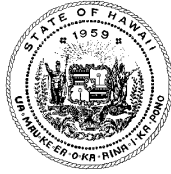


DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



JAMES K. NISHIMOTO
DIRECTOR

CINDY S. INOUE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**
235 S. BERETANIA STREET, SUITE 1201
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-2437

February 1, 2016

TESTIMONY TO THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT
For Hearing on Tuesday, February 2, 2016
9:30 a.m., Conference Room 309

By

JAMES K. NISHIMOTO
OFFICE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, CHIEF NEGOTIATOR

**House Bill No. 1940
Relating to Collective Bargaining**

(WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY)

CHAIRPERSON MARK M. NAKASHIMA, VICE CHAIR KEOHOKALO LE AND
MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.

H.B. No. 1940 would establish a collective bargaining unit for graduate student assistants employed at the University of Hawai'i (UH).

The Office of Collective Bargaining **does not support** this bill for the following reasons:

- Unlike other employees, a graduate student's employment is temporary and is not a career or profession.
- Establishing UH graduate students as collective bargaining unit 15 could have significant cost increases for both the UH and the State since mandatory

subjects of collective bargaining cover wages, hours, conditions of employment,
and fringe benefits.

Based upon the above, OCB respectfully requests that this measure **be held**.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Labor and Public Employment
Tuesday, February 2, 2016 at 9:30 a.m.

By
Risa E. Dickson
Vice President for Academic Affairs
University of Hawai'i

HB 1940 – RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Keohokalole and members of the House committee on Labor and Public Employment:

I am providing testimony on behalf of the University of Hawai'i (UH) regarding House Bill 1940 – Relating to Collective Bargaining – which proposes to amend Chapter 89, HRS, more specifically HRS, §89-6, to create a new bargaining unit 15 entitled “Graduate student assistants employed by the University of Hawaii”, and HRS, §89-11(d), to include the new bargaining unit 15, which will allow “graduate student assistants employed by the University of Hawaii” to be included in public sector collective bargaining as provided for in HRS, Chapter 89.

The University opposes this measure.

“...graduate student assistants are students first and employees second.” This statement, from the Governor’s Message No. 1328, dated July 13, 2015, articulates one of the concerns and issues raised in Governor Ige’s *Statement of Objections* toward a similar bill, House Bill 553, which he vetoed in 2015. The current bill continues to be objectionable since it is still incomplete and could potentially cause legal and administrative problems. None of these positions is a career position within government service unlike all other positions in the established fourteen (14) collective bargaining units under HRS, §89-6. There still will be significant cost increases to both the University and the State of Hawaii should graduate student assistants become employees with the right to collectively bargain. These costs could extend to include, but would not be limited to, additional pension contribution costs and possible increases in health benefit costs. The current levels of compensation for graduate student assistants are competitive, taking into consideration tuition waivers and monetary stipends as well as the current opportunity for graduate assistants who have 50% appointments to enroll in the same health and benefit plans (medical, prescription drugs, dental, vision and life insurance) as employees. Graduate assistants who are also full-time students are exempt from the FICA tax.

As we explained in prior testimonies, there are several issues that the Legislature, the University and the State taxpayers should consider in deliberating the approach to allow university-employed graduate student assistants to be included in collective bargaining.

First, from an employment perspective, the rationality of requiring the State and University to collectively bargain employment with employed students – in this case, graduate student assistants. The University's graduate student assistants are unlike any other employees of the State. They are students first and employees second. Graduate student assistants are student learners. They are at the University to learn as much about their fields of study as their individual time and talents will allow. These graduate student assistants are mentored and supervised by our rank 3, 4, and 5 Faculty members who hold Ph.Ds. and have many years of proven professional competence and experience, including evidence of proficiency in teaching and/or research. 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 developing graduate student assistants as academic professionals with real job skills in research techniques and teaching expertise, contributing to scholarly and research disciplines at national and international levels. They learn these essential skill sets while in their graduate assistant positions under the guidance and supervision of our current faculty employees. A graduate student assistant is similar to an on-the-job training or apprenticeship training program. It is not a career or a profession, but the beginning stages most faculty must complete to pursue a career in higher education. There are no long term career opportunities for graduate student assistants at the University and a University's priority is degree completion for these graduate student assistants.

The duties and assignments of a graduate assistant differ from that of a faculty member. Our faculty members in ranks 3, 4, and 5 who mentor graduate student assistants are professionals required to teach classes and/or develop research programs without active supervision or management oversight. The purpose of an assistantship is to train and mentor a student in specific skill sets with the explicit goal of increasing their competitiveness as they enter their professional academic career.

