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TESTIMONY BY JAMES WATARU
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
EUTF BOARD OF TRUSTEES CHAIRPERSON
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
STATE OF HAWAII
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
ON HOUSE BILL NO. 2472 HD1

April 1, 2026
10:03 a.m.
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

RELATING TO THE HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
STAFF SALARIES

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

The Hawaii Employer-Union Health Benefits Trust Fund (EUTF) Board of Trustees strongly supports this bill. The EUTF Board currently sets the salary of the EUTF Administrator and Chief Investment Officer (CIO) and respectfully requests the ability to set the salaries of the EUTF Assistant Administrator. This position is currently exempt from civil service and excluded. All EUTF positions, including this position, do not use general funds but are funded through trust funds. The EUTF Assistant Administrator reports directly to the EUTF Administrator, assumes the duties of the EUTF Administrator when the EUTF Administrator is unavailable and oversees the day-to-day operations of the EUTF. In general, pay adjustments for this position are limited to across the board pay increases for bargaining unit 13 members, minimal additional percentage increases or adjustments to the position description of job duties. Providing the EUTF Board with more direct oversight of this position will strengthen EUTF's accountability and having the EUTF Board determine the EUTF

The Hawaii Employer-Union Health Benefits Trust Fund (EUTF), an agency within the State Department of Budget and Finance, provides medical, prescription drug, dental, vision and life insurance coverage to eligible state and county employees, retirees and dependents.

Assistant Administrator salary will ensure the continued strength of the EUTF operations and will help to ensure that EUTF is able to attract and retain the most qualified individual with competitive salaries.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



The Senate Committee on Ways and Means

April 1, 2026

Room 211

10:03 AM

RE: HB 2472 HD1, Relating to the Hawai'i Employer-Union Health Benefits Trust Fund Staff Salaries

Attention: Chair Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki, 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 HB 2472 HD1.**

In addition to my role as the UHPA Executive Director, I also currently serve as an appointed Employee-Beneficiary Trustee on the Hawai'i Employer-Union Health Benefits Trust Fund (EUTF).

The EUTF Board has the fiduciary responsibility of acting in the best interest of its roughly 200,000 beneficiaries, which includes active and retired State and County employees and their dependents. This responsibility includes prudent management of the trust assets (just short of \$10 billion) as well as providing and managing the medical, drug, vision, dental and life benefit plans, all while ensuring financial sustainability.

The EUTF board currently has the authority to set the salary of the Administrator and the Chief Investment Officer and needs the flexibility to set the salary for the Assistant Administrator that is commensurate with the role and responsibilities of the position. The Assistant Administrator is deeply involved with the operations and serves as the second in command at the EUTF, taking over the roles and responsibilities of the Administrator when the Administrator is on vacation or sick leave. The EUTF Board needs to ensure that we have the ability to attract and retain the best candidate for this critical position.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB 2472 HD1.**

Respectfully submitted,

Christian L. Fern
Executive Director
University of Hawaii Professional Assembly



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TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Item: **HB2472 HD1 - RELATING TO THE HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND STAFF SALARIES**

Position: **Support**

Hearing: **Wednesday, April 1, 2026, 10:03 a.m., Conference Room 211**

Submitter: **Osa Tui, Jr. – President, Hawai'i State Teachers Association**

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the committee,

As a trustee on the board of the Hawai'i Employer-Union Health Benefits Trust Fund, I **strongly support** HB2472 HD1 which would authorize the EUTF Board of Trustees to establish the salary for the assistant administrator.

As a trust that oversees the health plans for hundreds of thousands of active and retiree members and their families with and also with a multi-billion dollar trust in our care, the EUTF board needs the flexibility to set the salary for the assistant administrator that is commensurate with the workload of the position.

The board already has the authority to set the salary of the administrator and the chief investment officer. The assistant administrator is deeply involved with the operations of the EUTF and the fund needs to ensure that we have the ability to attract and retain the best people for this critical position.

I ask that you please **support** this measure. Mahalo!