

Aloha,

'LATE TESTIMONY'

I am writing in full support of HB1146. Graduate students have an immense responsibility as educational professionals whether they are a first-year MA student serving as a teaching assistant or an advanced PhD candidate conducting original research and teaching a course they designed. Since 2004, graduate assistants (GAs) at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) have received zero compensation adjustments, while the cost of living in the islands has progressively risen. In December 2012, Chancellor Tom Apple released a memo stating, "Effective Fall 2013, all GAs currently assigned to Step 7 or lower will be moved to Step 8."

While this does impact a number of GAs, this gesture does not technically constitute a "raise" as there are no standardized and continuous budgetary increases to go along with this mandatory adjustment, even though many schools are scrambling to find funds to keep the same number of GAs. This stop-gap measure will inevitably reduce the number of graduate assistantships offered in the years to come and will adversely impact the health of many programs and the vitality of the university as departments will constrict out of financial necessity. I am confident, however, that graduate students can work with both system and campus-level administration to forge sustainable metrics for GA compensation that provides for a living wage. Engendering quality educational experiences for all students is the utmost concerns for graduate students, who are future faculty and administrators, and I feel the best way to accomplish this is to find successful models from other institutions of higher education.

Other universities across the United States enjoy positive working relationships with graduate student unions that fairly advocate for graduate student workers, including some of UHM's peer and benchmark institutions. Consequently, graduate students are seeking the capacity to bargain collectively. Passing HB1146 serves as a critical first step in giving graduate students the opportunity to start the process of unionizing. Some universities with graduate student unions are: New York University; Columbia University; University of Michigan Ann Arbor; University of Massachusetts at Amherst; University of Massachusetts at Lowell; University of Massachusetts Boston; University of Iowa; Wayne State University; University of Kansas; Oregon State University; University of Washington; Michigan State University; Temple University; University of Rhode Island; University of California, Berkeley; University of California, Davis; University of California, Santa Cruz; University of California, Santa Barbara; University of California, Riverside; University of California, Irvine; University of California, Los Angeles; University of California, Merced; University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; University of Illinois at Chicago; University of Illinois Springfield; Southern Illinois University; the entire California State University system; Western Michigan University; and Central Michigan University.

Graduate Student Organization (GSO) representatives have had a number of meetings with Chancellor Apple about our intent to unionize, and he assured us that if we were to gain the ability to bargain collectively that it would not change our working relationship. We have not,

however, received any invitation to meet with system-level administration about our concerns and proposal to bargain collectively, which is disconcerting as some system-level administrators have spoken out against our efforts to bargain collectively. GSO would welcome this opportunity and hopes to be able to participate in such meetings in the future if they are available.

At UHM, the total number of graduate students is estimated to be 5722 (Fall 2012), and 22.7% (1308) of those students have graduate student on-campus employment either as a research assistant or teaching assistant. Disparities exist between actual salaries and benefits provided to graduate student workers at UHM and comparable institutions. At the University of Oregon (UO), the university covers 100% of the medical plan costs for graduate students whereas UHM's administration covers merely 50%. Factoring in health care, students at UO far outpace their UHM counterparts, and these two communities have vastly different costs of living. In fact, with rising health care costs and no pay increases relative to inflation and cost of living, graduate students progressively make less money each year. A recent survey conducted by Graduate Student Organization (GSO) found that 90% of graduate students feel that current salary scales do not account for the cost of living in the islands.

Recent budget cutbacks with a campus-wide impact at UHM have eliminated offices and administrative positions crucial to the successful employment and academic experiences of graduate students. In particular, the Ombuds Office at UHM, which provided an accessible grievance process for troubleshooting issues related to the experience of attending and working at UHM, has been eliminated. This office addressed and adjudicated 359 (2006-2007), 387 (2007-2008), and 338 (2008-2009) disputations brought to the fore by the students, faculty, and staff. According to a GSO survey, 65% of respondents were in favor of re-opening the Ombuds Office.

