

yamashita2 ----Aulii

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Tuesday, February 07, 2012 8:48 AM
To: LABtestimony
Cc: gibsonn@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: Yes
Submitted by: Nicholas Gibson
Organization: UH Manoa Graduate Student Organization
E-mail: gibsonn@hawaii.edu
Submitted on: 2/7/2012

Comments:
I strongly support this bill.

From: Ahnate Lim

Date: 2/7/2012

Subject: Support for HB 2859, Graduate Student Unionization Bill

My name is Ahnate Lim, and I live at 2132 Wilder Ave, Honolulu, HI 96822.

I am writing today to express my support for HB 2859, which would allow graduate students at UH to unionize into an appropriate collective bargaining unit.

The failure of the legislature up to this point to include student help in the list of state employees has denied us the right to unionize.

The overwhelming affect 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 should take action immediately to ensure our rights as state employees for better working conditions and salary increase.

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 is easily exploited and we have no recourse of action for a grievance process to advocate for our workers' rights and education.

Our current collective bargaining laws are out of date and currently prohibit us to form and/or join a union as graduate student workers at public state university.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.

Sincerely,

Ahnate Lim
808-777-0799

yamashita2 ----Aulii

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Tuesday, February 07, 2012 10:35 AM
To: LABtestimony
Cc: mbutler808@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: Marguerite Butler Higa
Organization: Individual
E-mail: mbutler808@gmail.com
Submitted on: 2/7/2012

Comments:

Testimony in support of HB2859

Dear Chair Karl Rhoads and members of the Committee on Labor and Public Employment:

I write to you in full support of HB2859 and the right of graduate students to fair employment practices. I fully believe that the ability to unionize will be of material aid to graduate students in obtaining fair and equitable working conditions.

As a faculty member who actively recruits graduate students to come study at UH Manoa, I have been frustrated for many years regarding the treatment of graduate student workers. Graduate students do valuable work. Indeed we could not carry out our teaching and research missions without them. They bring to us great talent, intellect, energy and creativity. They are not merely assistants, but take on increasing responsibilities in teaching and the development of research programs. In short, they quickly become colleagues. It is in our interest to treat them as professionals as we only benefit from the increased caliber of their work.

When I arrived at UH five years ago, I was shocked and appalled at the low wages and poor treatment of graduate students. Many students take jobs outside of the university in order to subsist. Sometimes they take 2 or 3 jobs. Bringing the best and the brightest to UH only to end up working in restaurants and bars does no one any good. It certainly does not contribute to their education nor to their work quality. For those graduate students with families, the problems only intensify.

This sad state of affairs truly hurts our ability to recruit the best and the brightest. When they receive better offers from other universities (nearly every other offer is better), it is nearly impossible to compete.

I have tried my best as an individual faculty member to take care of my own students. I supplement their TA income to bring it to a livable wage. However, this is very difficult without institutional support, and is entirely dependent on my ability to obtain outside funding. What happens is that I split a research position among two students who are TA's in order to supplement their income. Teaching is extremely time-consuming, and this arrangement compromises research output. It is not a good system, but it is my only means of supporting students.

Being a graduate student is not a 9-5 job. There are classes to take, classes to teach, and research to be done. All of this can take 60 hours a week or more. If we continue to pay such

sub-standard wages to our graduate students, we will turn it into something achievable only by the independently wealthy, driving out most students by economic attrition. It is unconscionable to pay such sub-standard wages to our graduate students who work long hours to support teaching and research at UH.

Sincerely,
Dr. Marguerite Butler Higa
Associate Professor
Dept. of Biology
University of Hawaii
2450 Campus Rd., Dean Hall Rm. 2
Honolulu, HI 96822

mbutler808@gmail.com

Monday, February 6th 2012



The Honorable Karl Rhoads

Committee on Labor & Public Employment

Conference Room 309
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

Re: Support for HB 2859, Graduate Student Unionization Bill

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

I am writing you this letter in order to express my support for the Graduate Student Unionization Bill HB 2859. I am currently a doctoral student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and I have been a Graduate Assistant at the University for the past eight years.

In many ways, my experiences as a Graduate Assistant have been worthwhile and have enabled me to both gain knowledge and experience in my fields of study and partly support my cost of living as a full-time student pursuing a higher education. As a Graduate Assistant and state employee at the University, I have had the unique opportunity to teach courses in my field, work alongside professors, organize colloquium series, co-direct a campus organization, and work as an administrative assistant in multiple departments. These experiences have enriched my studies at the University and have enabled me to broaden my areas of interest and research experience.

My desire to pursue a higher education degree and work as a Graduate Assistant have also led me to believe that graduate students strongly need more financial support and better healthcare benefit opportunities. Since 2004, graduate students have not received a salary increase. However, with the rising cost of living, taxes and tuition we earn low wages and work long hours. Thus, as workers, our labor is easily exploited and we have no recourse of action for a grievance process to advocate for our workers' rights and education.

For example, as a Graduate Assistant I earn below poverty wages each year as I attempt to pursue a higher education degree. While I have supplemented my low-income with federal student loans and several scholarships, each Graduate Student position has been highly demanding and labor intensive. Often times, the workload of a Graduate Assistant position exceeds the maximum 20-25 hour per week workload described in the position description.

Under these conditions, I have been extremely hesitant to voice my concerns about my intensive workload, extremely low pay, and lack of healthcare benefits as a Graduate Assistant, because I have no access to collective bargaining rights as a graduate student and therefore no formal process to list my grievances and demand courses of action. The Graduate Student Unionization Bill will therefore provide graduate students like me with more opportunities to advocate for the changes we so desperately need as employees at the University.

Sincerely,

Brianne Gallagher

Brianne Gallagher
1621 Anapuni Street #N
Honolulu, HI 96822

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

LATE

From: Anjali Nath
ANath@hawaii.edu (email)

Testimony for HB2859—STRONG SUPPORT

My name is Anjali Nath. I am testifying as an individual in STRONG SUPPORT of House Bill 2859. I am a Political Science Ph.D. student and Lecturer in the field of constitutional law at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. I am also President of UH-Manoa's Graduate Student Organization and a Degree Fellow at the East-West Center.

I was a member of UAW 4123 when doing my Masters Degree and lecturing in the California State University system prior to my doctoral program at UHM. Upon arrival in the state of Hawai'i, I was shocked to hear that graduate students were legally prohibited from collectively bargaining. The overwhelming affect of the University of Hawaii's system-wide and campus-wide budget cuts on graduate students must be addressed immediately. At the state level, all we are requesting is the ability to collectively advocate for ourselves in a more sustained manner than we are currently able to do, so that we can ensure our rights as state employees for better working conditions and salary increases. 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 is easily exploited and we have no recourse of action for a grievance process to advocate for our workers' rights and education. Our current collective bargaining laws are out of date and prohibit us from forming and/or join a union as graduate student workers at a public state university. Please update our collective bargaining laws by removing student help from the list of individuals prohibited from inclusion in any appropriate collective bargaining unit. Ultimately, we deserve the right to unionize as state employees.

Please pass this bill; thank you for your consideration.