



## UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

### Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Labor & Public Employment  
Tuesday, February 7, 2012  
9:30 a.m.

By  
Dr. Linda K. Johnsrud  
Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost  
University of Hawai'i

#### HB 2859 RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Yamashita and Members of House Committee on Labor & Public Employment, I am submitting written testimony on behalf of the University of Hawai'i regarding House Bill 2859 – Relating to Collective Bargaining which proposes to amend HRS, §89-6, to not exclude from collective bargaining “...students of a state institution that are not employed by the State”.

The University of Hawai'i has concerns regarding the impact, intended and unintended, of the proposal if such legislation were enacted.

While the introductory section of the bill references graduate assistants, Section 2 of the bill deletes student help and inserts the provision “.. *students of a state institution that are not employed by the State.*” In the absence of a clear definition or description, the amending language could be interpreted as extending collective bargaining rights to undergraduate students, or even HIDOE K-12 students. We ask that the groups in question, i.e., graduate teaching and research assistants be clearly defined.

Most importantly, however, the University's graduate assistants are unlike any other employees. They are students first, and employees second. Graduate assistants are student learners. They are at the university to learn as much about their fields of study as their time and talents will allow. These graduate assistants are mentored and supervised by our rank 3, 4, and 5 faculty members who all hold Ph.D.'s and have many years of proven professional competence and experience, including evidence of proficiency in teaching. Part of our efforts as university mentors is to teach graduate assistants the subject matter. An equal or larger part of our efforts is devoted to turning them out as academic professionals with real job skills in research techniques, teaching expertise, database management, etc. They learn these essential skill sets while in their graduate assistant positions under the guidance and supervision of our current faculty employees. A graduate assistantship is not a career or profession, but most similar to an on-the-job training or apprenticeship program.

Graduate assistants' duties and work assignments differ significantly from that of faculty employees. Our Faculty members in ranks 3, 4, and 5 are required to teach classes and/or develop research programs with no supervision or oversight. There are at times consultation and interaction with other faculty members depending on the department's teaching needs or research focus, but there is not supervision *per se*. A graduate assistant does not step into a classroom, laboratory, or field exercise without supervision of some kind. Senior Teaching Assistants may be capable of teaching a lecture section with little or no supervision because they have been mentored and trained to take on that type of assignment. Similarly, senior Research Assistants will undertake more complex roles without strict supervision or even have the capacity to develop new techniques as they grow into their roles. Our goal is to train and mentor these graduate assistants to get them to that point where they can function as professionals and begin their careers.

From a collective bargaining perspective, it does not appear that the proposed amended group-- students "*not employed by the state*"--would fall within any of the existing categories under HRS, §89-6(a). Therefore, either the current categories will need to be expanded or additional bargaining units created. The issue of expanding the number and type of collective bargaining units has been a long standing issue by various employee groups and will likely lead to extensive debate and discussions with representatives of the existing bargaining units and advocates of other various employee groups. Included among the issues that would need to be addressed are the definition of the employer and the dispute resolution or impasse procedure (i.e., right to strike or subject to interest arbitration).

If collective bargaining were extended to *students not employed by a State institution*, among the mandatory subject of negotiations would be wages, hours, conditions of employment and fringe benefits. Wage and fringe benefits would have cost implications to both the State and the individual employer. In addition to the stipends that graduate student workers earn, the University also provides them full tuition waivers which may range from \$458.00 to \$725.00 per credit hour for residents; tuition waivers for non-resident tuition can range from \$1,116.00 to \$1,382.00 per credit hour. A full time graduate student resident tuition ranges from \$5,500.00 to \$9,000.00 per semester while non-resident tuition ranges from \$13,400.00 to \$16,600 per semester. Such matters will become negotiable subjects and may or may not be included in the negotiated compensation package.

Moreover, in the current fiscal climate, all UH employees have had their salaries reduced to deal with the funding shortfalls. We have been able to protect graduate students serving as teaching or research assistants from these reductions, but under this proposal their stipends would become negotiable. Currently graduate students can advance on a salary schedule according to their years of service or experience; even in the current fiscal climate, we have not precluded increased wages for graduate assistants. Furthermore, graduate assistants have access to a choice of subsidized group medical coverage or student health insurance plans; under this proposal, medical coverage would become negotiable.

The passage of this proposal would result in considerable new expense for the University as well as the state. The unfortunate consequence would likely be fewer opportunities for graduate students to benefit from serving as teaching and/or research assistants and less support for the University's core mission.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.





HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION  
AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

RANDY PERREIRA, Executive Director • Tel: 808.543.0011 • Fax: 808.528.0922

The Twenty-Sixth Legislature, State of Hawaii  
House of Representatives  
Committee on Labor and Public Employment

Testimony by  
Hawaii Government Employees Association  
February 7, 2012

H.B. 2859 – RELATING TO  
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO strongly supports the concept of allowing student help to be included in an appropriate collective bargaining unit, as proposed in H.B. 2859 – Relating to Collective Bargaining.

Student workers have encountered numerous issues in the past few years, including budget cutbacks, an increase in class size and workload, and the ever increasing cost-of-living in Hawaii. Despite these issues, student workers have not received a salary increase since 2004. Amending Chapter 89-6, Hawaii Revised Statutes, by removing the exclusion of student help employees from collectively bargaining is the first necessary step in allowing them to unionize and will ensure their rights as state workers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 2859.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira  
Executive Director



**yamashita2 ---Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 01, 2012 3:21 PM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** adonahue@hawaii.edu  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM  
**Attachments:** HB2859SUPPORT

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Amy Donahue  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [adonahue@hawaii.edu](mailto:adonahue@hawaii.edu)  
Submitted on: 2/1/2012

Comments:  
Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 2859

Aloha,

Hawaii's public universities depend on student labor, but the state's current collective bargaining laws deny students ordinary, reasonable worker rights. As a result, student workers are disadvantaged relative to other workers in negotiations with university administrators. The currently unequal treatment afforded by the state to student workers negatively affects graduate student financial health and in some cases leads to lifelong financial distress, including poverty conditions. For example, I worked for the State of Hawai'i for 6 years, from 2003 until 2009, as a graduate assistant teaching the state's college students and as a graduate assistant managing an interdisciplinary academic center. During this time, I earned approximately \$15,000 p. year, the same each year, paid nearly \$300 p. mth for health insurance, and graduated with about six figures in debt. Mahalo for supporting HB 2859.

Sincerely,

Amy Donahue, Ph.D.  
Temporary Assistant Professor  
Department of History and Philosophy  
Kennesaw State University  
Kennesaw, GA 30144





Committee on Labor and Public Employment  
Chair, Rep. Karl Rhoads  
Vice Chair, Rep. Kyle Yamashita

**Re: Support for HB2859**

Feb. 7, 2012  
9:30am, Conference Room 309

To the honorable committee members:

My name is Rebecca Stotzer, and I am an Associate Professor at the Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work at the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa, and am writing as a citizen of Hawai'i and someone who had spent the last fifteen years in institutions of higher education. I am writing in support of HB2859.

Graduate students and student assistants play a vital role in the academic community. As a graduate student at the University of Michigan (one of the University's listed in HB2859), I was a part of our graduate student union, and participated in two different rounds of collecting bargaining with the university. In one round of bargaining, graduate students were able to get access to day care facilities on campus. Previously, the university had expected them to be available for class periods and office hours, but graduate students were not eligible for on campus day care placements and did not receive any kind of day care assistance or subsidy in order to do the work of the university. However, with respectful collective bargaining from both sides, *because of the union, graduate students were able to secure some of these basic necessities to do the important work of the university.* In another round of bargaining, the union was able to secure modest pay raises to reflect cost of living adjustments, when most of us were living on cereal and ramen and often had to choose which bills to pay and which to delay due to low salaries. *Because of my union, I was able to live modestly but without fear of food insecurity or homelessness while pursuing my education.*

Allowing graduate students to unionize benefited everyone. The university learned of the needs of this valued segment of their workforce as contract negotiation periods arose, and the graduate students were able to secure needed changes to the conditions of their employment to continue with their graduate studies while supporting the university with their labor. Therefore, **I support HB2859's** proposed change to protect graduate students by allowing them to participate in collective bargaining. With great respect,

Rebecca Stotzer  
(808) 956-6121  
House District 24



**yamashita2 ----Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 01, 2012 6:15 PM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** forster@hawaii.edu  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Richard Forster  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [forster@hawaii.edu](mailto:forster@hawaii.edu)  
Submitted on: 2/1/2012

**Comments:**

As a graduate student at the University of Hawaii who has worked as a teaching assistant I believe it should be my right to join a union that can help protect my interests. Furthermore, if the interests of graduate students are protected in this way, I believe that the quality of educational outcomes at the University will dramatically improve. This can only be a good thing for the people of Hawaii. Thank you.



**yamashita2 ----Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 01, 2012 10:01 PM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** tristanh@hawaii.edu  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Tristan Holmes  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [tristanh@hawaii.edu](mailto:tristanh@hawaii.edu)  
Submitted on: 2/1/2012

**Comments:**

Please pass this bill. The University of Hawaii system suffers greatly from incompetent administration above the departmental level, and graduate students are hurting because of it. Levels of support for graduate students are far too low and are given/taken cavalierly. Every graduate student who comes out of here will spread the word to students on the mainland that if they attend UH they will face poor working conditions. This bad reputation will cost UH talented students and the out of state tuition they would pay.



2 February 2012

Dear House of Representatives,

I am writing to ask that you vote in favor of HB2859, the bill which would give graduate student employees the ability to bargain for fair and appropriate student salaries.

It has been over 7 years since students working as graduate assistant have had a salary increase, however, the cost of living has continued to increase every year. Currently, students have no effective way to negotiate for a much-needed salary increase. HB2859 would change that.

The lack of value put in students (in the form of a respectable amount of pay) discourages many exceptional students from enrolling at UH, and also reduces retention rates for students because many cannot afford to live on the meager wages they earn.