Considering all of the above, I believe that graduate student workers, as state employees, should have the right to bargain collectively. 85% of the respondents to GSO's survey agreed that graduate students should have collective bargaining rights. I am in full support of HB1146, which grants graduate students the ability to take the first steps to provide for the protection of graduate student workers' rights and education by permitting the inclusion of graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i system in an appropriate collective bargaining unit, which has yet to be determined.

Mahalo nui for your efforts to ensure the health and well being of our state's flagship institution of higher education!

John A. Sweeney
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University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

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I am writing in full support of HB1146 and SB1365. Graduate students have an immense responsibility as educational professionals whether they are a first-year MA student serving as a teaching assistant or an advanced PhD candidate conducting original research. Since 2004, graduate assistants (GAs) at the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM) have received zero compensation adjustments, while the cost of living in the islands has progressively risen. In December 2012, Chancellor Tom Apple released a memo stating, "Effective Fall 2013, all GAS currently assigned to Step 7 or lower will be moved to Step 8."

while this does impact a number of GAS, this gesture does not technically constitute a "raise" as there are no standardized and continuous budgetary increases to go along with this mandatory adjustment. This stop-gap measure will effectively reduce the number of graduate assistantships offered and adversely impact the health of many programs and the vitality of the university.

In hopes of remediating this issue, along with concerns over equal representation, graduate students are seeking the capacity to bargain collectively. Passing HB1146 and SB1365 serves as a critical first step in giving graduate students the opportunity to start the process of unionizing. Other universities across the United States enjoy positive working relationships with graduate student unions that fairly advocate for graduate student workers, including both peer and benchmark institutions.

At the University of Hawaii at Manoa, the total number of graduate students is estimated to be 5722 (Fall 2012), and 22.7% (1308) of those students have graduate student on-campus employment either as a research assistant or teaching assistant. Disparities exist between actual salaries and benefits provided to graduate student workers at UHM and comparable institutions. At the University of Oregon (UO), the university covers 100% of the medical plan costs for graduate students whereas UHM's administration covers merely 50%.

Factoring in health care, students at UO can make more money than at UHM, and these two communities have vastly different costs of living. In fact, with rising health care costs and no pay increases, graduate students progressively make less money each year when their health care costs are raised. A recent survey conducted by Graduate Student Organization (GSO) found that 90% of graduate students feel that current salary scales do not account for the cost of living in the islands.

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Considering the above, I believe that graduate student workers, as state employees, should have the right to bargain collectively. 85% of the respondents to GSO's survey agreed that graduate students should have collective bargaining rights. I am in full support of HB1146 and SB1365, which grants graduate students the ability to take the first steps to provide for the protection of graduate student workers' rights and education by permitting the inclusion of graduate students

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employed by the University of Hawaii system in any appropriate collective bargaining unit.

Mahalo nui for your efforts to ensure the health and well being of our state's flagship institution of higher education!



**PRIDE@WORK
Hawai'i**

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Workers and Allies

LATE

January 31, 2013

House Committee on Higher Education
Chair, Rep. Isaac Choy
Vice Chair, Rep. Rep. Linda Ichiyama

Testimony in strong support of HB 1146

Pride At Work Hawai'i, an affiliate of the Hawai'i State AFL-CIO, supports HB 1146, which would take the long-overdue step of granting collective bargaining rights to graduate students who work for the University of Hawai'i system.

Over 1300 graduate students at UH Manoa also work for the University as research or teaching assistants, giving them responsibility as educational professionals who provide essential services for the school. However, graduate assistants at UH Manoa have not received a pay increase since 2004, while the cost of living in the islands has risen. A recent survey conducted by the Graduate Student Organization found that 90% of graduate students feel that current salary scales do not account for the cost of living in Hawai'i.

Other universities across the United States enjoy positive working relationships with graduate student unions that advocate for graduate student workers. The ability to bargain for basic working conditions, wages, and benefits is an internationally-recognized human right. Hawai'i needs to extend this right to our hard-working - and all-too-easily exploited - brothers and sisters who keep our higher-education system functioning.

Please support our higher education system by supporting HB1146.

PRIDE AT WORK HAWAI'I advocates for full equality and inclusiveness - in our workplaces and our unions - for LGBT workers and our families, and builds solidarity between the Labor movement and the LGBT community.

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