability, and the responsibility to give back.

That foundation led me to compete as an Olympian in three Olympic Games (Sydney in 2000, Greece in 2004, and Beijing in 2008), served as team captain in 2004 and 2008, and later to play professionally around the world. Because of the opportunity that the University of Hawaii volleyball program granted me, I have been inducted into the USA Volleyball Hall of Fame, The Hawaii Sports Hall of Fame and the University of Hawaii Sports Circle of Honor, and I am truly humbled and grateful.

That is why I support HB 2384. College athletics is different now, and we need to make sure we can continue to be competitive in order to offer the same opportunities that I received to our future generations.

HEAD COACH ERAN GANOT

It has been an absolute honor and privilege to coach for 23 years at the division 1 level, and to serve here in Hawaii for 15 of those years, the last 11 as Head Coach. To be 5,000 miles from where I grew up yet feel like I'm at home speaks volumes about just how special Hawaii has been to me, my family, and so many others. I am forever grateful to Legendary Coach Riley Wallace for hiring me in 2006, to my Hanai family for taking me in, and to countless more for the opportunity to immerse myself in this culture and share those experiences with my own family and team.

UH athletics has often been referred to as Hawaii's 'pro team' and we do not take that position lightly. We are very proud of our program's ability to perform on and off the court, and in the classroom. While I could speak at length about our student-athletes and staff, the message has been simple and consistent: "Hire Them. They are a guarantee!" Through their experiences at UH and in Hawaii, they have learned all aspects of integrity, work ethic, and team, among other great qualities. These qualities have allowed them to become incredible fathers, husbands, and leaders in whatever paths they have chosen.

These are unique and exciting times in college athletics and I firmly believe that you can whine and complain about it or simply navigate it the best way you can, for who you are, how you want to run your program, and consistent with the values of Hawaii. Our most important job has always been to take care of our student-athletes, to provide them with the best possible experience, and to put them in position for future success. I

feel confident and blessed to know that our leadership at the State and University level, combined with our aloha spirit and culture put UH in a unique position for continued success! I look forward to working with so many to continue to support this incredible and special community. I support HB 2384.

ASSISTANT COACH GIBSON JOHNSON

My time at the University of Hawaii as a student-athlete for the men's basketball program was truly life changing. The program, the university, and the state have become the center of my life.

I moved here as a young single man chasing a chance to win a championship and to represent a state and a culture that are centered in values that I have tried to base my life upon. Family, community, love, and a fierce desire to be the best I can be.

Nine years later, I find myself married with a 5-year-old son that attends University Lab School and a 1-year-old daughter, both of whom were born at Kapiolani Medical Center. I battle every day to make our program the absolute best it can be and to put a product on the court that Hawaii can be proud of at the national level. I hope to see this university continue to strive for excellence as we move into this new era of college athletics. I support HB 2384.

STUDENT-ATHLETE TESTOMINY

JAMIH OTIS – FOOTBALL (Senior/Linebacker/Las Vegas, Nevada)

Coming out of high school the University of Hawaii was one of the very few schools who gave me a home and scholarship to play football and was the first of a couple. Since that day I have been accepted to a family that will last past my 4 years of college but lifelong relationships. The coaches and staff made a promise to my family to help me grow into a leader, and better man, also prepare me for the real world and over the years have done much more. For that I am forever in debt, as my time at Hawaii is coming to an end I have learned so much being a student-athlete through the ups and downs. Hawaii is a place of history and great culture when it comes to football and a community that is like no other, but coming in as a freshmen winning wasn't apart of the culture at the time, but Coach Timmy came in with the rest of the coaches and lit a new flame to grow into the God fearing team you guys see today. All this to say is that the state feeds off of us athletes and we feed off the community. With all that's going in on college athletics with NIL and the transfer portal it is easy for us athletes to take an opportunity somewhere else with better resources and maybe even more financial income but there's one thing that many places don't have and that is the family atmosphere, strong community, and true genuine coaches and staff that care for us without a jersey on. Here on the island that makes playing with that "H" across our chest mean way more. Thank you, Go Bows

DEAN BRISKI - FOOTBALL (Senior/Offensive Line/Pago Pago, American Samoa)

Talofa, I want to thank and truly appreciate anyone who takes the time to read this. I am from American Samoa and a senior at the University of Hawai'i. Coach Timmy and his staff took a chance on a kid from Samoa, knowing that many of us come from places

where we lack access to proper training, technique, mechanics, and even football knowledge. Still, they believed in me and trusted the developmental process—something that not many schools are willing to do anymore.