Please recognize the necessity and value of passing this bill.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Chai Blair-Stahn  
Graduate Student, Pacific Island Studies, UH Mānoa





**yamashita2 ----Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 01, 2012 6:45 PM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** bisaki@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Bianca Isaki  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [bisaki@gmail.com](mailto:bisaki@gmail.com)  
Submitted on: 2/1/2012

Comments:



HB2859

Testifier position: Support

Testifier will be present: No

Submitted by: Douglas Chun

Organization: Individual

To whom it may concern,

I would like you to pass this bill. Other testimonies have likely brought up our lack of bargaining power, the rising cost of living without increases in wages, lack of recourse should we have a grievance, etc. I would like to bring up one simple issue: As a full time PhD student, with a family, I have very little time to do little else. My wife and I live with our kids in my parents' house because my wife's income is not enough to afford rent. I make a grand total of \$421 every two weeks for teaching the same course that full professors teach for more than 5 times as much, and receive no benefits.

This state and the nation as a whole have stated that education is important, but we have seen little evidence of support for education in this state.

Support this bill.



**yamashita2 ----Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 02, 2012 11:29 AM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** cheryl.geslani@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Cheryl Scarton  
Organization: UH Manoa GSO  
E-mail: [cheryl.geslani@gmail.com](mailto:cheryl.geslani@gmail.com)  
Submitted on: 2/2/2012

Comments:



**yamashita2 ----Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 02, 2012 10:48 AM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** jasfcartw@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: James F. Cartwright  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [jasfcartw@gmail.com](mailto:jasfcartw@gmail.com)  
Submitted on: 2/2/2012

**Comments:**

Although I am not a graduate student, I have a vital concern for those who are and who in turn work for the University. For too long, the graduate students at the University of Hawaii have been denied the rights to organize and bargain for working conditions, including wages.

Since the "revolution" in 1954, our tradition in Hawaii has been one of sympathy for workers rights. It is time to eliminate this block to some underpaid workers.

Please pass this measure.

James F. Cartwright  
University Archivist  
University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Please note that this opinion is my personal conviction and does not represent the University.





To whom it may concern:

Regarding Graduate Student Unionization Bill House Bill 2859, HB2859. I strongly support this bill and think that now is the time to protect students pursuing graduate studies. I am a second year graduate student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa studying Geography and have worked as a teaching assistant thus far in my graduate career. I have found it difficult to survive on the wages provided to me and have had to seek other employment in the service industry. This second job has taken time away from my studies and my teaching responsibilities, but without this extra income, I would not be able to pay for necessities outside of rent such as groceries and personal health supplies. I think that it is a disgrace that graduate students have not had a salary raise since 2004 and furthermore that we are prohibited from joining a union for university student workers. We deserve the right as students to unionize as state employees. Hawaii needs to stand behind individuals seeking fair pay and benefits, especially those seeking higher education so that they may positively contribute to the Hawaii community and economy.

Sincerely,

Olivia Schubert  
[oliviass@hawaii.edu](mailto:oliviass@hawaii.edu)  
356-9364



Dear State Legislators,

I am currently a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i-Manoa. Right now, I am excluded from forming or joining a union as an employee at a state institution. My fellow graduate students who are employed have not had salary raises since 2004. Are graduate students not also people? Do we not deserve to collectively bargain for better treatment as employees? It is not a myth that graduate students work long hours for little pay, living off of little and paying off debt for high tuition costs. Graduate students are highly skilled workers who are giving back to the state and giving back to the community. Does our labor not count for as much as other state employees? Our current collective bargaining laws are out of date and prohibit us to form and/or join a union as graduate student workers at public state university. I implore you to please update our collective bargaining laws and remove "student help" from the list of individuals prohibited from inclusion in any appropriate collective bargaining unit.

Please pass HB2859. The overwhelming effects of the University of Hawaii's system-wide and campus-wide budget cuts on graduate students need to be addressed now. Graduate students, myself included, are voters. We voted you in to office, and we ask that you take action immediately to ensure our rights as state employees for better working conditions and a salary increase. Please do not let the exploitation of our labor continue. We have no recourse of action for grievances or for advocating for our rights and education.

Thank you for your time,  
Jessica Austin  
Honolulu, Hawai'i  
University of Hawai'i-Manoa



**yamashita2 ----Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 02, 2012 11:20 AM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** c2paul@hotmail.com  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Dr .Paul M Chandler  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [c2paul@hotmail.com](mailto:c2paul@hotmail.com)  
Submitted on: 2/2/2012

**Comments:**

Please support HB2859 which will allow graduate students to be treated with respect. They deserve to have better status and better treatment, especially in view of their horribly low stipends and almost zero possible benefits. Sincerely, Paul M. Chandler



**yamashita2 ----Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 02, 2012 12:02 PM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** LaneSki@LaneDavey.com  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Lane Davey  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [LaneSki@LaneDavey.com](mailto:LaneSki@LaneDavey.com)  
Submitted on: 2/2/2012

**Comments:**

I am a resident unclassified student with a 3.6 GPA who has been rejected from the graduate program twice now which is partly because UH has had so many budget cuts so I have been harshly effected by these cuts. Student help and assistantships are essential for graduate students who should have a stake in the collective especially since they are likely to become future teachers. I support HB2859





**yamashita2 ----Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 02, 2012 12:50 PM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** novam@hawaii.edu  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Nova Morrisette  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [novam@hawaii.edu](mailto:novam@hawaii.edu)  
Submitted on: 2/2/2012

**Comments:**

I am a graduate student who works as a UHManoa Research Assistant. This position pays approximately 2/3rds of what I need to live a very simple life in Honolulu. I take 12 grad-level hours of classes a semester, and do a required, but unpaid, 20 hour-a-week practicum each semester. This leaves me very little time to do homework and Dissertation research, and even less time get a second job to try to pay the bills. Please pass this bill. Thank you,  
Nova



**yamashita2 ----Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 02, 2012 10:17 PM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** bertz@hawaii.edu  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Ned Bertz  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [bertz@hawaii.edu](mailto:bertz@hawaii.edu)  
Submitted on: 2/2/2012

**Comments:**

As a University of Hawai`i faculty member, I strongly support this bill. Denying graduate student workers the option of collective bargaining is a violation of their rights. Furthermore, it damages the University and the state. If graduate student workers can negotiate their contracts collectively, it is more likely they will have access to adequate health care and other benefits, including a living wage. This will make them more productive workers in their duties of educating students and helping make the university run efficiently--crucial as an economic engine of our state. As a student myself at an institution which had a graduate student union, I testify that this organization increased productivity and collegiality. The UH works because graduate student workers do. They deserve the same rights as all workers. Please support this bill.



**yamashita2 ----Aulii**

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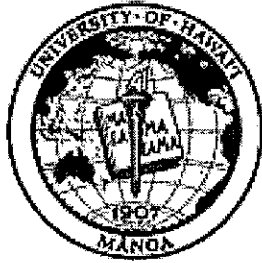
**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 02, 2012 3:23 PM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** jolit.anais@laposte.net  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: anais jolit  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [jolit.anais@laposte.net](mailto:jolit.anais@laposte.net)  
Submitted on: 2/2/2012

Comments:





**RICHARD R. COLEMAN**  
**UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII**  
**MANOA**  
**HAWAII INSTITUTE OF**  
**MARINE BIOLOGY**

P.O. Box 1346  
Kaneohe, HI 96744  
T (916) 524-3734  
F (808) 236-7443  
rcolema@hawaii.edu

February 5, 2012

Committee on Labor & Public Employment  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: HB 2859

Dear Members of the Committee on Labor & Public Employment,

I am currently a graduate student at the University of Hawaii, Manoa (UHM) and I am in full support of this Bill HB 2859. I have worked as a teaching assistant for UHM and take great pride in providing the undergraduate students I teach with well thought out lesson plans and a supportive learning environment. It is vital for graduate students to be able to retain our rights as state employees for better working conditions and salary increase. It is my firm belief that graduate students provide a critical component to UHM's undergraduate education and that as employees of the University we should be aptly compensated for our work. Since 2004, we have not received a salary increase; yet with the rising cost of living it is difficult for graduate students to have their work as Teaching Assistant's cover their basic living costs. Additionally increasing the pay of graduate student positions on campus will enable the University to remain competitive with other graduate programs on the mainland and to recruit new graduate students to pursue degrees here in Hawaii. It is my firm belief that the passing of HB 2859 is vital to the continued success of current and future graduate student at UHM.

Sincerely yours,

Richard R. Coleman  
M.S. Candidate, Zoology





## HB 2859 – IN FULL SUPPORT OF THIS BILL

In the Fall 2009, I was hired as a Graduate Teaching Assistant (G.T.A.) and was required to sign a letter that I agreed to teach two classes. Unbeknownst to me there existed a Graduate work policy that states, “a G.T.A. may teach one class or lab.” After experiencing an overload of work in the first semester of teaching, I felt it my responsibility to inform the Director of Kamakakuokalani Hawaiian Studies Center that he might want to reexamine the workload.

No action was taken by management to correct the situation so a group of 6 G.T.A.s which included myself, filed a grievance after discovering that a policy existed stating that a G.T.A. may teach one class or lab. It was our hope that either the policy be rewritten to state that a G.T.A. may teach two classes or lab or that management comply with the written policy.

We followed the grievance process and filed a grievance with our direct supervisor, which then escalated to the Graduate Chair of Hawaiian Studies, then to the Director of Kamakakuokalani Hawaiian Studies Center, then the Graduate Division and then to the Vice-Chancellor’s Office. Finally, we staged a protest at the UH Board of Regents meeting in March 2011. Shortly thereafter, we presented the details of our grievance to the Graduate Student Organization (G.S.O.). Hoping to gain a wider student support, we found that other G.T.A.’s were experiencing similar policy violations. We also discovered that we were considered wards of the state thus were not entitled to any type of union representation.

Over the next three semesters, one G.T.A. dropped out of the M.A. program and went to another campus to teach. Two others became Graduate Research Assistants (G.R.A.’s) to avoid retaliation. Another who was a single parent dropped out of the grievance process for fear of losing her job. That left myself and one other G.T.A. to continue the grievance process as far as we could take it.

