

Testimony of Representative Ryan Yamane
House Bill No. 2588, Relating to the University of Hawaii
Committee on Higher Education
February 12, 2008
2:15pm

Chair Chang, Vice Chair Bertram and members of the Committee,

I stand in strong support of this measure. The intent of this bill is to honor our veterans by offering them the opportunity to attend courses within the University of Hawaii system using resident tuition rates. Currently, veterans from out of state, with no Hawaii residency would have to pay non-resident tuition rates if they were so inclined to enroll in any University or Community College classes. This measure seeks to honor our veterans' outstanding service and numerous sacrifices to our State and Country by providing them a small fiscal alleviation through their goals in achieving a higher education.

My office researched the differences between the non-resident tuition and resident tuition rates within the entire University system. We used tuition rates for the upcoming 2008-2009 regular semester schedule, as provided on the University system's website, and calculated the costs for a fulltime student enrolled in each campus and in every respective degree program. The overall average difference found among all University system campuses and in their degree programs was an estimated \$4937.00. This loss of revenue the University is referring to is minuscule at best considering that this only accounts for one full-year of full-time attendance. Furthermore the veteran-student can qualify for resident tuition in the following years after the completion of this first year enrollment.

While it is commendable that the University recognizes the services and sacrifices of our Active Duty, National Guard, and Reserve personnel, it does not currently recognize the same services and sacrifices our veterans have provided. Veterans at this time are relying on the Federal Montgomery GI Bill to assist in achieving their educational objectives – while it is helpful, it is largely outdated. The U.S. Congress has recently introduced S.22: The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act in November 2007, to revise and update the Federal Montgomery GI Bill, established in 1944.

According to US Senators Jim Webb and Chuck Hagel, the co-authors of S.22, their intent is to make the GI Bill benefits more competitive with the rising costs of tuition. A recent study cited in their opinion piece published on November 9, 2007 in the New York Times, shows that the Montgomery GI Bill would only cover about 42% tuition costs at the University of Hawaii; leaving the remaining 58% to be the veterans' burden to pay. The Montgomery GI Bill should not be the veterans' only assistance in their opportunity to receive a higher education. If veterans were provided the opportunity to enroll for courses in the University system, the Montgomery GI Bill would cover extra education costs.

While the Federal Montgomery GI Bill does provide assistance to veterans, it is an outdated program derived from the 1940s. Our State and the people of Hawaii should recognize the outstanding service and insurmountable sacrifices our veterans have made by providing them this opportunity as a way to extend our patriotism and appreciation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.