A lot of programs rely on money, transfers, or highly rated recruits with years of experience. For us, that has never been the case. Our coaches believe in each and every player and invest everything they have into our growth, not just as athletes but as men. Where I'm from, resources are not always available, so being resourceful, making the most of what you have, and being grateful for every opportunity is how I was raised. That mindset is exactly what this team represents and what Coach Timmy has built here. Despite limited resources, he has made so much happen—not just for this program, but for Hawai'i athletics and the entire university. With the way NIL is now, teams can be fragile. Players come and go. But the family, unity, loyalty, and culture built here by our coaches instill something deeper in those who choose to stay. This island is special—it brings people together, and it is filled with love. I've had opportunities from Power 4 schools offering large amounts of money, but I chose to stay because of what has been built here: a team rooted in faith—not just faith in each other and our community, but faith in God. Hawai'i is an expensive place to live, and when other schools offer money that can change the lives of family members back home, it becomes incredibly hard to say no—because at that point, it's no longer just about you.

But with the guidance of these coaches, the foundation already in place, and the added blessing of NIL support, the possibilities for what Hawai'i football can become are truly special. I believe this program is only scratching the surface, and with the right backing, what Hawai'i can achieve will be something great—not just on the field, but for the people, the culture, and the future generations who come from places like mine. Thank you giving me the opportunity to share my story. God bless you, Dean Briski.

POFELE ASHLOCK (Senior/Wide Receiver/Eules, Texas)

Dear Representatives of the Great State of Hawai'i.

My name is Pofele Ashlock, and I am a wide receiver representing the University of Hawai'i. I am sincerely grateful for the opportunity to share my story and for your time in reading this testimony. My experience here in Hawai'i has been one of the most meaningful chapters of my life. From the moment I sat down in Coach Chang's office, I understood that this program was built on something far deeper than facilities or finances. Coach Chang spoke to me about what he saw in me from the very first moment I walked into the room. The mana that surrounded him—established long before I arrived—was already present, respected, and embodied through his leadership. That moment left a lasting impact on me.

In today's NIL-driven era of college football, many programs emphasize financial resources and infrastructure, yet often lack loyalty and long-term development. At its core, what truly matters is coach-to-player development, growth, and belief within the program—values consistently highlighted by former players of great coaches. Nick Saban, for example, built loyalty and championships through development and leadership long before the influence of money.

I respectfully ask that you take a close look at our coaching staff here in Hawai'i. I can state with full confidence that we have one of the finest coaching staffs in college football. This program continues to prove who we believe we are who we believe the

State of Hawai'i represents and what we are capable of accomplishing with limited NIL resources. I have personally turned down million-dollar offers from Power Five programs to remain here. I chose this coaching staff, this team, this state, and this process because I believe we are building something historic something that will positively impact this university with or without my presence. If we are able to achieve this level of success with our current resources, one can only imagine what increased funding could bring. NIL would allow players who genuinely want to remain in our program the ability to sustain themselves while doing so. The cost of living in Hawai'i is substantial, and when young athletes hear of six-figure opportunities elsewhere, it presents difficult decisions for individuals aged 18 to 23 years old. With all of this in mind, I sincerely hope we can look toward the future of Hawai'i football and recognize the trajectory we are on. The momentum within this program is real and will not fade. With our coaching staff and incoming players, I confidently promise that you will see the results of our hard work, discipline, and shared hardship. These coaches and players deserve the opportunity to be able to compete with the highest level each week and continue making the State of Hawai'i proud. I support HB 2384.

Mahalo nui loa, Pofele Ashlock

JOVI LEFOTU (Junior/Guard/Kaneohe, Oahu)

Growing up in Hawai'i, UH Athletics has always meant more than just sports to me. It represents my home, the Polynesian culture and the community. Being able to play in front of my family and represent this state as a Hawaiian athlete is an opportunity I'm very grateful for. Every time I step on the court wearing "Hawaii" I feel pride and honor because you feel the Aloha Spirit in every game, every smile, every word of encouragement. I'm constantly reminded that I belong to something bigger than the game when I see familiar faces or hear a big "cheeehooo" in the crowd.

My journey hasn't been easy, especially after two ACL injuries. But those moments showed me just how powerful this community is. There were times when I felt discouraged and unsure but the love and support I received from everybody carried me through. People reached out with prayers, messages and aloha reminding me that I wasn't alone in my recovery. That meant everything to me because it's why I chose UH: because it felt like family and that choice has changed my life.