At the start of the fourth semester of teaching, we were asked if we planned to teach one or two classes. Naturally, we responded that we would teach one class and only according to the G.T.A. written policy. We were not challenged or directed otherwise to teach two classes. In the summer of 2011, we received a letter informing us that we would not be rehired in the Fall 2011 although the other G.T.A. had already graduated that same semester. So, I was left alone to fight this wrongful action taken against me.

Consequently, I sought legal counsel who contacted the U.H. Legal Department who wished to resolve the situation quickly and agreed to hire me back as a G.R.A. They also made it clear that the G.R.A. position paid more than the current position that I was hired as a G.T.A. It has been our contention from the onstart that G.T.A.s have no one to represent us whenever a violation of work rules has transpired. Therefore, I am IN FULL SUPPORT of HB 2859 to allow G.T.A.s to unionize thus providing representation that all other employees of the state of Hawai’i enjoy.



**yamashita2 ----Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 05, 2012 7:54 PM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** gnuyen@math.hawaii.edu  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Paul Nguyen  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [gnuyen@math.hawaii.edu](mailto:gnuyen@math.hawaii.edu)  
Submitted on: 2/5/2012

**Comments:**

I support this bill. As a graduate student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, I believe it is exploitative to not allow graduate students and TAs, whose professional careers are held in the hands of their advisers, who also happen to be their bosses, not to have any collective representation. This is a situation ripe for exploitation, and I have seen it first hand as high educated graduate students are forced to work for little pay, and asked to do things outside the scope of their employment. Please allow us a voice.



**yamashita2 ----Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 05, 2012 6:08 PM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** dspaffor@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: DAVID SPAFFORD  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [dspaffor@gmail.com](mailto:dspaffor@gmail.com)  
Submitted on: 2/5/2012

**Comments:**

As a teaching assistant graduate student, I am working long hours for low wages. I worked today, Sunday, preparing a lab for students. It seems unfair that our important State of Hawaii jobs are not represented by any ability to bargain for more livable wages.



I am currently a graduate student at UH Manoa and am in full support of this Bill. I have worked as a teaching assistant for UH Manoa and take great pride in providing the undergraduate students I interact with well thought out lesson plans and a supportive learning environment. It is vital for graduate students to be able to retain our rights as state employees for better working conditions and salary increase. It is my firm belief that graduate students provide a critical component to UH Manoa's undergraduate teaching and that as employees of the University we should be aptly compensated for our work. Since 2004, we have not received a salary increase; yet with the rising cost of living it is difficult for graduate students to have their work as Teaching assistants cover their basic living costs. Additionally increasing pay of graduate student positions on campus will enable the University to remain competitive with other graduate programs on the mainland and to recruit new graduate students to pursue degrees here in Hawaii.





Please accept my written testimony in support of HB2859.

I am a faculty member in the English Department at UH-M, and am concerned about graduate education.

In order for us to recruit excellent graduate students, and then in order to support them while they are attending UH in a way that enables them to succeed in their respective pursuits, they need better working conditions.

Graduate students receive very little pay and must struggle given the rising cost of living, taxes and tuition. Their labor is exploited and they no recourse of action for a grievance process to advocate for their workers' rights and education.

Their current collective bargaining laws are out of date and currently prohibit them from forming or joining join a union as graduate student workers at a public state university.

They deserve the right to unionize as state employees, and the UH system needs, for the sake of maintaining research standards, to see that graduate students are treated with fairness and respect.

Sincerely,  
Cynthia Franklin  
Professor  
Department of English  
UH-Manoa  
cfrankli@hawaii.edu



Written Statement of  
**Robert Brewer**  
**PhD Candidate in Computer Science**, University of Hawaii at Manoa  
before the  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT**  
Tuesday, February 7, 2012  
9:30 AM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 309

In consideration of  
**HB 2859 RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING.**

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Yamashita, and Members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment:

I support the intent of HB2859, which would allow students employed at a state institution to form or join a union.

Student employees are vulnerable because they are very much at the mercy of the administration. Graduate student workers at UH Manoa have not received a salary increase since 2004, despite increases in the cost of living. Preventing student workers by statute from forming or joining a union creates an unfair power imbalance between students and the institution that employs us.

I urge you to eliminate the ban on student worker unionization. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony on this bill.



To: House Committee on Labor and Public Employment

From: Shahin Rahman ([shahinur@hawaii.edu](mailto:shahinur@hawaii.edu))

Testimony for HB2859— VERY STRONG SUPPORT

My name is Shahin Rahman. I am a doctoral student in the department of urban and regional planning at UH Manoa. I'm an international student from Bangladesh. I have been working as Graduate Assistant (GA) since 2008. Over this four year period, my GA salary has remained almost stagnant. I only received one pay increase during the entire four years. Even though, there is a vague rule that states "After two semesters of satisfactory service, GAs may receive a step increase."<sup>1</sup> I worked for 3 years in the same organization and there was no complain from my boss that my performance was unsatisfactory. Rather, I was working on different components of the project that was beyond the job description. Moreover, the project I was involved had substantial funding to provide me a step increase as the rule suggest. I repeatedly asked my employer to give me a raise by citing the above mentioned rule. However, I was denied my hardly earned step increase. To add insult to injury, my job contract was not renewed after the summer of 2011. I have strong conviction that my boss was not particularly happy when I raised my voice regarding salary and other job place issues. Since, there is no oversight to check whether the early mentioned rule is getting implemented, principal investigators like my boss very often violate this salary increase provision thus exploit graduate student workers.

Partially driven by my frustration with my boss regarding salary increase and work place condition, I joined Graduate Student Organization (GSO) to see if I can do anything about this. Since summer of 2011, I have been working in GSO executive committee as "Employment and Compensation" chair. As the title of the position suggests, one of the main responsibilities of this position is to "investigate concerns of students regarding employment and compensation."<sup>2</sup> Since the fall of 2011, I have been looking into different issues regarding employment and compensation. During middle of fall semester I went to Graduate Division office at UH Manoa to seek some demographic, admission and other information about graduate student population. I was also trying to find out since when the existing graduate assistant salary rate has been in place<sup>3</sup>. I ran into a graduate division official and received a document which shows graduate assistant salary rate since the academic year of 1987-88. The stunning revelation that I discovered from this document was that the current graduate assistant salary package has been effective since the academic year 2003-04. In another words, there has been no salary increase since 2003-04. To put this matter into perspective, from academic year 1987-88 to 1992-93, there has always been a modest salary increase in every academic year. During the academic year 1993-94 and 2002-03, the salary increase occurred in every 3 to 4 years as opposed to the previous trend when salary raise happened in every academic year. This regressive trend brought us to the current situation whereby graduate student workers have not seen a dime

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<sup>1</sup> <http://manoa.hawaii.edu/graduate/content/compensation-tax-withholding>

<sup>2</sup> [http://gso.hawaii.edu/page/?page\\_id=44](http://gso.hawaii.edu/page/?page_id=44)

<sup>3</sup> For current graduate assistant pay steps, please see: <http://manoa.hawaii.edu/graduate/content/compensation-tax-withholding>

increase in their pay check for almost about a decade. As soon as I digested this sour pill of salary stagnation document, I immediately contacted graduate division and found out they have been working on a new salary structure which up until very recently is still going through discussion. Even though my job description with GSO suggests I am entitled to investigate compensation related issues, I cannot do much given as a graduate student we do not have the right to collectively bargain to negotiate our salary or other rights due to the existing state law that prohibits students to unionize. It is imperative to change the existing law.

I would like to finish this testimony with a personal story. As I have mentioned earlier, I'm an international student from Bangladesh. I have been living in Honolulu and attending UH Manoa since 2005. After completion of my MA degree I have started doctoral program since 2008. I have chosen to continue my graduate study at UH Manoa for couple of reasons. I have fallen in love with this land of Aloha and I was not quite ready to leave right after I received my MA degree. At the same time, I was able to build a rapport among my classmates and faculties in my department and the community I was living. In retrospective, sometime I ponder how rational was it for me to continue my doctoral program at UH Manoa. This feeling of ambivalence has nothing to do with my feeling about this island. Neither has it had anything to do with my personal relation with my fellow classmates, friends and professors. This indifference grew partially due to the reason that I was not able to visit my family back home in Bangladesh since I started my doctoral program in 2008. It costs about my 3 months graduate assistant salary to buy a two-way air ticket to Bangladesh and to cover other travel related expenditures<sup>4</sup>. With a stagnant graduate assistant salary and ever increasing living costs in this expensive place, my monthly check is getting smaller and smaller. Particularly, the cost of modest housing somewhere near the campus costs about two third of total monthly pay check. Furthermore, since summer of 2011, we as graduate student workers are paying 50% of our health insurance cost as opposed to previous rate of 40%. Not to mention ever increasing rise of tuition and other fees associated with attending the university. This financial predicament ultimately force many graduate students like me to spend substantially longer time to finish graduate study.

As a result, it is important to pass this HB2859 bill that will eliminate the barrier for students to unionize which in the long run will enable graduate student workers to bargain for their salary and other work place rights. Ultimately, this change will improve graduate student experience while attending UH Manoa.

Mahalo

***Shahin Rahman***

Doctoral Student, Dept. of Urban and Regional Planning  
Employment and Compensation Executive Committee chair, GSO, UH Manoa

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<sup>4</sup> 20% of graduate student population is international. I am pretty sure many of them also struggle to save enough money to visit their home countries.

