

SCR80



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

BOARD OF REGENTS

Testimony presented before the
Senate Committees on Education and
Economic Development and Technology
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SCR 80 – REQUESTING REPORTS ON THE FEASIBILITY OF USING EXISTING TELECONFERENCING AND VIDEOCONFERENCING FACILITIES FOR UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII BOARD OF REGENTS AND BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS

Chairs Tokuda and Fukunaga, Vice Chairs Kidani and Wakai, and members of the Senate Committees on Education and Economic Development and Technology:

The University of Hawai'i Board of Regents appreciates this well-intentioned resolution that proposes to help the University save money through the use of alternative meeting technologies.

The Board has considered the use of such technologies at several times to try to lessen the travel burden on our neighbor island Regents. In each case, the logistics have mitigated against this approach. We would therefore like to share our observations regarding the use of teleconferencing and videoconferencing for meetings of the Board of Regents. These are not insurmountable obstacles, but represent practical considerations and challenges that would need to be addressed for the systemic cost-effective use of teleconferencing and videoconferencing.

In general, the Board of Regents regular meetings are scheduled far enough in advance that most members are able to schedule their time and achieving quorum is usually not a problem. The Board also accepts public testimony on agenda items in advance by mail, email and fax. Therefore, the primary purpose for using teleconferencing and videoconferencing would be to reduce travel costs.

In general, Board of Regents meetings take place as full day meetings during the week. This represents peak instructional time on UH campuses. Given the nature of class scheduling, holding existing UH videoconferencing facilities open for regular Board of Regents meetings each month would essentially require withholding those facilities from scheduling for regular classes one day a week.

The State Sunshine law prohibits the use of telephonic or audio-only technologies for official meetings. The State Sunshine law further requires that every location where a

Board member participates be open to the public. And the State Sunshine law also has specific and fairly stringent requirements for handling situations in which video connectivity cannot be maintained. In total, these requirements preclude the use of common technologies such as Skype, which would allow Board members to conveniently participate from their homes or offices. And in total, these Sunshine Law considerations also impose a practical requirement that every site where a Board member participates on any island would need to be fully staffed in order to accommodate the public and address any connectivity challenges that might arise at any time during the meeting. In essence the cost of a plane ticket for a neighbor island Board member would be traded off against the dedication of a room and full-time staff support on that island.

Almost every regular meeting of the Board of Regents includes an Executive Session. Given the use of “control rooms” for the University’s most capable existing videoconferencing facilities, a technical and logistic plan would need to be developed and implemented to preserve and ensure confidentiality among multiple locations for neighbor island Regents to participate.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.