The community support motivates me and my team every day to keep pushing, keep believing and representing Hawai'i with heart. I'm forever grateful to UH and the community of Hawai'i for standing by me through my hardest moments. I know what you all give to us as student-athletes is more than just emotional support and I just wanted to share that it is meaningful to us on a daily basis. When we know that you all have our back and invest in our journey it give us confidence as young women and as athletes who want to deliver championships for our state.

I support HB 2384 because it provides opportunities for college athletes like me, a local girl from Hawaii, to grow and learn about responsibility, teamwork, accountability, commitment, and most importantly, giving back to the community that gave so much to me.

RITORYA TAMILO (Sophomore/Center/Auckland, New Zealand)

The reason I chose UH is because it feels like home. I knew it was the place for me when I came on my recruiting visit because my values felt like they were important here too: Respect, humility and genuine care for people. It doesn't feel like I left home and it still feels like home.

Being part of a winning program and wanting to uphold a legacy matters to me and I've taken a lot of lessons from my freshman year. I've put a lot more attention on my nutrition and taking care of my body because I know that I have to be at my best for my teammates, coaches and to deliver for this community that has taken me in with open arms.

When I first got to Hawai'i we had a few events where boosters, community leaders and others met me before I even played in a game here. At first I was overwhelmed by it. The attention and their knowing "who I was" before I ever played. I wasn't always comfortable speaking in those rooms and feeling the spotlight but the support of this community – and feeling safe to tell my story and to share my experiences – has meant the world to me. The continued support you guys give makes this all incredibly meaningful to all of us.

I support HB 2384 because it helps college athletics in Hawaii change with the new world and keeps Hawaii relevant on the national stage where we can continue to contend for championships.

TREAD ROSENTHAL (Junior/Setter/Austin, Texas)

As a student-athlete on the University of Hawai'i men's volleyball team, my experience with UH athletics has been incredibly impactful both on and off the court. I chose UH because of the program's strong culture, competitive excellence, and the unique sense of community that surrounds Hawai'i athletics. The support from boosters and fans across the islands has meant more to me than I can fully express. Their encouragement has helped me succeed academically by easing everyday pressures and providing a strong support system that extends well beyond athletics.

Hawai'i men's volleyball has truly become a second family for me. My teammates, coaches, and the broader UH community have supported me through challenges in school and in life, helping me grow as both a student and a person. The program brings people together across generations and islands, creating pride and connection throughout the state. I am grateful to represent UH and to be part of a program that not only competes at the highest level, but also positively impacts the lives of student-athletes and the Hawai'i community as a whole.

I support HB 2384 because it helps sports like men's volleyball continue to win and compete for national championships.

JUSTIN TODD (Sophomore/Middle Blocker/Houston, Texas)

My name is Justin Todd, and I am honored to play for the Men's Volleyball Team at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and represent the state of Hawai'i. I chose to play at UH because after watching only a few games, I quickly realized the strong values the people of Hawai'i hold in community, pride, and support for one another. UH Athletics is more than just competition. It is a shared connection that brings people together across the islands. Wearing the Hawai'i jersey means representing something bigger than myself, and that responsibility has shaped me both as an athlete and as a person.

As a student-athlete at UH, I have grown through balancing academics, athletics, and community involvement. Competing here has taught me accountability, discipline, and the importance of giving back to the place that supports us. Whether through community events, youth engagement, or simply being visible role models, UH student-athletes play a meaningful role throughout Hawai'i. My experience has shown me how athletics can positively impact the community while also preparing student-athletes for life beyond college. Thank you for the opportunity to share my experience and represent the University of Hawai'i.

I support HB 2384 because it helps Hawaii continue to grow the game of men's volleyball and compete at the highest level.

TALI HAKAS (Junior/Outside Hitter/Kfar Saba, Israel) Being a student-athlete at the University of Hawai'i has been one of the most meaningful parts of my college experience. I chose UH not only for athletics, but for the strong sense of community and pride that surrounds the program. Representing Hawai'i comes with a responsibility to give back, and through UH athletics I've had opportunities to connect with local youth and serve as a role model in ways that reach beyond the court.

Name, Image, and Likeness opportunities are an important way for student-athletes and the UH athletics program to continue growing. NIL allows us to develop professionally, build partnerships, and bring greater visibility to our teams while still prioritizing academics and our responsibilities to the university. As the landscape of college athletics evolves, thoughtful support for NIL can help UH attract opportunities, expand its exposure, and strengthen the connection between student-athletes and the community that supports us. I appreciate the Legislature's consideration of how NIL can positively shape the future of UH athletics.