**yamashita2 ----Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 05, 2012 10:12 AM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** mariebro@hawaii.edu  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Marie Alohalani Brown  
Organization: University of Hawaii at Manoa, English Department  
E-mail: [mariebro@hawaii.edu](mailto:mariebro@hawaii.edu)  
Submitted on: 2/5/2012

Comments:  
Aloha mai kakou,

I am a second year PhD student. I am also a Native Hawaiian who grew up in Waianae. I am also an educator (G.A.) at the University of Hawaii at Manoa who earns (after taxes) \$1,150.00 a month. I have beat the odds to arrive where I am now. Being a PhD student is a full time job between studying and teaching. What I do (teaching and inspiring by example) is important yet I struggle to feed myself. Do you know that renting a room in a house for less than \$500 a month is nearly impossible? Not all of have relatives that have space in their homes so that we can sleep on a couch, or an extra bed. The cost of food in our islands is prohibitive. Many of us get survive by eating Saimin (36 cents a bag) as a regular diet. Even though we G.A. get a tuition exemption, we still have to pay student fees. I pay \$360 a semester. You do the math. I support this bill because I hope that it will give graduate students an opportunity to bargain for decent wages so that we can continue to teach and study without having to worry where our next meal comes from or having to live in a neighborhood where we are afraid for our safety. I thank you for taking the time to read my comments. Sincerely,  
Marie Alohalani Brown, PhD Student, English Department, University of Hawaii at Manoa.





To: House Committee on Labor and Public Employment  
Representative Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Representative Kyle Yamashita, Vice Chair  
Conference Room 309, February 7, 2012 at 9:30am

From: Sue Haglund  
shaglund@hotmail.com (email)

Testimony for HB2859—STRONG SUPPORT

My name is Sue Haglund. I am testifying as an individual in STRONG SUPPORT of House Bill 2859. I am a Political Science doctoral candidate ABD at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. I am also Parliamentarian and Adjudication Chair of UH-Manoa's Graduate Student Organization since 2010.

A university is a community of scholars and *community of employees*. The binary relationship of scholar and employee is analogous to a graduate student's university role as a student and a graduate assistant employed by the University.

There is a nationwide trend where graduate students who are graduate assistants share a common educational livelihood: scholarly research and economic survival. As a community of scholars, graduate students in non-terminal and terminal degree programs experience first hand the dire trend of American universities that operate university research institutions as corporations. Universities operate like corporations based on how much profit can be generated and budgets cuts in a top-down method, as a justification to save money. The University of Hawaii, a public university system in the State of Hawaii, is no different.

The University of Hawaii is a corporation—first—before it is a research, scholarly institution. At the university level, conceptually and ideally, we are a community of scholars. However, in practice we are a community of employees. The University of Hawaii is our major employer. As a community of employees, graduate student employees received the brunt of the University of Hawaii's calculated financial decisions in order to save money and to make money. The University of Hawaii's financial decisions affect all stakeholders of the university systemwide from collective bargaining unit employees (UH faculty-staff for example) to non-collective bargaining unit employees (for example, graduate assistants, teaching assistants, and research assistants).

There is a huge difference between collective bargaining unit employees and non-collective bargaining unit employees at the University of Hawaii. The first group has representation to negotiate on their behalf for better working conditions, salary increases, grievance procedures, and healthcare coverage. The second group, on the other hand, is excluded from any and/or all collective bargaining negotiation(s) because

current state law lists them as “a student of a state institution” and “student help” entities that are prohibited from collective bargaining.<sup>1</sup>

### **Background on Academic Collective Bargaining Nationwide**

Graduate assistants’ right to academic collective bargaining is not a new concept. In fact, several American universities legally recognize graduate student employees’ rights in university-setting workplace.

According to Dr. Gordon J. Hewitt, an assistant director in institutional research at Tufts University:

...graduate student unions have been around since 1969, when the University of Wisconsin’s Teaching Assistants Association was recognized, it has been in the 1990s that large numbers of graduate student employees have attempted to unionize at colleges and universities in the United States. In 1992 and 1998 graduate teaching and research assistants in the University of California System went on strike seeking recognition for collective bargaining and, in 1999 finally won recognition from the university administration. In the State University of New York (SUNY) system, the Graduate Student Employee Union successfully negotiated its first contract with the State of New York in 1994 after voting to unionize. This certification vote was the culmination of almost twenty years of negotiations, work stoppages, and court cases aimed at obtaining recognition as an employee union in SUNY [2]. In the latter 1990s graduate student unions have also won recognition elections at the universities of Iowa and Kansas, Wayne State University, and Oregon State University.<sup>2</sup>

Hewitt’s study examined and probed the relational effects between faculty and graduate student employees at five universities who already had established graduate student employee unionization.<sup>3</sup> The following institutions were: University of Massachusetts-Amherst, State University of New York at Buffalo, University of Florida, University of Michigan, and the University of Oregon.<sup>4</sup> In his findings, Hewitt dismiss the typical arguments of administrators at universities who theorized that academic collective bargaining disrupt and harm the educational relationship between faculty and graduate students who are members of a collective bargaining unit. Hewitt concludes:

It is clear, through the results obtained from the attitude scale and experience

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<sup>1</sup> Hawaii Revised Statutes, Section 89-6,(f), 14-15

<sup>2</sup> Gordon J. Hewitt, Ph.D., “Graduate Student Employee Collective Bargaining and the Educational Relationship Between Faculty and Graduate Students,” J. Collective Negotiations, Vol. 29(2)(2000): 154.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 157-158.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 153.

section, that faculty do not have a negative attitude toward graduate student collective bargaining. It is important to reiterate that the results show faculty feel graduate assistants are employees of the university, support the right of graduate students to bargain collectively, and believe collective bargaining is appropriate for graduate students. It is even more important to restate that, based on their experiences, collective bargaining does not inhibit their ability to advise, instruct, or mentor their graduate students.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly in 2002, a study lead by Stanford University upheld and demonstrated Hewitt's findings that collective bargaining also did not affect the educational relationship between faculty and graduate student employees.<sup>6</sup> Both Hewitt's study and Stanford University's study summarize that no conclusive evidence show unionization of graduate student employees does not disrupt that faculty-graduate student employee relationship nor impede academic freedom—on the contrary, both entities are “strengthen the integrity of the academy.”<sup>7</sup>

The unionization of graduate student employees is crucial, not only at a national-level, but at the state-level as well. Graduate student employees are a substantial percentage of instructional workforce at the university and who are usually undercounted. According to Coalition on the Academic Workforce's February 2010 report, federal data on instructional staffing report that:

One must also account for graduate teaching assistants (TAs). When TAs are included, almost three-fifths of the teaching corps in higher education taught part-time in 2007—58.5% in all institutions (55.9% in four-year institutions)...graduate student TAs accounted for 19.4% of teachers in higher education in 2007 (25.0% in four-year institutions); full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty members made up only 25.1% (27.5% in four-year institutions). Thus close to 75% of the instructional workforce was made up of non-tenure-track faculty members and graduate employees in 2007...<sup>8</sup>

Evidently, graduate student employees are undercounted economic function contributors in universities. Gordon Lafer, an assistant professor at the University of Oregon's Labor Education and Research Center, report that “it is estimated that

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Mauer, Esq. “American Labor Board Hearing: Statement of Michael Mauer, Esq., Director of Organizing and Services Yale University, September 30, 2003,” American Association of University Professors, <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/issues/grads/mauerstatement.htm> (accessed February 3, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Coalition on the Academic Workforce, “One Faculty Serving All Students: An Issue Brief by the Coalition on the Academic Workforce, February 2010” <http://www.academicworkforce.org/> (accessed February 3, 2012).

between 50 percent and 70 percent of all teaching hours are now performed by graduate students and other “contingent” teachers.”<sup>9</sup> That is to say, as Lafer explains, “an undergraduate signing up for an English class has a less than one-in-four chance of being taught by a tenure-track professor. And in both natural science and humanities departments, graduate students are responsible for 90 percent of the grading.”<sup>10</sup>

So what does that mean? That means, Graduate student employees are an undercounted instructional workforce who contributes to the economic operations of all universities, including the University of Hawaii. However, graduate student employees often are “an indispensable ingredient in the financial calculations of every major university.”<sup>11</sup> For this reason of being seen as “an indispensable ingredient” by university administrators, graduate student employees nationally organized and campaigned for unionization in the name fairness and justice for decent livable wages, decent healthcare coverage, grievance procedures and better working conditions.

Currently there are 31 recognized graduate employee unionization in different academic institutions and university systems. These graduate employees organization are the following:

1 Teaching Assistants' Association -- University of Wisconsin, Madison
2 Rutgers Council of AAUP Chapters -- Rutgers University
3 Graduate Employees Organization -- University of Michigan
4 Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation -- University of Oregon
5 Graduate Assistants United -- University of Florida
6 Graduate Assistants United -- University of South Florida
7 Graduate Assistants United -- Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University
8 Graduate Employee Organization -- University of Massachusetts, Amherst
9 Milwaukee Graduate Assistants' Association -- University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
10 Graduate Student Employees Union -- State University of New York System
11 Graduate Employee Organization -- University of Massachusetts, Lowell
12 Graduate Teaching Assistants' Coalition -- University of Kansas, Lawrence
13 Campaign to Organize Graduate Students -- University of Iowa
14 Graduate Employees Organizing Committee -- Wayne State University
15 UAW Local 2865 -- University of California System
16 Coalition of Graduate Employees -- Oregon State University
17 Graduate Students Organizing Committee -- New York University
18 Graduate Employee Organization -- University of Massachusetts Boston
19 Temple University Graduate Students Association -- Temple University

<sup>9</sup> Gordon Lafer, “Organizing Graduate Students,” *Dissent*, (Foundation for the Study of Independent Social Ideas, 2001), 4.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

20 Graduate Employees Union -- Michigan State University
21 Graduate Assistants United -- University of Rhode Island
22 Graduate Employees Organization -- University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
23 UAW Local 4121 -- University of Washington, Seattle
24 Graduate Employees Organization -- University of Illinois, Chicago
25 UAW Local 4123 -- California State University System
26 Association of Graduate Employees -- University of Illinois, Springfield
27 Teaching Assistants Union -- Western Michigan University
28 Graduate Assistants United -- Southern Illinois University, Carbondale
29 Graduate Assistants United -- Florida State University
30 Stony Brook RA Union -- Stony Brook Research Foundation
31 Graduate Student Union -- Central Michigan University

Figure 1 List of Recognized Graduate Employee Organizations in the US.<sup>12</sup>

The impact of existing graduate student employee organizations vary from state to state and campus to campus. These organizations, recognized as unions in their respective university and state, have equal collective bargaining rights as any faculty, staff, and other university personnel. In a period of economic instability, the rights of academic workers such as graduate student employees must be protected and guaranteed. These rights include, but not limited to: the right decent livable wage, the right to a decent affordable healthcare coverage for workers and their families, the right to better working conditions, and the right to a grievance process without fear of reprisal from university administrators, faculty, staff, and other university personnel.

