

LATE

SB 563



LATE

EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
HONOLULU

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR

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State Capitol Room 414

Testimony of
Policy Office of the Governor, State of Hawaii

To the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Brian Taniguchi, Chair
Senator Gilbert Kahele, Vice Chair

Senate Bill 563 - Relating to the University of Hawaii

Chair Taniguchi, Vice Chair Kahele, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 563 (SB563). The bill amends section 304A-104.5 of HRS and amends the form and function of the University of Hawaii (UH) Regents Candidate Advisory Council (RCAC).

The Governor believes that the University of Hawaii system is the single most underutilized public resource in Hawaii. UH contributes to and plays a leadership role in every element of improving Hawaii. The UH Regents provide vital leadership to ensure that college is accessible and affordable for students on all islands, support the entrepreneurial professor, facilitate innovation and technology transfer, support renovation, support premier education and research projects, and improve student success.

A 2006 constitutional amendment established a council in process of appointing Regents, and the composition and obligations of the council were established in statute in 2007 and subsequently amended in 2008, 2010 and 2011.

Per section 304A-104.5 of HRS, leaders of seven stakeholder groups such as the chairperson of the Executive Council of the University of Hawaii Student Caucus, All Campus Council of Faculty Senate Chairs of the University of Hawaii, and University of Hawaii Alumni Association appoint members to the RCAC. I appreciate the service of RCAC members who serve voluntarily.

SB563 would reconstitute the RCAC so that its voting members would be appointed by the Governor and encourages the RCAC to provide more candidates for the Governor's consideration in appointing Regents.

SB563 addresses challenges of the current RCAC process relies on the RCAC to recruit, screen and nominate Regents. This process limits the Governor's ability to recruit and select Regents. Furthermore, since the RCAC process was established, the Senate has denied advice and consent for Regents appointees in 3 of 5 legislative sessions.

The current RCAC process discourages candidates from applying for the Board of Regents. The process involves three levels of screening: RCAC to identify qualified candidates to present to the Governor, Governor to make appointments, and Senate to confirm appointees. Many appointees and potential candidates reported reluctance to apply or seek reappointment because of the burden of the process that requires significant commitment of time and exposure.

In making appointments for boards and commissions, the Governor considers the individual qualities—personal and professional—of the candidates, as well as how the candidates would balance the board in terms of their experience, skill sets or perspectives. The Board of Regents' balance among the members is important to fulfill the Board's charge to govern and steward public higher education. Governor Abercrombie believes that flexibility need to balance many characteristics of the candidates to reflect the diversity of Hawaii and the functional needs of the Board of Regents. Considering only a limited "short list" of candidates currently provided by the RCAC makes it extremely challenging to balance the Board on the many dimensions of importance to the University and our state.

The UH and state are best served by a process that increases the Governor's flexibility to appoint Regents. SB583 provides this opportunity by changing the composition of the RCAC to be five members selected by the Governor and the most recent past Chair of the Board of Regents.

Thank you for your consideration.