I support HB 2384 because it will allow the program to compete at the national level and offer opportunities for athletes like me to experience being part of a community that embraces the aloha spirit.

VICTORIA LEYVA (Sophomore/Defensive Specialist/El Paso, Texas)

Coming from a border town in Texas that is not highly recruited from, I did not know what to expect when my collegiate recruiting journey began. However, through persistence and travel tournaments, I was able to gain that exposure and ultimately receive offers. At my last club tournament, Hawaii came into the picture and now I find myself 3000 miles away from home.

The legacy and competitive spirit of UH's athletic programs first drew me here. However, in two years as a student-athlete, I have gained far more than skill or knowledge about my sport. I have learned about life. The relationships I've built at UH have shown me that this university is defined not only by its history of excellence and competitive spirit, but by the values it instills in each of us. Here, I've learned what it means to work with discipline and humility, to move with a purpose, and to take pride in all I do. After all, wearing this uniform means representing not only the University of Hawai'i, but the state itself — its history, its people, and the Aloha spirit that shapes everything we do. That meaning became clearer through my experiences in the community. Every conversation on the island made it clear that UH athletics is more than competition; it is connection. As student-athletes, we are both role models and

underdogs — reminders that no matter where you come from, you deserve a place on the big stage.

I have seen this connection firsthand: the way a child's eyes light up when we teach them our sport, to watching kupuna smile as they talk story and about the game they watched the night before, the unwavering support from fans who show up through every high and low. At UH, athletics and community are not separate. They are one — standing together, always. Since arriving in Hawai'i, I have been welcomed with open arms by people who believe in us and support our programs unconditionally. I carry deep gratitude for them. Because of this support, I have been given opportunities to invest in my education, my sport, and my future. As I look forward to continuing my journey here, I hope to give back in every way I can — so that UH can continue to thrive and continue offering opportunities to kids like me. After all, UH took a chance on a girl from a small town in Texas, and in doing so, gave me a place that truly feels like home.

I support HB 2384 because we need to change with the times in order to continue offering opportunities for student-athletes at Hawaii who can represent the islands and experience the unique culture that comes with being a Wahine volleyball player.

CHA'LEI REID (Freshman/Outside Hitter/Laie, Oahu)

My experience here at UH has been nothing but the best. Of course as every student-athlete does go through struggles and toughness the university and athletics always prepares us for the next play. Being here at UH gives a sense of pride, we've created a family not just within our sport but with everyone. Having so many supporters that truly believe in us and root for our success is something that you can't find anywhere else. As our motto says, "Our Team, Hawai'i's team" we are more than just a sport, we are an influence, we are a team, a family. Establishing the values and pillars of what it means to be a Bow is such a blessing.

Why I chose to come to UH was more than just coming to play volleyball. As a local girl from the small town of Laie, there's so much pride that comes along with it. There really is no place like home, being able to give back to the community and state that gave me everything, is worth so much. Representing our people and our culture is something to be thankful for. Having amazing coaches that help support, raise, and push us is something you just can't pass off. As a student athlete we have that platform to be someone that the next generation can look up to. We can make a difference through our actions, our playing, and our service. What better way to give back to the people and the state than to represent what we stand for.

I support HB 2384 because it will help us continue to compete for championships, mentor aspiring young local keiki, and make a difference in the community we live in.

ADRIANNA ARQUETTE (Freshman/Setter/Kailua, Oahu)

My name is Adrianna Arquette and I am a student-athlete on the University of Hawai'i wāhine volleyball team. I was born and raised in Kailua and am a proud graduate of Kamehameha Schools. It is a privilege and an honor to represent the state of Hawai'i

through volleyball and to compete for a university that means so much to me and the people of this community.

I chose to attend the University of Hawai'i because of the strong sense of connection and pride that surrounds this program and the history of Wāhine volleyball. Competing at home is truly special because it gives me the opportunity to create strong relationships in the community while pursuing both my academic and athletic goals. The support I receive from my family, coaches, teammates, and the wider Hawai'i community has shaped my experience as a student-athlete and has helped me grow both on and off the court. Representing the University of Hawai'i is something very unique and I am grateful for the opportunity to be able to live out a dream while giving back to the community that continues to support us.