The unionization of graduate student employees at universities who recognized their collective bargaining rights did not cost the university more money nor decreased the assistantships offered. In fact:

The data from [University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign] UIUC shows that there is little correlation between providing good pay and benefits to grads and decreasing the number of assistantships. In 2002, prior to grads winning the bulk of the economic benefits, the University of Illinois greatly reduced the number of TAships available. The evidence from unionized campuses like the Universities of Wisconsin and Michigan shows that fair pay and benefits do not result in a decline in the number of assistantships. University of Wisconsin graduate employees bargained union contracts between 1970 and 1979, but the UW administration refused to bargain from 1979 to 1987. UW Teaching Assistants and Project Assistants won union rights again in 1987 and have bargained regular contracts since 1988. Since 1988 the number of assistantships at the UW has actually gone up at from 2,373 to 2,839. At University of Michigan TAs and Staff Assistants won their first contract in

<sup>12</sup> List of recognized graduate employee organizations from Coalition of Graduate Employee Unions. Retrieved on February 3, 2012. CGEU website: [http://cgeu.org/wiki/index.php/Recognized\\_Graduate\\_Employee\\_Unions\\_in\\_the\\_USA](http://cgeu.org/wiki/index.php/Recognized_Graduate_Employee_Unions_in_the_USA)

1975 when there were 1,200 employees. In 2000 there were 1,650 assistants.<sup>13</sup>

The economic trend and benefits increase at University of Wisconsin and University of Michigan, both public institutions and unionized campuses, give us a positive overview on the economic impact of graduate student employee unionization in public universities. The budgets for graduate assistantships are always changing. The impact of a university's financial decision on budget cuts has more of an impact to the quality and quantity of education provided by university members to enrolled students. Nevertheless, university members who have collective bargaining rights set to have more of an advantage compared to their non-collective bargaining rights counterpart. For instance, when university administrators propose a tuition increase,

### **University of Hawaii's Graduate Student Employees Exploitation**

HB2859 is in the best interest for current and future graduate student employees at the University of Hawaii. The educational setting of University of Hawaii has changed and waned over the years—most recently due to major budget cuts. During uncertain economic times, graduate student employees without collective bargaining rights are left to carry the burden of teaching classes with double the class size of students and working beyond the required maximum hours—thus, leading to unfair labor practices and labor exploitation of graduate student employees.

University of Hawaii at Manoa's budget cuts during Fall 2009 increased in larger class sizes and increasing faculty workload, which led for the faculty union to file a complaint to Hawaii State Labor Board against UH administration for unfair increase of faculty workload.<sup>14</sup> University of Hawaii's faculty and staff not satisfied with the double class sizes, through their union, may file a grievance and complain to the state labor board. However, graduate student employees who are teaching assistants teach large class sizes, are also affected by the unfair increase of graduate assistantship workload, but they have no place to go to file a grievance or complaint.

On April 14, 2011, at the Graduate Student Organization's General Assembly meeting, Hawaiian Studies graduate students who are teaching assistants presented and shared with the general assembly their grievances and increase in their workload. From GSO's General Assembly minutes the presentation was shared:

#### **Hawaiian Studies Presentation**

- Here to talk about grievances of Hawaiian Studies graduates. In Hawaiian Studies dept., GTAs teach 2 classes automatically. One GTA had a class cancelled due to low enrollment

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<sup>13</sup> Graduate Student Employees' Organization, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, IFT/AFT Local 6300 AFL-CIO, <http://www.uigeo.org/faq/#Sciences> (accessed February 3, 2012).

<sup>14</sup> "Budget Cuts Force Larger Class Sizes At UH", <http://www.kitv.com/news/20678226/detail.html> (accessed February 3, 2012).

and the department gave her 10 extra hours of work. They realized they were at the top tier of the workload. They filed a grievance in March 2010. At the start of the fall semester, they were told it would be fixed by the next semester but then 2 other students had the same issue.

- In December they began receiving retaliation from the Dean, this retaliation has happened multiple times and has been documented.
- HS program reworked the Fall 2011 schedule to show they are in compliance, but they have multiple placeholders who will not actually teach. This has sidelined the GTA protests by creating an appearance of compliance when, come fall, GTAs will be assigned these classes.
- There are myths of economic hardship, that other departments and other universities are using the same practices. The reality is that they are working 40 hours instead of 20, and this is in violation of their own regulations. Professors teaching two classes are considered fulltime. GTAs teaching two classes are considered half time. Why?
- Grad Division is supposed to check over department workload and hiring of GTAs to make sure they are in compliance, but it doesn't actually work that way.
- The reality is that graduate students are transient, they are dependent on the professors. In the past 14 years, not a single graduate employee grievance has been won, and some GTAs have been fired. With academic grievances, students have power, but as employees, we have none.
- Solutions: Request a GSO resolution in support of the GTAs; that the department follow their own regulations; demand a grievance process that is free from threat, intimidation, and retaliation; create a Graduate Student Bill of Rights. Will present this and other resolutions of support at the BOR meeting.<sup>15</sup>

As a graduate student governance, Graduate Student Organization had no other options in assisting our fellow graduate student employees. By the end of 2008-2009 academic-year, the Office of Ombuds at University of Hawaii at Manoa was eliminated due to "budget cuts." The UH-Manoa Ombudsman was Dr. Neal Milner, a Political Science Professor. The Office of Ombuds "provided an impartial, confidential, informal problem-solving assistance to students, faculty, and staff."<sup>16</sup> The Office of Ombuds was the only place for graduate student employees who do not have any collective bargaining rights to go to file a grievance against an employer (faculty, staff or administrator) for unfair increase of graduate assistantship workload, unprofessional conduct, workplace disputes, violation of UHM policies, protecting your reputation, and threats of retaliation.<sup>17</sup>

In the last Office of Ombuds' Annual Report of 2008-09, the ombuds office handled 338 cases and employment issues being a highest percentage of concerns compared

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<sup>15</sup> Minutes from Graduate Student Organization's General Assembly Meeting on April 14, 2011 at Campus Center Ballroom at University of Hawaii-Manoa's campus, <http://gso.hawaii.edu/gso2/resources.html> (accessed February 3, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> The Office of Ombuds, University of Hawaii at Manoa, <http://manoa.hawaii.edu/ombuds/whatdoesanombudsdo.html> (accessed February 3, 2012)

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

to academic.<sup>18</sup> The impact of UH budget cuts and the elimination of the ombuds office took away the only impartial, confidential option to access a grievance process for graduate student employees, thus leaving graduate student employees more vulnerable to labor exploitation.

HB2859 is a bill that provides the first steps to the protection of graduate student employees' rights and education. HB2859 is a step to improve the quality of our working conditions, access to affordable healthcare coverage, access to better working conditions, access to grievance process due to unfavorable and exploitative labor practices, access to livable wage, and most of all access to ensure protection for workers and their families.

Therefore, I urge the committee to please PASS HB2859. Thank you.

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<sup>18</sup> Office of Ombuds' Annual Report of 2008-09, University of Hawaii at Manoa, <http://manoa.hawaii.edu/ombuds/annualreports.html> (accessed February 3, 2012).



gradStudent.txt

As a graduate student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, I have been a Graduate Student Organization (GSO) representative and a Graduate Assistant (GA). Over the years I have heard many stories of abuse and mistreatment of graduate students by both professors and the University administration. Ombudspersons are not enough. We sorely need more representation and more equitable treatment. HB2859 will provide that. Please vote yes for HB2859.

Sincerely,

Michael A. Miller  
Ocean and Resources Engineering Department



**yamashita2 ----Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 04, 2012 5:25 PM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** pohlmann@hawaii.edu  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: Yes  
Submitted by: Attila Pohlmann  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [pohlmann@hawaii.edu](mailto:pohlmann@hawaii.edu)  
Submitted on: 2/4/2012

**Comments:**

With a PhD degree I will be contributing to the scientific community in the future and provide teaching services to other students.

Upfront the PhD is a huge investment. Tuition cost alone has increased by about 80% since I started in the program 3 years ago while graduate student salaries have stayed the same during the last 10 years. Financial support is available, but the salary is out of touch with living expenses in Hawaii. If I am not mistaken, the yearly salary of a graduate student hovers around the poverty limit.

In some instances graduate students in Hawaii are offered teaching positions that do not qualify for benefits and are purposefully restricted to only teaching 6 credits. With 7 credits the students would be included in a bargaining unit as instructors.



Laura Kati Corlew  
2637 Kuilei St., A51  
Honolulu, HI 96826

Re: Testimony IN SUPPORT OF HB 2859

Dear Committee Members,

Respectfully, I would like to submit my testimony IN SUPPORT OF HB 2859. It is my belief that in this strong union state, graduates student workers should have the same rights as other state workers, including the right to unionize. Our lack of organizing power has not served us well. For example, graduate student workers have not received a raise in 8 years. Graduate students are tax-payers in Hawai`i, and many of us are residents and voters. We live here for an extended period of time and invest ourselves in the community. We are highly invested in the university system, pouring in countless hours of work for many years to receive our high quality education and degrees. I believe very strongly in this bill, and would like to ask you to pass it through committee. Thank you for SUPPORTING HB 2859.

Aloha,  
Laura Kati Corlew, M.A.  
PhD Candidate, Psychology Department  
University of Hawai`i, Mānoa  
Hawai`i resident and registered voter



Testimony re: HB2859 In Support of Graduate Students Workers rights

I have attended UN Manoa for 3 years as a Graduate Student and my roommate and most of my class mates were GA's in the system, one in Athletic Departments the others in Religion.

The athletic department GA's are the most abused employees I have ever seen in this working group.

