

February 2, 2011

Aloha Kakou,

My name is Kanoeuluwehianuhea Kahakua Case and I'm writing this letter in support of the proposed House bill 395 which addresses the access to higher education for those who reside in Hawai'i and have Hawaiian ethnicity. For many of us, myself included, struggle in the midst of financial turmoil upon introduction to higher education. A worry of money for payment of tuition and books quite often hinders on capable students flooding themselves with doubt of success in college which ultimately prevents them from achieving their dreams. It is too often that our College fights with this retention component of their strategic planning which ultimately benefits our college if they prosper in these components of higher education.

As a Native Hawaiian student in Hawaii Community College and currently the Student Body President for ASUH-HawCC, I cannot speak for all students at this time or even for my Senate due to the short notice of this request by networks on campus but I can surely speak on behalf of my own experience as a native Hawaiian student at HawCC and for my constituents who voted me in as their representative, that we believe this is a step in the right direction for people of minority to have a chance in this world, relieve poverty, and deteriorate ignorance as to make aware. These kinds of bills introduced in our Hawaiian Island communities in extension to the nation can only build stronger communities especially individuals. We want to improve our lives and having access to higher education with the least amount of barriers as possible will assure that our Native Hawaiian population in Hawaii get the attention they need to be compatible in this world. I want to live to my full potential and it is a good time to say that many students are moving in that direction. I am not sure if it is the wonderful staff and faculty which HawCC has or if it is just the change in our era to recognize what is important and what's not though I can honestly say that if we provide these kinds of opportunities for our people, only good can come. It is not to say we don't have anything good now, it is to say that we as human beings should always strive to do something better to make the world a better place to live in.

I hope that all who are in the position to make a vote can do so with the future of Hawaii in mind. We all have a vision. Slowly, this vision will become a reality. We just must persevere and work together as a team. Please let me know if we, the students of HawCC, can be more of assistance in this matter.

Mahalo Nui Loa,

Kanoeuluwehianuhea Kahakua Case

ASUH-Hawaii Community College~ President

Ahahui O ka `lo

Aloha Kakou,

My name is Syndi-Mei K. Spencer – Kealamakia. I am writing in regards in support of the bill HB 395. I am a single young adult attending college, and I am also native Hawaiian. I have attended college since 2007 and even though there are some native Hawaiian scholarships available. Some of them are extremely limited to the financial burden that is required for my education. I qualified for one scholarship in 2008 which I may include that I had to go through a series of waiting and many paper works just to receive a little financial help. However, I still ended up taking out student loans and working full-time for a year to catch up with the demands of the cost of tuition, room and board, books, and personal expenses. That in turn with trying to catch up with my academics and being able to pay for it, I suffered greatly mentally and academically. I sought out help with my counselors and advisors. They were astonished how I still ran short of my schooling, and acknowledged the hard situation I was in, because of the great financial problems occurring throughout the duration of 2009-2010. I have recently dropped out of school primarily because I could no longer afford, and because of the mental, and emotional pressure it had on me just trying to get by with the expenses alone.

I am writing in support because I see how greatly native Hawaiians suffer in trying to obtain a degree because they cannot afford even the tuition itself, and how much native Hawaiians have to jump through hoops just to get a measly scholarship that only covers for a small amount. People do not stop to think how hard it is. There are also additional things to worry about. If tuition is paid for them how much of a blessing it will be for us. This gives us the opportunity few of my parents and my native Hawaiian family have ever dreamed of: a degree. Barely any of my native Hawaiian family has obtained no more than a high school education. How sad to see how again I will say, limited, it has been for us as indigenous people to even gain the opportunity of an education. True, only few make it, and I want to be one of them. I want all of them to be that.

In closing I would ask to please pass this bill. It will open doors that will enable us to have the education we never dreamed of. To give us what we feel deserving of as a people, that education is dangled in front of us but is never given. How much we hope, and desire for those things, but don't have the chance to do so. We ask those to do right by us.

Mahalo nui loa

Syndi-Mei Kamahinanioka'ainaonukilani Spencer - Kealamakia