I support HB 2384 because it gives us a chance to continue competing at the highest level and serving our community.

BEN ZIEGLER-NAMOA (Graduate/Utility/Lahaina, Maui)

Hello everyone, my name is Ben Zeigler-Namoa and I am here today to talk about the impact the university of Hawaii has had on my life. Throughout my last four years here, I have learned how to become a better student, athlete, and most importantly how to be a person with a greater purpose than themselves. When I first set foot on campus in August of 2023, I didn't know what to expect. A program with a new coach and a non-successful record in recent history definitely wasn't the easiest decision. After reflecting, it was the best decision I could have made.

Being a student-athlete here at UH is not treated the same as any student-athlete anywhere else in the country. We represent a State, we are Hawaii's professional team. With that being said, it comes with great responsibility to make an impact on our community as well. When I think about the greatest thing I have been able to do at UH, it isn't a baseball moment, it's the privilege of impacting my community and being the best example for our keiki. UH athletics has given athletes just like me a chance to live out a childhood dream as I once was just like the keiki who aspired to be in the Kelly green and orange. Thank you for your time and Go bows!

I support HB 2384 because it will help us to continue to pay what we have and what we have learned forward to Hawaii's keiki and community.

ELIJAH ICKES (Junior/Infielder/Waiawa, Oahu)

Aloha, my name is Elijah Ickes. I am a Junior and I play infield for the University of Hawaii baseball team. The reason I wanted to play here at Mānoa is because this place is different. There really is no other place in the world that will give you the same experiences that you get when you play here. Being a student-athlete at UH means that you are representing an entire state, and that is something that I wanted to do.

Growing up in Hawaii, watching these games was like watching the major leagues. It was the coolest thing to see these stars playing under the lights doing their thing. And I wanted to be a part of that. I wanted to be a leader and a role model to the younger generations. The University has allowed me to experience a lot of special things. Meeting new people, fans, and community members not only at the games but out in the community, and hearing how happy they are to watch me play on the field is just as great as a feeling of actually playing and being out there on the field.

Being a student-athlete at UH allows me to do things that I have always dreamt of. I get to be a leader, make my family proud, become a better overall person, and be a Rainbow Warrior. I support HP 2384.

HARRY ROUHIADEFF (Senior/Forward/Brisbane, Australia)

Aloha fellow peers, my name is Harry Rouhliadeff and I am a senior student-athlete at the University of Hawai'i. I have been a part of the Men's Basketball team for the past four years and have cherished every moment. I have made so many lifelong friends along the way and I cannot be more grateful for the connection I have made to this University and the land of Hawai'i. Furthermore, my student athlete experience has been a once in a lifetime experience. With so much support and resources from this great community, I have been able to thrive and live my life with the most 'Aloha' possible.

In the new world of college athletics with NIL, a few people have asked me over the years "Why stick with Hawai'i?". The answer was pretty clear, I am surrounded by the best community in the country and there is no other environment that shows this much love and support. Moreover, being away from my family is difficult and to have so many Aunties asking me if I am eating enough and getting my rest is like having my own mother with me. The University of Hawai'i is such a special place and holds so much Māna to me. I will never forget the memories made with my friends and family that I have made on this island. I cannot thank the University enough for a great four years and hope to see the Rainbow Warriors still thriving in the future. GO BOWS!

I support HB 2384.

TANNER CUFF (Graduate/Guard/American Fork, Utah)

As a current student-athlete at the University of Hawai'i, NIL has had a meaningful and positive impact on my experience both on and off the court. As a husband and father, a major factor in deciding where I play is finding a place that feels like home for my wife and daughter and a community where we feel supported. Hawai'i has provided that sense of family and belonging.

This season, I experienced a season-ending injury that prevented me from competing in the sport I love, but the continued support from the UH athletics program and the Hawai'i community helped me still feel valued, connected, and hopeful during a challenging time. NIL opportunities have allowed me to build relationships with locals, gain real-world experience, and better provide for my family while staying engaged with the community that supports UH athletics so passionately. I am grateful and proud to represent the University of Hawai'i and to be part of a program that supports student-athletes not only in competition, but through adversity and life beyond sports. I support HB 2384.

AARON HUNKIN-CLAYTOR (Sophomore/Guard/Wahiawa, Oahu)

Talofa, my name is Aaron Hunkin-Claytor and I am sophomore point guard for the University of Hawaii men's basketball team. The past two years I have been blessed to be a part of this basketball team that has helped me grow not only as a player but as a person. I am from the small but mighty town of Wahiawa, Oahu. Growing up I have dreamed of being a Division I athlete and having the opportunity to be a part of the team

I grew up watching. After receiving the offer to continue my education and athletic career from Coach Ganot here on island, I knew with no hesitation I wanted to be home and represent the 808 to the best of my ability.

