



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

**Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education**
April 1, 2008 at 2:00 p.m.

by
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**HCR 325 HD1 / HR 269 HD1 – REQUESTING HAWAII'S NATURAL DISASTER
PREPAREDNESS TRAINING CENTER TO WORK WITH THE JOINT
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON FAMILY CARE GIVING, KUPUNA CAUCUS,
AND OTHER INTERESTED ORGANIZATIONS AND PERSONS TO DEVELOP
PROGRAMS EMPHASIZING AT-RISK COMMUNITIES.**

Chair Chang, Vice Chair Bertram, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of HCR 325 HD1 and HR 269 HD1.

The mission of the National Disaster Preparedness Training Center (NDPTC) explicitly includes an emphasis on at-risk populations which include the elderly, persons with disabilities, as well as those with medical conditions.

An integral part of our program and curricular development will be meeting with members of the community, including state and local government agencies and non-profit organizations.

We would also like to take this opportunity to provide you with some background on the NDPTC and the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium of which it is a member.

As an island state, recent events have reminded us of how vulnerable we are to a myriad of natural hazards. Over the past 4 years, the Governor has issued numerous disaster proclamations including the Mānoa flood in October 2004, the March 2006 flood and Ka Loko dam failure, the October 2006 earthquake, and brush fires on the Big Island and the North Shore of O'ahu. The ability of the general public to prepare for and

respond to natural disasters is a key component in our ability to withstand and recover from such events.

As a land, sea, and space grant institution with national and international recognition for its academic and research excellence in the fields of urban planning and earth sciences, the University of Hawai'i has the expertise and research and training programs in the fields of disaster management and related topics to conduct research and develop specific models and tools for monitoring natural hazards and evaluating risk to urban areas. Planning for the response, recovery and reconstruction of communities affected by natural disasters will include a special emphasis on islands and at risk vulnerable populations.

The National Domestic Preparedness Consortium was established by Congressional Mandate in September 1998 (House Conference Report [H.R.2267]) and reconfirmed in Public Law 107-273 in 2001. The original members (Center for Domestic Preparedness, Louisiana State University, Nevada Test Site, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, and Texas A&M University) of the Consortium addressed counterterrorism preparedness needs of our nation's emergency responders within the context of chemical, biological, radiological, and explosive (Weapons of Mass Destruction [WMD]) hazards. Re-authorized in Homeland Security legislation (H.R.1) in 2007 through FY 2011, the Consortium's mission was expanded to include all hazards, including technological and natural hazards. Two new members were added to the Consortium (Transportation Technology Center, Inc. and the National Disaster Preparedness Training Center at the University of Hawai'i). Within DHS, the Consortium is located within the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) under the National Preparedness Directorate.

On August 3, 2007, President Bush signed H.R. 1 "Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007" which authorized the establishment of the National Disaster Preparedness Training Center (NDPTC) at the University of Hawai'i. UH is uniquely positioned to develop and deliver natural disaster preparedness training to governmental, private, and non-profit entities, incorporating urban planning with an emphasis on community preparedness and at-risk populations.

The focus of the NDPTC is on building community resilience to all hazards by developing and providing training to first responders, decision makers, policy analysts, and urban planners. Additionally, we will need to reach key management and administrators in the public and private sectors who are responsible for facilities with high occupancies such as hotels, condominiums, public venues, and schools.

The NDPTC will partner with key federal, state, local and international partners to develop and implement training on disaster preparedness, response, and recovery relevant to the special needs and conditions of Pacific island communities and others at risk from natural and technological hazards. In addition to meeting with the other Consortium members at our quarterly meetings, we have had productive meetings with FEMA's Emergency Management Institute and others within the Department of Homeland Security involved with training and community preparedness, response and recovery. We have also interacted with the Natural Hazards Center at the University of

Colorado, Boulder as well as other national and international training and research partners. We have been also working closely with other entities and organizations within Hawaii and the region involved with disaster management. It is evident that the work of the NDPTC will play an important role in addressing needs of both Pacific island communities and also other coastal communities as well as those affected by natural disasters throughout the nation.

The NDPTC will provide training consisting of formal degrees and certificate programs, as well as specialized courses, workshops and conferences; coordinate the sharing of data and information related to disaster preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery; and serve as an incubator for new ideas, technologies, business and partnerships between academia, business and government.

Because the Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance (DMHA) certificate program in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning forms the foundation for the NDPTC, there is a critical need to expand the instructional and research capacity of the DMHA program. In addition to transforming existing curriculum so that it is appropriate for our diverse training constituencies, we need to increase the DMHA program to address areas focusing on at-risk populations, community-based emergency planning, and the impact of climate change on coastal communities.



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

House Concurrent Resolution 325/House Resolution 269 - Developing Hawaii's National Disaster Preparedness Training and Consultation Program for Private, Governmental, and Non-Profit Entities with an Emphasis on At-Risk Communities

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports House Concurrent Resolution 325/House Resolution 269 which requests that the National Disaster Preparedness Training Center include in its work program a component that addresses the needs of Hawaii's at-risk population of elderly persons and persons with disabilities.

We understand the function of the National Disaster Preparedness Training Center is to conduct research and develop models for disaster preparedness for the entire population. The Board has worked extensively in the past 2-1/2 years to develop the "2008 Interagency Action Plan for the Emergency Preparedness of People with Disabilities and Special Health Needs" in specific response to the unique needs of at-risk populations. We believe that these needs and issues should be integrated into the generic community planning efforts and that the National Disaster Preparedness Training Center is an appropriate vehicle for this effort.

We note that DCAB, as well as other agencies, are mentioned in the resolution for the transmittal of certified copies the resolution. Specific agencies should be listed on page 2, line 25 for inclusion by the Center in its efforts. We would be willing to participate in any group as noted in the resolution.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,


PATRICIA M. NIELSEN
Chairperson
Legislative Committee


FRANCINE WAI
Executive Director