First: They are told their work begins in August but, in several cases, no one bothered to mention that it was "unpaid" or Voluntary work. At the same time, what graduate student subject to grading by the department professors would say NO if their supervising professor "asked" them to start work 30 days early? What are they expected to live on for those 30 days?

Second: Almost all athletic Dept GA's experience an extra month or more delay in getting their first pay checks and when they ask about it they are told "oh it is always like this." So, that is 2 months or more without income while working virtually full time hours. Again how can they live?

Third: There seem to be no restrictions on the number of hours these GA's are asked to work for essentially part time pay, and yet they are still expected to carry a full load of classes. This also applies to GA's in other departments. Some supervising professors are more considerate than others, but the number of hours a student worker has to work, and the amount they are paid for that work needs to be balanced with their academic obligations.

Fourth: Some student workers are obviously less skilled or experienced then someone hired to fulfill a job professionally, however that is not always the case. Student employees with advanced experience and/or skills should be paid a higher wage then beginner students.

Martha E Randolph  
UH Manoa  
MA Arts, Religious Studies  
Feb 4 2012





HB2859

Testifier position: Support  
Submitted by: Vera Zambonelli  
Organization: Individual

Please pass this bill. As an international student, I am allowed to work only on campus, hence the work I do, as graduate assistant is my only source of income. I have seen my salary decrease, while everything else at the university was increasing. Tuitions fees went from \$112 (Spring 2007) to over \$400 (Spring 2011), while my stipend went from \$490 (net deposit in 2010 once taxes and insurance were withheld) to \$465 (last deposit). Moreover, since last semester, I had to buy additional insurance because the HMA I am enrolled through my job does not cover the entire repatriation expenses if I die in this country. I am sure you understand how all this makes me rely heavily on credit cards even for expenses of primary use, such as food. I am dedicated to my job which I love, and yet striving to obtain better working conditions and remuneration that only an appropriate collective bargaining unit will allow us, graduate students, to seek. Please do pass this bill for the many like me. Thanks!



Please support HB2859 to allow the unionization of graduate students. The overwhelming effect of the University of Hawaii's system-wide and campus-wide budget cuts on graduate students need to be addressed now. At the state level, legislators must take action immediately to ensure our rights as state employees for better working conditions and salary increase. Graduate students have not received a salary increase since 2004, and we are, for some mysterious and inconceivable reason, classified as "student help." I can see the word "student help" being applied to undergraduates working at an hourly rate, with strict schedules, but I know from personal experience that graduate research assistants do much more than what is written in the job requirement. As a graduate research assistant (GRA) with the Public Policy Center at the University of Hawai'i of Manoa, I know that the amount of work and effort I put in is more than that of a "student help." But if you insist on calling us that, I would like to explain to you the things we do.

I work well beyond the required 20 hour per week schedule because of how much my boss relies on me to get things done. Excuses such as "I've already worked 20 hours" do not cut it. I have to work as many hours as necessary to get the assigned tasks done. And not just done, but *well* done. People expect much higher quality work and attention to detail in graduate students, and I must live up to that expectation. Not only that, but graduate assistants are called upon to do other things beyond the job requirement; we must answer to our boss' every needs. In that sense, we earn relatively low wages and work very long hours. Our labor is easily exploited and we have no recourse of action for a grievance process to advocate for our workers' rights and education.

I love my job and I love the people I work with. I am incredibly grateful to have been hired for this job and I know I am very fortunate to be funded during my graduate studies. However, there are certain issues that need to be addressed, such as the limited and expensive health care plans we are given.

Our current collective bargaining laws are out of date and prohibit us to form and/or join a union as graduate student workers at public state universities. Please update our collective bargaining laws by removing student help from the list of individuals prohibited from inclusion in any appropriate collective bargaining unit.

We, the voters, deserve the right to unionize as state employees because we sure do work hard to keep things running smoothly. *Please support HB2859!*

Thank you very much for your time,

Penn Pantumsinchai



yamashita2 ----Aulii

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, February 06, 2012 8:15 AM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** subraman@hawaii.edu  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: S. Shankar  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [subraman@hawaii.edu](mailto:subraman@hawaii.edu)  
Submitted on: 2/6/2012

**Comments:**

I support this bill. As Professor at UHM, I am intimately aware of the atrociously low pay received by graduate student assistants. This is not only unfair and exploitative, it causes us to lose good students to other universities. Passing this bill is smart and fair. Thank you.



**yamashita2 ----Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, February 06, 2012 10:03 AM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** thinkingglobal@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Carmen Golay  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [thinkingglobal@gmail.com](mailto:thinkingglobal@gmail.com)  
Submitted on: 2/6/2012

**Comments:**

Allowing graduate students to form a workers union is the first step in workers equality. As a professional working at UH who graduated from one of the schools cited in this bill, I was shocked to learn that UH did not have a graduate students union. This is a basic measure to ensure fairness.





**Testimony Against HB 2859**

Excludes student help from the list of state employees statutorily barred from inclusion in any appropriate collective bargaining unit. Effective July 1, 2012.

The overwhelming affect of the University of Hawaii's system-wide and campus-wide budget cuts on graduate students need to be addressed now.

Graduate students are already not receiving federal subsidized funding starting 2012-2013 school year. This is a hardship for many graduate students. The message from the government is clear: only a distinct class of the elite and those that can afford an education can have access to higher education. By not allowing graduate students to participate in a collective bargaining agreement, not only do we not receive federal subsidized funding, but we also have no say in our working conditions. Since 2004, we have not received a salary increase; yet with the rising cost of living, taxes and tuition we earn low wages and work long hours. Thus, as workers, our labor are easily exploited and we have no recourse of action for a grievance process to advocate for our workers' rights and education.

At the state level, legislators should take action immediately to ensure our rights as state employees for better working conditions and salary increase.

Our current collective bargaining laws are out of date and currently prohibit us to form and/or join a union as graduate student workers at public state university. Please update our collective bargaining laws and by removing student help from the list of individuals prohibited from inclusion in any appropriate collective bargaining unit.



yamashita2 ----Aulii

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, February 06, 2012 9:01 AM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** tamang@hawaii.edu  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Suresh Tamang  
Organization: University of Hawaii at Manoa  
E-mail: [tamang@hawaii.edu](mailto:tamang@hawaii.edu)  
Submitted on: 2/6/2012

Comments:



**yamashita2 ---Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, February 06, 2012 9:08 AM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** tarawynn@hawaii.edu  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Tara Wynn  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [tarawynn@hawaii.edu](mailto:tarawynn@hawaii.edu)  
Submitted on: 2/6/2012

**Comments:**

I am a 2nd year law student at William S. Richardson School of Law. I am also the first in my family to complete high school, college, or to enter graduate school. Were it not for financial aid, to include subsidized student loans I would not have made it this far. Currently, student loan debt outpaces law student's earning potential, especially in Hawai'i where the cost of living is exorbitant & young public interest attorneys are not paid commensurate with their colleagues on the mainland. I am a registered voter & I urge all lawmakers who represent Kailua/Waimanalo & all constituencies to vote for the passage of this bill.



**yamashita2 ----Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, February 06, 2012 10:26 AM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** klevy@hawaii.edu  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Kelea Levy  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [klevy@hawaii.edu](mailto:klevy@hawaii.edu)  
Submitted on: 2/6/2012

**Comments:**

As a Graduate student assistant, I support this bill and making it possible for GAs to unionize. If education is at all important to the state, they will pass this legislation. Increasingly, being a student at UH Manoa is not about our education, but trying to survive while we go to school with little ability to study because we spend too much time dealing with survival issues





Feb. 6, 2012

To the Hawaii State Legislature:

My name is Steve Moody and I am currently a graduate student at the University of Hawaii. I am also serving as a Graduate Assistant (GA). In this position, I teach an introductory Japanese class. This class meets for 4 hours each week. I am also responsible for lesson planning, writing tests, meeting with students outside of class, grading assignments, and meeting with other instructors for coordination of curriculum. My position is listed as being a 20-hour per week assignment. On average, I probably spend a little more than this in teaching-related activities.

I am not only a graduate student. I am also a husband, and in a few short months will be a father. My wife used to work, but owing to her pregnancy and other considerations has had to reduce her work load to about 15 hours each week. Once our baby is born, she will likely not be able to work at all. Thus, as a graduate student, I will also be the sole income-earner for our household. Because of my situation, I cannot live with roommates and split the cost of rent. I pay \$1,400 each month for rent. The stipend I receive as a GA is just less than \$1,000 each month. It does not even cover my rent. Once our baby is born, I estimate my monthly living expenses will be around \$2,500. That's \$1,500 *each month* that I cannot cover based on my GA wages. While this can be covered with loan money, the federal government just announced that they are eliminating subsidized loans for graduate students. That means the only loans I can get are high-interest. I probably have 3 years left in school. That means that I can plan on incurring over \$50,000 in loans by the time I finish. With interest, I figure I would have to pay back over \$100,000. Probably much, much more.

Those numbers are unacceptable. So, in order to avoid loans, I have picked up extra jobs. I teach night classes which means that in addition to full-time classes and my GA responsibilities; I am also away from my family an average of 2 nights each week to teach at other local private colleges. My wife is left at home alone, usually not feeling well due to her pregnancy (and the fact that I cannot afford air-conditioning). These extra jobs provide me with an addition \$1,000/month and cut my loan amounts down significantly. However, between school, GA, and work, I am probably putting in nearly 70 hours each week. While this reduces my financial burden, it significantly increases the stress and pressure I am under day-by-day. I still anticipate needing \$20,000 in expensive loan funds to make it through my program. I still try to volunteer at my local church and be engaged in other activities that I would like to do, but this is difficult given my heavy load.

Prior to coming to the University of Hawaii, I was a graduate student at the Ohio State University. I also worked as a GA there, where I received a stipend of \$1,700/month, had my health insurance subsidized at an 80% level, and only had to pay \$900 in rent. Thus the stipend was enough for me to live without needing loans or putting in extra hours at other jobs. Ohio State did not have a union, but it did not need one because we were treated fairly.