People as me, "Why UH?" I say, "Why not UH?" I was offered the opportunity to further my education in kinesiology as well as play the sport I love in front of the people I love and in the greatest place on earth. Since being here I have been nothing but supported, loved, and pushed to be the best version of myself and I cannot thank my coaches, family, and supporters enough for it. Being a bow means I am part of a lifetime family and I am eternally grateful for it all. I support HB 2384.

**HB 2384 TESTIMONY
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII STUDENT-ATHLETE**

MICAH ALEJADO

I chose the University of Hawai'i football program because this is home. I'm from here, and growing up here teaches you early that family is everything. Loyalty isn't something you talk about it's something you live. Love is shown by staying, by standing with your people, by choosing each other even when it's hard. That's what this place has always meant to me, and that's why I'm still here.

Being part of this program has taught me what it truly means to represent this culture. Hawai'i isn't just a location it's a way of life. It's about respect, connection, and taking care of one another. Every single person in this building matters, and I've felt that from day one. The coaches, the players, the staff this is a family in every sense of the word.

I have so much love and respect for our coaching staff, especially Coach Timmy and Coach Chris Brown. Coach Timmy gave me an opportunity out of high school when nobody else did. He believed in me before the world saw me, and that kind of belief changes a person. The love, trust, and faith he showed me as a head coach is special and rare in this game. It's something I'll never forget and something I carry with me every day. Coach Chris Brown has been a constant source of guidance and support, always pushing me to be better while genuinely caring about who I am off the field.

As a player, you never want money to be the reason you play the game. You play because you love it. You play for your brothers. You play for the name on your chest. But in today's college football world that has become almost like the NFL, life changing money becomes visual. It becomes real. And at that point, it's bigger than just yourself it's about your family, your future, and the people who sacrificed for you to be here. Even with all of that, what keeps people grounded and what keeps people here is the culture that's been built. That's something you can't replace.

This place is special because of the people in it. I believe in everyone here. I believe in what we're building. And with the right people in this building, and your support, the future is bright for our program to restore tradition, prestige, and a winning culture.

Feb. 25, 2026, 2 p.m.
Hawaii State Capitol
Conference Room 308 and Videoconference

To: House Committee on Finance

Rep. Chris Todd, Chair

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

From: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

Ted Kefalas, Director of Strategic Campaigns

RE: COMMENTS ON HB2384 HD2 — RELATING TO STUDENT-ATHLETE COMPENSATION

Aloha chair, vice chair and other committee members,

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii offers **comments** on [HB2384 HD2](#), which would require the University of Hawai'i to adopt policies regarding name, image and likeness agreements and activities for student athletes.

Inasmuch as this bill seeks to clarify NIL rules and activities and make them more both transparent and accountable, it deserves praise. This is an evolving area that would be helped by greater clarity for both students and schools, though federal legislation¹ may soon change the landscape of NIL payments.

However, we believe it is important to note that the bill should include a provision clarifying that state funds cannot be used to compensate athletes. If the university decides to pay its athletes, those payments should come from third-party contracts, donations, revenues and other funding sources, not taxpayer dollars.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ted Kefalas
Director of Strategic Campaigns
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

¹ [H.R. 4312](#) – SCORE Act, 119th Congress (2025-2026).

HB-2384-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 2:46:21 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victor Brock	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I do not agree that the state should appropriate general revenue funds for these purposes. The UH system should have to pursue funds from donations of local businesses, individuals, or other sources. Let's stick to education and research instead of funding sports!

HB-2384-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 3:00:41 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sean Spencer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 2384.

Written Testimony of Carlos A. Santana

February 25, 2026

Prepared for the Hawai`i State Legislature – House Committee on Finance

For consideration of HB2384: Relating to Student-Athlete Compensation

Proponent Testimony

My name is Carlos A. Santana. I am a graduate of the William S. Richardson School of Law. I have also completed graduate-level coursework on Name, Image, Likeness and Athlete Compensation through the University of Florida. I submit this testimony in support of HB2384 relating to student-athlete compensation.

