

STAND. COM. REP. NO.

3563

Honolulu, Hawaii

APR 11 2006

RE: S.C.R. No. 97
S.D. 1

Honorable Robert Bunda
President of the Senate
Twenty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2006
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Higher Education, to which was referred
S.C.R. No. 97 entitled:

"SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE AUDITOR TO
CONDUCT A MANAGEMENT AUDIT OF STUDENT HOUSING SERVICES AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MANOA,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose of this measure is to request the Auditor to
conduct a management audit of the University of Hawaii at Manoa's
Student Housing Services department.

Testimony in support of the measure was received from the
Associated Students of the University of Hawaii, over fifty
students from the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and the American
Civil Liberties Union of Hawaii. The University of Hawaii at
Manoa Interim Chancellor provided information.

Your Committee believes that student housing is an integral
part of the university experience. Student housing not only
provides affordable access for non-residents, but serves an
important and vital role in providing local residents with access
to higher education. Of the 2,700 student housing residents
surveyed by the University of Hawaii at Manoa Student Housing
Services, twenty-four percent come from the neighbor islands and
nearly twenty percent are from Oahu. Student housing should
provide a variety of learning-centered residential communities
where residents feel safe and supported, are treated fairly, and
can enjoy an environment that supports academic success.

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Your Committee heard testimony from current and former student housing residents. One student testified that she had been sexually harassed by University of Hawaii at Manoa privately-contracted security guards while in the dormitory parking area. One former Resident Advisor testified that a supervisor rented out dorm rooms during the summer to ineligible students in violation of the Housing Policy on subletting, that the supervisor was embezzling funds from the Resident Hall Association for personal use, and that the supervisor had threatened residents with bodily harm.

Furthermore, several students testified that Student Housing charges a mandatory fee, called the Resident Hall Association Dues, to residents prior to room check-in, but they believe the fee is imposed in violation of Board of Regents policy. As listed under the Student Affairs section, the two objectives of the student housing program are to "uniquely characterize student housing as both an educational program and an administrative function that is managed in accordance with the highest operational, personnel and fiscal standards." These objectives are clearly stated and there is no reference made to the establishment of the Residence Hall Association, required membership, or mandatory fee associated with the organization. Regarding student housing activities, the Board of Regents policy states that "the student housing rate structure is intended to cover all operating costs including debt service and the costs of providing an educationally-oriented student life experience."

In addition, several students testified with regard to Student Housing officials violating their right to free speech by confiscating 3,000 letters the Associated Students of the University of Hawaii planned to send to housing residents. Students also testified about specific disciplinary cases against them and the delays in getting an appeal to housing officials' actions, causing extended displacement from their dorm and affecting their academics. One former resident cited the lack of attention and resolution in addressing an infestation of bed bugs that occurred in her dorm room, causing her to sleep on the dining table. One student testified she was the victim of retaliation by the housing staff after she reported the housing staff for not enforcing housing policies. The President of the Inter-Resident Hall Association as well as a former Resident Advisor testified that Resident Advisors lack sufficient training to perform their duties well. For example, the former Resident Advisor was required to identify the smell of marijuana, yet the training did



not indicate what marijuana smells like. Housing officials affirmed that the training provided to housing staff is not from a certified or established training program.

Two Resident Advisors testified that not all students are unhappy, but that their jobs can be difficult given the peer environment they work in and the rules they must enforce.

Your Committee finds that the University of Hawaii at Manoa Interim Chancellor acknowledged the many issues faced by students and Student Housing Services and is committed to improving the quality of residential life for students at Mānoa. The Interim Chancellor indicated a variety of steps have been implemented to improve resident conditions, including, but not limited to:

- (1) Conducting a national search for a new University of Hawaii at Manoa Vice Chancellor of Students and a new University of Hawaii at Manoa Director of Student Housing;
- (2) Retaining the Association of College and University Housing Officers - International to conduct a comprehensive external review to learn what dimensions of University of Hawaii at Manoa's housing program are strongest, and what need to be improved, from the students' perspective;
- (3) Retaining national experts in student housing affairs to examine a number of functional areas of University of Hawaii at Manoa's Student Housing operations, including business management practices, educational programs, physical facilities, property management, food service, and staff qualifications;
- (4) Committing to spend \$1,500,000 for repairs and maintenance to address areas of immediate need over this coming summer;
- (5) Assigning the new University Ombudsman to mediate problems between the Associated Students of the University of Hawaii, the Student Resident Assistants, and the housing staff;



- (6) Convening a Chancellor's Task Force on Student Conduct, to include student representatives, to define the process for settling conflicts;
- (7) Working in cooperation with the Associated Students of the University of Hawaii, to develop and deploy a more detailed survey of residents of Housing to gain an even more intimate understanding of the issues; and
- (8) Establishing a Student Housing Advisory Board that will include student representation and faculty with expertise helpful in improving the management of student housing.

Notwithstanding the efforts of the Interim Chancellor, your Committee is concerned about the seriousness of the allegations raised by the students, especially as they relate to health, safety, and due process, and to what appears to be a lack of administrative leadership. In fact, the Interim Chancellor stated in her testimony, "[t]he [Student Housing Services] organizational structure has long been isolated from upper campus. Within Housing, the organization is fragmented. Lacking a permanent director, or vice chancellor is challenging." Your Committee recognizes that housing staff have a difficult task and that they are committed to doing a good job. However, without adequate and stable leadership, University of Hawaii at Manoa Student Housing Services will continue to raise concerns. Therefore, your Committee believes that adoption of this measure will complement the Interim Chancellor's efforts.

Your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Noting that the Associated Students of the University of Hawaii has unsuccessfully attempted to resolve the timeliness of the University's response to students complaints and appeals; and
- (2) Clarifying that sexual harassment of a female student had occurred by privately contracted security guards.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Higher Education that is attached to this report, your Committee concurs with the intent and purpose of S.C.R. No. 97, as amended herein, and recommends its adoption in the form attached hereto as S.C.R. No. 97, S.D. 1.



Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Higher Education,



CLAYTON HEE, Chair



