



**TESTIMONY OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA  
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026**

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**ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**

H.B. NO. 2517, RELATING TO HIGHER EDUCATION.

**BEFORE THE:**

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**DATE:** Friday, February 6, 2026 **TIME:** 2:05 p.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 Garrett and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments.

This bill adds a new section to chapter 304A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to require the University of Hawai'i (UH) to establish and report on a systemwide framework for assessing prior learning for the purpose of awarding academic credit, where appropriate, toward certificates or degrees offered by UH.

This bill implicates article X, section 6, of the Hawai'i Constitution, which gives the Board of Regents of the UH "exclusive jurisdiction over the internal structure, management, and operation of the university." Section 6 further provides: "This 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." 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.



# 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 Higher Education  
February 6, 2026 at 2:05 p.m.

By

Debora Halbert  
Vice President for Academic Strategy  
University of Hawai'i System

#### HB 2517 – RELATING TO HIGHER EDUCATION.

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i (UH) supports HB 2517 – Relating to Higher Education, which authorizes UH to establish a systemwide framework for the assessment and award of academic credit for prior learning (CPL). We appreciate the Legislature's recognition that awarding academic credit for rigorous, college-level prior learning can "reduce time to degree, lower educational costs, and support workforce development."

We are pleased to report that UH is already proactively developing a new system-wide Executive Policy that aligns with HB 2517. The bill mandates that the CPL framework identify categories eligible for assessment, specifically listing military training, industry-recognized credentials, apprenticeships, credit-by-examination, and portfolio-based assessments. UH's draft policy addresses these same categories and explicitly outlines methods for earning credit including National Equivalency Exams such as College Level Examination Program (CLEP), International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) exams; Portfolio-Based Assessment; Non-Collegiate Sponsored Education, which covers military training and private industry experience; and Professional Skills Trainings.

HB 2517 also emphasizes the need to "preserve faculty authority over curriculum, academic standards" and ensures that awarded credit reflects "college-level learning outcomes". UH's draft policy adheres to these principles as well. To ensure academic rigor, the draft policy requires that any credits awarded align with standards established by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL).

The bill also directs UH to "promote transparency and consistency" across campuses while permitting campuses to determine how credit applies to degree requirements. Under the draft policy, while the framework is systemwide, specific academic programs retain the authority to determine the number of credits earned from prior learning which can be applied to certificates or degrees. This ensures that the integrity of specific degree programs is protected.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

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



STEPHEN F. LOGAN  
MAJOR GENERAL  
ADJUTANT GENERAL  
KA 'AKUKANA KENELALA

PHILLIP L. MALLORY III  
BRIGADIER GENERAL  
DEPUTY ADJUTANT GENERAL  
KA HOPE 'AKUKANA KENELALA

STATE OF HAWAII  
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII  
**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE**  
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TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 2517  
RELATING TO HIGHER EDUCATION  
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

BY

BRIGADIER GENERAL WALTER R. ROSS, JR.  
DIRECTOR  
JOINT STAFF, HAWAII NATIONAL GUARD

February 6, 2026

Aloha Chair Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice-Chair Terez Amato, and Members of the Committee:

I am Brigadier General Walter Ross, Director of the Joint Staff, Hawai'i National Guard, State of Hawai'i, Department of Defense.

I am presenting this testimony in **SUPPORT** of HB2517.

This important legislation establishes a statewide framework for assessing and awarding academic credit for prior learning acquired through military service, workforce training, apprenticeships, professional certifications, and other structured learning experiences outside traditional classrooms.

Members of the Hawai'i National Guard (HING) gain extensive knowledge, skills, and competencies through their military training and service, much of which is directly applicable to academic disciplines. However, inconsistent and unclear practices for evaluating prior learning can lead to delays in degree completion, increased educational costs, and inequities among students with similar qualifications. This legislation addresses these challenges by establishing a transparent and equitable process for assessing and awarding academic credit for prior learning, including military training, workforce certifications, apprenticeships, and other nontraditional learning experiences. This measure will enhance professional development and career opportunities for HING servicemembers. The passage of this legislation will strengthen our ability to attract top talent and retain our current personnel. This commitment to education ensures that the HING continues to cultivate a highly skilled force prepared to support our communities and defend our nation as needed.

This legislation is a critical step toward recognizing the value of military training and other structured learning experiences. The benefits of this measure are far-reaching. By reducing the

time required to earn degrees and lowering educational costs, it will empower students, including veterans and working adults, to efficiently complete certificates and degrees that align with Hawai'i's workforce needs. This initiative will also support workforce development by enabling students to transition more quickly into careers that contribute to the state's economic growth and resilience.

Importantly, this legislation maintains faculty authority over academic standards and campus autonomy in implementation. By ensuring that academic integrity remains intact, it strikes a thoughtful balance between recognizing prior learning and preserving the rigorous standards of higher education. This approach respects the unique missions and curricula of individual campuses while fostering collaboration across the University of Hawai'i system.

The implementation of this statewide framework will provide significant benefits to students, veterans, the University of Hawai'i system, and the broader community. This legislation is vital for promoting equity among diverse student populations and veterans, ensuring that their unique skills and knowledge are acknowledged within the educational landscape. It will create a more inclusive and efficient pathway to higher education, reduce barriers for nontraditional learners, and honor the contributions of servicemembers by recognizing the value of their military training and experience.

I humbly ask for your support of HB2517, which aims to establish a system that recognizes the value of prior learning and supports diverse academic journeys, ultimately ensuring the success of all students and veterans across the University of Hawai'i system.

Brigadier General Walter R. Ross, Jr., [walter.r.ross2.mil@army.mil](mailto:walter.r.ross2.mil@army.mil); 808-844-6087

**HB-2517**

Submitted on: 2/5/2026 12:27:14 PM

Testimony for HED on 2/6/2026 2:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry Support

2517 HB RELATING TO HIGHER EDUCATION.