Name, Image, and Likeness

The landscape of college athletics is changing rapidly. The University of Hawai`i must keep up to remain competitive. Many of these changes are coming through litigation and judiciary decisions. Many of these court cases allege the National Collegiate Athletic Association (“NCAA”) has violated antitrust laws by restricting athletes from earning compensation for the use of their name, image, and likeness (“NIL”). As the courts incrementally dismantle the NCAA’s policies on NIL compensation, the Hawai`i legislature should provide specific guidance for the state court through legislation specific to the issue of student-athlete compensation.

In 2015, the Ninth Circuit court held that the NCAA’s rules operate as an unreasonable restraint on trade, in violation of antitrust law.¹ This was only the beginning of the end of the NCAA’s NIL policy. The most notable court case is *In re College Athlete NIL Litigation*, commonly known as *House v. NCAA*. In this federal case, the plaintiff filed an antitrust challenge against the NCAA and five athletic conferences.² The complaint alleges that the NCAA’s restrictions on athlete compensation for NIL use constitute an unreasonable restraint on trade.³ The complaint also alleges that the NCAA, defendant conferences, and member institutions engaged in a conspiracy to collectively refuse to negotiate with athletes for compensation.⁴ After other plaintiffs joined the case, the court certified it as a

¹ *O’Bannon v. NCAA*, 802 F.3d 1049 (9th Cir. 2015).

² The Atlantic Coast Conference (“ACC”), Big Ten, Big 12, Southeastern Conference (“SEC”), and Pac-12 were co-defendants in the case.

³ *In re College Athlete NIL Litigation*, 4:20-cv-03919 (N.D. Cal.)

⁴ *Id.*

class action. The case was settled in June 2025 when the court approved an agreed-upon settlement between the parties.

The biggest impact of this settlement is in the area of student-athlete compensation. The settlement provided for \$2.8 billion in damages to the various classes of athlete plaintiffs dating back to 2016. The settlement also included:

- Allowing member institutions to be able to enter into direct NIL agreements with athletes for their broadcast NIL rights (up to a cap of 22 percent of Average Shared Revenue for Power Five institutions);
- Eliminating scholarship limits in favor of roster limits; and,
- Enacting restrictions on NIL deals entered into between athletes and third parties, specifically boosters and booster collectives, where such deals must be for a valid business purpose and for fair market value.⁵

International Students

Legislation should also address the matter of international students. In a recent case, an Australian national was denied a P-1A visa. International students typically apply for F-1 student visas to attend universities in the United States. However, a student is not permitted to work off-campus with an F-1 visa. As this is the case, many international athletes apply for a P-1A visa, which allows international athletes to compete in the United States. In this case, the Australian student-athlete attending a university in the United States applied for the P-1A visa. The U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services (“USCIS”) denied the application because (1) her proposed NIL activities were not seen as “ancillary promotional activities” and are unrelated to her status as an athlete, (2) her NIL representation agreement is not an agency agreement; and (3) she cannot attend school on a P-1A visa.⁶ The student-athlete is challenging this decision and the overall limits on P-1A visa access for college athletes.

The problem:

- Students cannot work on an F-1 visa
- Athletes cannot attend school on a P-1A visa

The solution:

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Poa v. Jaddou (USCIS)*, 3:24-cv-00887, Louisiana Middle District Court

- Create a new visa (possibly an F-1A) for foreign students to attend a university, participate in intercollegiate athletics, and avail themselves of NIL opportunities.

The legislature and the University of Hawai`i must persuade federal legislators to require the USCIS to create this new visa program for international student-athletes.

Student-Athletes as University Employees

In July 2024, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals issued an opinion finding that some college athletes can and should be considered employees under the Fair Labor Standards Act ("FLSA").⁷ In doing so, they developed a four-part test for determining whether particular athletes should be considered employees. Under this test, college athletes may be employees under the FLSA when they (a) perform services for another party, (b) necessarily and primarily for the other party's benefit, (c) under that party's control or right of control, and (d) in return for "express" or "implied" compensation or "in-kind benefits."⁸ This case has not been resolved and is pending a decision on the NCAA's motion to dismiss.

HB2384 would resolve this issue in Hawai`i courts as it states that nothing in the amended law would create an employment relationship between a student-athlete and the university.

Conclusion

I support this legislation to support the student-athletes and the university. Creating NIL opportunities for all student-athletes, including international student-athletes, is good for the participants, the institution, and the state. While some might feel that it is unfortunate that college athletics has evolved to be about monetary compensation for the athletes, this is the world we live in, and we must stay on par to contend with other universities.