My situation as a GA was further insulted last year. My department director sent an e-mail happily announcing an increase in GA pay. There were no details, just the exciting news that we would be paid more. What was not mentioned was that this pay increase came at the same time as a change in our health insurance benefits. The net change was a *decrease* in total compensation of about \$30/month. Yet this was sold to the graduate students as a pay raise. That kind of treatment showed, in my opinion, a complete disregard to graduate students and their situation. It was insulting that they could think we were somehow being treated fairly. The health benefits changes were the result of union bargaining from a union in which graduate students are not represented. That is why our situations were not considered. We were not represented in any of the negotiations.

I must say that it is not easy for me to write this letter. Politically, I am generally opposed to unionization. I think it puts an unfair burden on companies and ultimately hurts the employees' claims to protect by driving costs up and job supply down. I have a master's degree in economics, studied unions extensively, and came to my own conclusion that they generally do not do what they set out to do. However, after much thought, I am actually in support of the current bill allowing graduate students to unionize. This is because of the current climate at the University of Hawaii. Like it or not, Hawaii is a very unionized state. These unions are all negotiating for a variety of things, but these things do not include graduate students. Quite simply, without representation at the bargaining table, graduate students are subject to mistreatment and unfair labor practices. I am forced to conclude that, until the current labor climate changes, graduate students *need* representation. We need it desperately. Hawaii has one of the highest costs of living in the nation. Yet its graduate students are given lower than average compensation packages. For students, especially students with families like me, the current situation is unacceptable.

Major changes are required, but until those major changes happen, graduate students deserve to be represented like everyone else. We are *not* "student help." Two graduate students do work equivalent to the work of one full professor. But we are compensated less than one-quarter of a full professor. So the University is getting a good deal at our expense. This doesn't seem right to me. I know of several quality students who have gone elsewhere because it is nearly impossible to afford graduate education at the University of Hawaii. If UH wants to be competitive in the academic markets, being able to recruit and retain quality students, they must treat the students better. Students need to be represented.

I know that many of my fellow students feel the same way. Not all of them have families, but some do. Those who don't are doing a little better, but even they are struggling to make it. Some of them tell me they have accepted living in an apartment full of cockroaches in unsafe areas of town so that they can afford to go to school. I have opted to work extra hours, being away from family, and turn to loans. We have found solutions to make things work, but these solutions are unacceptable alternatives. We don't expect to get rich, but we do expect to be respected and treated fairly. Something

must be done. I understand the economy is hard and budgets are being cut. But graduate students are regularly subjected to high-work standards but paid low-standard wages. We are not just struggling through studies. We are struggling to live. I urge the state legislature to consider the situation of graduate students and give us *something* to empower us to improve our situation. I wish this did not have to be by unionization, but right now I do not see any other alternative.



## Testimony Regarding HB 2859

UH graduate student employees are treated terribly. As a Teaching Assistant, entirely responsible for teaching 40 undergraduates (I'm not supposed to be responsible, but the teachers and deans tell us that we have to do it all ourselves) I make \$900 a month. Have you seen the cost of living? What could you cut out of your own monthly budget to get down to \$900? 2 of my fellow graduate students are homeless, one living in a van and another in a hidden area of campus. Both of these men attend classes and work - and UH leaves them, quite literally, out in the cold. I have half a dozen friends that take out credit card loans to pay student loans. Graduate students are well below the poverty line, we live hand to mouth, and we have no rights. Furthermore, if we take a second job and get caught by UH, we lose our UH job, our tuition waiver, and have to refund the tuition.

Not only is the pay miserable, but many of us work more hours than we are supposed to. I actually got laid off at the end of the semester, with absolutely zero warning. I had 36 hours to find another position on campus so that I could stay enrolled. The professors are the only campus bargaining unit that has gotten a salary increase in the last several years - **AND WE ARE DOING THEIR JOBS!**

I am strongly in support of this bill. Students are supposed to be the future of Hawaii, but if we starve to death - or leave UH to go to other universities that appreciate us - we won't be here to help.



yamashita2 ----Aulii

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, February 06, 2012 11:50 AM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** ashleylj@hawaii.edu  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Ashley Jensen  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [ashleylj@hawaii.edu](mailto:ashleylj@hawaii.edu)  
Submitted on: 2/6/2012

Comments:





**yamashita2 ---Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, February 06, 2012 12:47 PM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** kw4@hawaii.edu  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Kristen Wheeler  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [kw4@hawaii.edu](mailto:kw4@hawaii.edu)  
Submitted on: 2/6/2012

**Comments:**

I support this because as of now I am spending all of my current savings to purchase food, rent, and utilities. Many other universities on the mainland are paying much higher stipends to their graduate students to provide for cost of living. When the cost of living here is much higher than many of these places on the mainland. Many of these universities are provided with a union who supports and looks out for the rights of these employees and I would like the same if not for myself, then for future graduate students.



HB2859

Testifier position: Support

Submitted by: Ilysa Iglesias

Organization: Individual

Dear Legislature,

I am proud to be an employee of the great state of Hawaii. I have been a teaching assistant at the University of Hawaii Manoa for three semesters and a research assistant for as long. As a TA in charge of a large classroom of undergraduate students I was responsible for curriculum, leading lab exercises and grading a tremendous amount of labs. Teaching science labs is tough work, demanding a tremendous amount of time outside of the classroom. In science classes at the University, most of the learning does not come from professors, it comes from the time the students get in the classroom, with a TA organizing and explaining concepts hands on. Yet we are not treated with the respect we deserve as such...teachers!! Professors are allowed certain rights that are completely removed for graduate students. We are not able to organize for some of the most basic rights! For example, as graduate students we have not seen a single raise in our pay since 2004! Our yearly salary is well below the poverty level. And this, despite increasing enrollment of undergraduates at the university, creating more work on the TAs and increasing student fees. It is only fair that we ask now for the right to form unions and represent ourselves with cohesive unity. I love the University of Hawaii and I love being a teacher and all I ask is to be treated as equal.



**yamashita2 ----Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, February 06, 2012 1:13 PM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** cheryl.lohr@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Cheryl Lohr  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [cheryl.lohr@gmail.com](mailto:cheryl.lohr@gmail.com)  
Submitted on: 2/6/2012

**Comments:**

Graduate students are people and like everyone else we deserve the right to bargain for better working conditions and salary increases.  
Graduate students are frequently people that have chosen to better themselves rather than stick with unemployment.  
Since 2004, we have not received a salary increase; yet with the rising cost of living, taxes and tuition we earn low wages and work long hours. Thus, as workers, our labor are easily exploited and we have no recourse of action for a grievance process to advocate for our workers' rights and education.  
I don't know a single graduate student that only works 20 hours per week and yet the University is allowed to exploit us and demand more than 20 hours work per week.  
Our current collective bargaining laws are out of date and currently prohibit us to form and/or join a union as graduate student workers at public state university. Please update our collective bargaining laws and by removing student help from the list of individuals prohibited from inclusion in any appropriate collective bargaining unit.  
We, the voters, deserve the right to unionize as state employees.



Monday, February 6, 2012

The Honorable Karl Rhoads  
House Committee on Labor & Public Employment  
Re: Support for HB2859, Relating to Collective Bargaining

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB2859. As a graduate assistant, my monthly take-home is \$924. As I am sure you realize, this is not enough to cover the cost of living in Honolulu, the second most expensive city in the US. On top of this, we are expected to attend academic conferences for which travel expenses are often not covered.

Graduate assistants have not received a pay increase since 2004, even though the cost of living continues to increase. Currently, the cheapest graduate student housing and meal plan offered by the University is more than my annual salary.

Graduate assistantships prevent us from being able to seek additional employment to supplement our income; therefore many of us have to take out additional student loans. Last year, I spent fifty to sixty hours per week in lab even though this is supposed to be a twenty hour a week job.

Because we are not allowed to unionize, we essentially have no voice when it comes to asking the University for a more reasonable salary and for enforcement of the limits on work that can be asked of us. For these reasons, I ask that you pass HB2859 so that we may organize effectively and hopefully garner some rights for graduate assistants.

Mahalo nui loa,

Samantha O'Hanlon  
Graduate Assistant  
UH Mānoa, Department of Psychology  
2530 Dole Street, Sakamaki C 400  
Honolulu, HI 96822-2294





**yamashita2 ---Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, February 06, 2012 2:48 PM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** nanditaranisharma@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Nandita Sharma  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [nanditaranisharma@gmail.com](mailto:nanditaranisharma@gmail.com)  
Submitted on: 2/6/2012

**Comments:**

I strongly urge the committee to \*pass\* this bill.

Graduate Assistants and Teaching Assistants at the University of Hawaii are workers and not just "help." They are a very important and valuable part of students' education at UH. They should have the right to collective bargaining as other workers at UH do.

It is well known that unionized workers have higher wages and better working conditions than those who do not. Much of the terrible working conditions endured by graduate students would be ameliorated if they were in a position to negotiate with their employer.

Graduate student workers at UH must have the ability to negotiate the terms of their employment.



Dear Hawai'i State Legislators,

I strongly support HB2859, which would allow graduate students who work in the University of Hawai'i system to participate in the union process. Our current collective bargaining laws are out of date and currently prohibit us to form and/or join a union as graduate student workers at public state university. Please update our collective bargaining laws and by removing student help from the list of individuals prohibited from inclusion in any appropriate collective bargaining unit.

As a UH graduate student myself I can attest to the myriad, complex and sophisticated work that we graduate students willingly offer to the University in various areas that include, but are not limited to, research, program management, curriculum development, project development, project coordination and many others.

I respectfully ask that you, our legislators, grant us the ability to ask for appropriate compensation that reflects our meaningful and essential contributions, skills, efforts and abilities. These attributes make a huge impact in the success of the University, a true engine of economic growth in the State.

The overwhelming effects of the University of Hawaii's system-wide and campus-wide budget cuts on graduate students really need to be addressed now. At the State level, legislators should take action immediately to ensure the rights of graduate students, who are State employees, for better working conditions and salary increase.

