

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



SB 2729 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committees on Health and Education
February 6, 2008 at 1:15 pm

by

Karen C. Lee
Interim Associate Vice President for Student Affairs
University of Hawaii System

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Chair Ige, Chair Sakamoto, Vice Chair Fukunaga, Vice Chair Tokuda, and Members of the Committees:

The purpose of SB 2729 is to establish a student loan forgiveness program to provide nursing health care to underserved areas of the State of Hawai'i.

The University of Hawai'i appreciates the intent of the Legislature to provide financial support through a loan forgiveness program to students who wish to become nurses in the State of Hawai'i. However, the University cannot support this bill because of the extensive administrative hardship this will place on our various offices, in particular our financial aid offices and general accounting office, to track students after graduation and to administer such a loan. With our current mission as an educational institution and our capacity of staffing and resources, we would not be able to develop and maintain such a program.

The private banking and loan industry sector may be a more appropriate place in which to initiate such a program. With limited resources, the University would not be able to adequately administer the program as would a private corporation.

Furthermore, the University does not believe that this type of incentive directly relates to the State's nursing shortage. At this point, we have more students than spaces available in our nursing programs across the UH system, and this bill would not alleviate the demand.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



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Room:225

Aloha Chairpersons Sakamoto and Ige and members of the committees. My name is Clyde Namuo, Administrator of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. The Office of Hawaiian Affairs **strongly supports SB 2729**. Our interest in this legislation is primarily based on the expected demand for registered nurses by 2020 and disparity of supply of 13.8%. OHA recognizes and supports incentives for students to seek a nursing education and, upon graduating, to practice nursing in Hawaii.

OHA supports additional forms of credit that reward employment in rural communities. An example of such is a waiver increase of an additional one-tenth for each year post-graduation for the first five years served in Hawaii's rural communities. Another example is to offer nurses who choose to live in the rural communities where they serve affordable home or rental loans.

In addition to financial incentives, the pending crisis can benefit from nurses prepared to work in rural communities. Programs, instruction and instructors must prepare students for the unique island approach to wellness and the special challenges of diverse socio-economic populations.

An example is 'IKE AO PONO, an innovative program at the School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene (SONDH) at UH Manoa. 'IKE AO PONO's first purpose is to "improve the health of Hawaiian and Pacific Island peoples through culturally sensitive care." They do so by supporting nursing students who are dedicated to serving Hawaii's rural and underserved communities successfully graduate. 'IKE AO PONO trains these students to properly care for a rural Pacific Island demographic.

'IKE AO PONO's 60 RN graduates as of Spring 2008 represent culturally competent nurses who are committed to contribute to and ultimately transform healthcare in Hawaii. Many more, however, are needed, and thus OHA encourages implementation of similar programs in the future.

OHA urges your support for HB2706. Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to present testimony.