The federal courts and several state legislatures have been weighing in on the issue of athlete compensation. The Hawai`i legislature has an opportunity show that it supports student-athletes' rights and also supports the university's efforts to remain competitive in a rapidly changing environment.

As part of an educational curriculum, athletics teaches goal setting and teamwork, among many other benefits. It's time to show the student-athletes that the legislature is part of the team.

I fully support HB2384 and encourage all legislators to vote in favor.

⁷ 9 U.S.C. §§ 201 et seq.

⁸ *Johnson v. NCAA*, No. 22-1223 (3d Cir. 2024)

February 25, 2026

Representative Chris Todd, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Finance
Thirty-Third Legislature, Regular Session of 2026

RE: **STRONG SUPPORT** for HB 2384, HD2 – Relating to Student-Athlete Compensation

Hearing Date: February 25, 2026, at 2:00 PM

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi and Members of the Committees,

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of HB 2384, HD2. This bill would allow UH to adopt policies for NIL agreements and activities, as well as provide education, support, and funding for NIL compensation.

As a former student-athlete at UH, I know first-hand of the countless hours that go into practicing, watching films and working out required to represent UH with pride and be part of a successful athletic program. Student-athletes must balance rigorous schedules with their full-time academic pursuits. Although financial aid is available to some student athletes, it rarely covers the cost of attendance when you factor in living expenses without the opportunity for employment. NIL compensation can provide student-athletes with the ability to supplement their scholarships/financial aid with additional income to help make ends meet.

Importantly, NIL has shifted from a recruiting enhancement only available at Power 4 programs to a critical component of collegiate athletics. Coaches across the country — including at UH — emphasize that NIL is central not only to recruiting top talent, but also to retaining players who might otherwise look elsewhere for such opportunities. The absence of sufficient NIL for UH athletes has and will continue to put our programs at a disadvantage compared to other similarly positioned programs. The lack of sufficient NIL has also significantly hindered UH's ability to recruit from Hawaii high schools.

The rise of NIL has also created confusion and the risk of unscrupulous representatives taking advantage of student-athletes. Most student-athletes lack the resources and expertise to properly evaluate the consequences of NIL marketing agreements, tax liability or other potential pitfalls. Hawaii needs a reasonable framework to educate and provide structured and equitable NIL support to student-athletes. HB 2384, HD1 would ensure UH's student-athletes have the same opportunities to benefit from their hard-earned reputation and marketplace value as their peers nationwide, while at the same time

February 24, 2026

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protecting them from confusion and risk. Without the framework, Hawai'i will be at a competitive disadvantage compared to other national programs.

I appreciate the committee's willingness to put forth a reasoned approach to NIL for UH's student-athletes, and strongly urge this committee to pass HB 2384, HD2.

Mahalo for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael L. Iosua". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" and last name "Iosua" clearly distinguishable.

Michael L. Iosua

HB-2384-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 9:08:53 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kathy Fay	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This bill is an insult to hard working Hawaii residents. Sports fans should provide these funds if they think it is so important. Those of us with no interest in sports should not have to fund these players.



Iron Workers Stabilization Fund

T. George Paris
Managing Director

February 24, 2026

Members of the House Committee on Finance
Thirty-Third Legislature, Regular Session of 2026

Re: Strong Support for HB2384, Relating to Student-Athlete Compensation

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice-Chair Takenouchi and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaii **Ironworkers Stabilization Fund**, in strong support of HB2384 HD2, Relating to Student-Athlete Compensation.

We understand that a thriving Hawaii is built on strong foundations, and that includes investing in our people and our institutions. The University of Hawaii (UH) is the single most important institution for higher education and opportunity in our state, and its athletic programs are a vital source of community pride and identity.

Investing in UH football program is a necessary step in the ever-changing world of collegiate athletics. Hawaii must remain competitive. As an island state with only one comprehensive public university, we have a responsibility to our local student-athletes and to our community.

The measure is crucial for the University of Hawaii (UH) to retain local talent and remain competitive with mainland schools, enabling local student-athletes to succeed at home. A successful college football program is essential for fostering community health and pride. The bill also establishes a modern, flexible framework that includes essential educational support for student-athletes. and our community pride, the Ironworkers Stabilization Fund strongly urges the Committee to **PASS** HB2384 HD2 and commit to UH what is necessary effectively maintain its viability as an option for Hawaii's best athletes and strengthen the local community connection to the program.

Respectfully,

T. George Paris
Managing Director