Since 2004, there has been no salary increase; yet with the rising cost of living, taxes and tuition we earn low wages and work long hours. Thus, as workers, our labor can be and sadly often is, easily exploited and we have no recourse of action for a grievance process to advocate for our workers' rights and education. We, the voters, have earned the right and inherently deserve the right to unionize as dedicated state employees.

Thanks so much or your support and time,

Siobhán Ní Dhonacha  
UH Graduate Student



testimonywilliamwright.txt

I rise support HB2859 because as a graduate student, I it is impossible survive any longer on \$13,000 per year.

To do so might have been possible 10 years ago, but since then the prices of everything (food, textbooks, and a place to live) have increased.

It isn't enough, and I have added to my student debt and sought every possible form of financial assistance in order to buy food, pay for the room me and my toddler live in and to cover such essentials as the eye doctor and childcare. Three weeks ago, I fell at my aerobics class and broke my glasses; now I am forced to chose between being able to see and paying the dentist. On student feedback forms, students have offered advice about the fit and outdated style of my clothes; little did they know that this is because it is financial impossible for me to replace old clothes.

Besides the financial issues, we have no recourse when the UH administration finds other ways to treat us in an inhumane manner. Last year, in addition to the legitimate payroll lag, to my dismay the UH administration simply did not pay me for an additional month. Without a union to advocate for me in this instance of administrative trickery, I have nowhere to turn in a situation like that; me and my son were nearly forced out on the street.

As a Teaching Assistant passionate about contributing to the futures of the undergraduate students of the University of Hawaii, I would do this work with or without pay. However, I have a right to sufficient pay for subsistence and to be treated in a humane way by the university administration.

The main issue right now in my mind is the need to update Hawaii statutes by removing student help from the list of those forbidden from collective bargaining: prison inmates, wards of the state, and the state's psychiatric patients. One would wish that administrators would be moved by humanity to act in the interests of student workers, but their priorities clearly lie elsewhere, and we are reluctantly forced to seek recourse in collective bargaining.

Please support the cause of the hard working Graduate Assistants and other student help of the University of Hawaii by voting in favor of HB2859 and forwarding the bill for vote by the full committee.

Thank you very much for inviting my testimony.



**yamashita2 ---Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, February 06, 2012 4:02 PM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** justpuckett@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Robert Puckett  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [justpuckett@gmail.com](mailto:justpuckett@gmail.com)  
Submitted on: 2/6/2012

**Comments:**

Please support HB2859. As a graduate student, I served for several years in the role of teaching and graduate assistant positions. Often these roles involved excessive hours for diminutive pay. My class load per semester ranged from 2 classes when I started, to eventually 4 classes, with no additional compensation. One semester they had me TA for one class for the half time rate, the next semester they wanted me to cover the same class for the quarter-time rate. I feel that the ability to unionize would give graduate assistants the rights they need to ensure fair working standards. Such hard working students, earning advanced degrees, should be treated more like human beings, and less like prison inmates.





**yamashita2 ----Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 02, 2012 12:35 PM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** kishore@hawaii.edu  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Oppose  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Kishore Kumar Dey  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [kishore@hawaii.edu](mailto:kishore@hawaii.edu)  
Submitted on: 2/2/2012

**Comments:**

As a graduate assistant working in lab for more hours than anybody else I feel there should be an increase in wage. The rising cost of living in honolulu makes life so tough! Despite working so hard I cannot even afford eating out with the low wage. The time I spent cooking can be better spent in the lab, being more productive. I sincerely believe our cause will be heard this time.



**yamashita2 ----Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 02, 2012 6:40 PM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** williamdemeo@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Oppose  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: William J. DeMeo  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [williamdemeo@gmail.com](mailto:williamdemeo@gmail.com)  
Submitted on: 2/2/2012

**Comments:**

I am a graduate student instructor in the math ph.d. program at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. I strongly oppose measure HB2859 as I believe collective bargaining rights for graduate students will be severely detrimental to the university as a whole, to the math department in particular, and to the graduate students themselves. The GSO, which is the organization responsible for submitting this bill, aims to raise minimum wages for grad students and impose limits on how many courses they are allowed to teach. I am vehemently opposed to any legislation that may result in restrictions on how much I am allowed to work, and at what rate I must be paid. Such measures invariably lead to a reduction in the number of work opportunities available. In our case, the result will be fewer TA's, and thus fewer resources for undergraduates. It seems the only way to make the GSO's agenda viable, without resulting in fewer TA positions, would be through significant increases in tuition. But, of course, the GSO opposes tuition increases.

-William DeMeo



**yamashita2 ----Aulii**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Friday, February 03, 2012 5:09 PM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** marriott@math.hawaii.edu  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Oppose  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: John Marriott  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [marriott@math.hawaii.edu](mailto:marriott@math.hawaii.edu)  
Submitted on: 2/3/2012

**Comments:**

As a graduate assistant in the Mathematics Department at UH Manoa, I oppose this measure. I strongly support unions for workers in a career. I was formerly a proud member of the NEA/IEA, and will gladly join any professional union in future employment. However, a graduate assistantship is not a life career, it is temporary employment with benefits (e.g. tuition waivers) beyond the salary. A union of graduate students is unnecessary, and is bureaucracy for the sake of bureaucracy. The major stated goal of the union is to raise graduate assistant wages. This will only strain department budgets further, resulting in fewer graduate assistants, leading to larger class sizes and a decline in graduate program quality. Budget shortfalls would have to be balanced by tuition increases, which the UH GSO opposes.





To: House Committee on Labor and Public Employment  
Representative Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Representative Kyle Yamashita, Vice Chair  
Conference Room 309, February 7, 2012

From: Brian Alofaituli  
[brian.alofaituli@yahoo.com](mailto:brian.alofaituli@yahoo.com) (email)

Testimony for HB2859 – Strong Support

My name is Brian Alofaituli and I am in support of House Bill 2859. I am a PhD student in Pacific History at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. I am an active member of the community here at the university. In addition, I am also affiliated with the East-West Center as an alumni scholar recipient.

The HB2859 Bill will protect graduate student employee rights and education. This Bill will not only improve the quality of the working conditions, but it will provide us access to affordable healthcare coverage and access to livable wages. As an active member of the Samoan community, we often promote active involvement. This is one issue I find very important and I strongly support.

We urge your committee to please Pass HB2859. Thank you.





yamashita2 ----Aulii

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, February 06, 2012 11:24 PM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** dasgupta@way.net  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM



Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Monisha Das Gupta  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [dasgupta@way.net](mailto:dasgupta@way.net)  
Submitted on: 2/6/2012

**Comments:**

I am writing in support of HB 2859 that will include university graduate students among state employees who are allowed to collectively bargain. As a professor at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, and as an erstwhile graduate student myself, I feel it is important for graduate students to have a say in the conditions of their employment as research or teaching assistants. Graduate students at our university do a lot of heavy lifting, and yet they have not received an increase in their pay since 2004. They are currently unable to negotiate their pay because they are excluded from collective bargaining. Furthermore, the right to collectively bargain will give them a process outside of departmental procedures to deal with grievances. The protection of graduate students' rights as workers is an essential part of the support we must give our graduate students so that they can thrive.

The currently classification of graduate students as "student help" minimizes their critical contributions to university. Graduate students deserve to be treated like all other state employees. They deserve the right to unionize so as to ensure fair conditions at their workplace - the university.

Thank you.

Monisha Das Gupta  
Associate Professor  
University of Hawai'i at Manoa



yamashita2 ---Aulii

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, February 06, 2012 10:51 PM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** kmaquino@hawaii.edu  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

LATE

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Kamakana Aquino  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [kmaquino@hawaii.edu](mailto:kmaquino@hawaii.edu)  
Submitted on: 2/6/2012

Comments:

I support the efforts of Graduate Assistants at the University of Hawai'i



yamashita2 ----Aulii

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, February 06, 2012 8:05 PM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** sarahmf@hawaii.edu  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

LATE

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Sarah Fukumoto  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [sarahmf@hawaii.edu](mailto:sarahmf@hawaii.edu)  
Submitted on: 2/6/2012

**Comments:**

Aloha Representatives,

I am a graduate student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and I am in strong support of HB2859. As a former graduate teaching assistant at the University, I understand and support the concerns of my peers and their request for equal representation. Requiring graduate student employees to work for unionized Professors - without the option of having their own union representation - is unjust. The disproportionate power distribution in G.A.-Professor relations should not lawfully extend to employee protection.

THIS TESTIMONY HAS BEEN PREPARED AND SUBMITTED DURING NON-WORKING HOURS AND WITHOUT THE USE OF STATE RESOURCES.

Sarah M. Fukumoto  
Communicology, M.A. (in progress)



**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, February 06, 2012 4:54 PM  
**To:** LABtestimony  
**Cc:** ljmillier@hawaii.edu  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2859 on 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM

LATE

Testimony for LAB 2/7/2012 9:30:00 AM HB2859

Conference room: 309  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Lisa J Miller  
Organization: Individual  
E-mail: [ljmillier@hawaii.edu](mailto:ljmillier@hawaii.edu)  
Submitted on: 2/6/2012

Comments:

I am writing to ask that you support HB2859. I am a graduate research assistant in the Information and Computer Sciences Department at UH Manoa. I am also a single mother and someone who returned to school after many years of running my own business on the Big Island. In 2009, I was accepted into one of the top 20 computer science PhD programs in the country at Brown University in Providence Rhode Island. While at Brown I was paid a research stipend. After a year there it was apparent that my family needed me to return home to Hawaii. Not wanting to give up my dream of a career in research I enrolled at UH and was able to get a research assistantship. Unfortunately, a research assistantship at UH pays less than 2/3 of what I was paid at Brown while the cost of living here in Honolulu is tremendously high compared to Providence. I honestly cannot live and support my daughter on my graduate assistantship pay. The only way I am able to continue at school is through the generosity of my parents and many student loans. The State of Hawaii and UH Manoa as a Research I University desperately need graduate researchers like myself that perform research at the cutting edge of technology, but without adequate compensation and no rights to pursue descent working conditions it is hard to justify remaining in graduate school here. Please support HB2859

