

Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Higher Education  
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LATE TESTIMONY

by  
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HB3072 - Relating to the Hawai'i Higher Education Commission

Chair Chang, Vice Chair Bertram, and members of the House Committee on Higher Education:

I am Linda K. Johnsrud, Vice President for Academic Planning and Policy, University of Hawai'i System. On behalf of the University System, we would like to express reservations and suggest changes in the approach to HB3072 which amends Chapter 304A, Hawai'i Revised Statutes, to broaden the representation on the state post-secondary education commission and expand its mission.

HRS Chapter 304A, as it currently is written, establishes the Hawai'i Higher Education Commission as a state postsecondary education commission composed of the UH Board of Regents and four other public members, and charges the commission to qualify the state to receive federal funds when federal legislation requires the designation of a state agency as a condition of receiving such funds. This Commission is administratively attached to the Board of Regents and it functions to accomplish this charge.

HB3072 would change the membership of the commission to include the presidents of the University of Hawai'i, Brigham Young, Chaminade, and Hawai'i Pacific Universities, and also to include the superintendent of education, the executive director of the Hawai'i Association of Independent Schools, and the directors of DBEDT, DLIR, the chair of the governor's innovation council, four members of the business community and of the general public and two university students.

The University of Hawai'i supports the bill in concept and sees merit in establishing an entity that not only qualifies the state to receive federal financial aid, but also serves as a vehicle for the management of state scholarships (i.e., the B Plus State Scholarship). Many states have a higher education commission devoted to managing financial aid for students within the state, and this could be advantageous to residents seeking post-secondary education and training and advantageous to the state in increasing the educational attainment of its citizens.

We are concerned, however, by the broadening of the responsibilities of the commission to evaluate Hawai'i's elementary and secondary public schools and their policies to increase the rate of students pursuing postsecondary education. We are currently working closely with the State Department of Education on increasing student

preparedness for college and careers through the American Diploma Project, an initiative supported by the P-20 Council. These efforts are bearing fruit. For example, the Board of Education is now considering establishing a more rigorous high school diploma option which aligns with the criteria for the B Plus State Scholarship established by the UH Board of Regents. We would prefer to continue our partnership with the DOE through the P-20 Initiative rather than placing the University in a position of evaluating the public schools as indicated in section (d).

We also are concerned with the proposed expanded membership. Nineteen members is unwieldy and would require staff support and coordination.

Thus, while we support the intent of HB 3072 to rethink the role of the state post-secondary commission, we have strong reservations about the suggested change in purpose and expanded membership.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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