Second, the State of Hawai'i and the University of Hawai'i must somberly consider the financial implications of student employees such as graduate student assistants in HRS, Chapter 89, the State's public sector collective bargaining law. There will be significant cost increases for both the University and the State of Hawai'i should the Legislature decide that student assistants are indeed employees with a right to collectively bargain. Graduate student assistants of the University are currently compensated via a package that includes a variety of benefits. Current compensation for graduate student assistants varies upon individual circumstances of the student. University graduate student assistants receive tuition waivers that are valued between \$593 to \$1,770 per credit hour, per semester, depending upon their residency status, i.e., whether the student is a Hawai'i resident or non-resident. For example, UH Mānoa full time resident graduate

student tuition ranges between \$7,116 to \$11,196 per semester while non-resident tuition ranges between \$17,160 to \$21,240 per semester. Graduate student assistants may also receive a monetary stipend that can vary by the educational program in which they are enrolled. The current level of compensation is a significant cost to the University and a significant amount of the financial assistance provided to graduate student assistants. Currently, graduate assistants who are 50% FTE may elect to participate in the medical, prescription drugs, dental, vision and life insurance programs at comparable premiums to members of bargaining units. As mandatory subjects of bargaining includes wages, hours, conditions of employment and fringe benefits, all such subjects shall now become “cost items” subject to legislative appropriations pursuant to HRS, §89-10(b). For example, membership in the State Employees’ Retirement System as provided to employees in Chapter 88, HRS, may add pension contribution costs to the State and employee.

Third, in addition, any increased enrollment in the Employer-Union Trust Fund for health insurance benefits will also add increased expenses to the University for contributions, and to the State for total liability of the system. Additionally, all compensation collectively bargained for can be treated as wages that will be subject to employment and income taxes – an issue graduate assistants may not be considering as it relates to tuition waivers. The Legislature must consider the additional expenses incurred above the current operational costs in the creation of a 15th bargaining unit. Adding collective bargaining components to graduate student assistants, who are first and foremost students and employed as an extension of their student experience at the University, will increase State general fund demand while simultaneously increasing University operational expenses.

Since mandatory subjects of bargaining covers wages, hours, conditions of employment and fringe benefits, all such subjects shall now become “cost items” subject to legislative appropriations pursuant to HRS, §89-10(b). For example, membership in the State Employees’ Retirement System as provided to employees in Chapter 88, HRS, will add pension contribution costs to the State and the employee.

Finally, since last legislative session, President Lassner met with representatives of the UH Mānoa Graduate Student Organization (GSO) in July and October 2015, and several other internal discussions have occurred to address the matters the GSO representatives conveyed on behalf of their members. The University’s priority for a graduate assistant is degree completion. To consider and address the GSO concerns, the administration has been working with the chief academic officers and the UH Mānoa Office Graduate Education on a proposed update to our procedure that addresses the GSO concerns regarding consideration of one year renewals instead of semester appointments as appropriate, earlier renewal date notifications, reminding supervisors to consider advance to next step on salary schedule for exemplary performance, recognition of need for outside employment at times, and work schedule adjustments for illness or emergency situations.

In summary, the Legislature must consider the current tuition waivers and compensation paid to graduate student assistants who are first and foremost students and employed as an extension of their student experience at the University. The proposed bill will increase additional expenses incurred above the current operational expenses.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

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

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

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 2, 2016

H.B. 1940 – RELATING TO
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO strongly supports the concept of allowing graduate student assistants employed by the University of Hawaii to be included in an appropriate collective bargaining unit, as proposed in H.B. 1940.

Graduate assistants employed by the University have encountered numerous work related issues in the past, including budget set backs and increases in class size and workload, in addition to the high cost of living in Hawaii. The language proposed in H.B. 1940 is the most viable as it not only removes the current exclusion of this group from collectively bargaining but also creates a unique bargaining unit with a dispute mechanism.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H.B. 1940.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director



Randy Perreira
President

HAWAII STATE AFL-CIO

345 Queen Street, Suite 500 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

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

Telephone: (808) 597-1441
Fax: (808) 593-2149

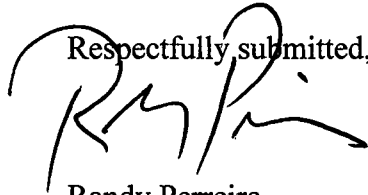
Testimony by
Hawaii State AFL-CIO
February 2, 2016

H.B. 1940 – RELATING TO
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The Hawaii State AFL-CIO strongly supports H.B. 1940 which establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate student assistants employed at the University of Hawaii.

Having the ability to collectively bargain will give University of Hawaii graduate students a unified voice to discuss their working conditions, wages, and a number of other benefits to help improve their quality of life and work environment. Collective bargaining will help solve workplace problems and provide a grievance process to ensure each situation is handled appropriately and fairly. The Hawaii State AFL-CIO strongly urges the passage of H.B. 1940.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,


Randy Perreira
President



Date: February 2nd, 2016
Time: 9:30AM
Place: Conference Room 309

To: House Committee on Labor
Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
Representative Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Re: Support for HB 1940 Relating to Collective Bargaining

Dear Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the House Committee on Labor & Public Employment,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Jonathan Dial, and I am writing on behalf and as the President of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) Graduate Student Organization (GSO), which represents the approximately 5,000 graduate students at the UHM campus. I am writing in strong support of HB 1940, which seeks to secure collective bargaining rights for graduate assistants at UH.

The role of graduate assistants is integral to the university's operation. They teach, research, and perform administrative work, but they are unfairly compensated for their labor and are vulnerable to exploitation and poor treatment. Regardless of the elimination of the bottom steps of the pay scale for graduate assistants in 2013, the pay rate for any of the steps has not increased since 2003/2004. The current base pay (\$17,500/year) is just fifty-one percent of the cost of living in Honolulu for graduate students, declared by the University to be nearly \$34,000/year in 2012. Given that these positions are intended to serve as means through which students can earn a living wage while pursuing their education, this is a major problem for graduate students. Furthermore, the relatively short duration of these positions, while sometimes pointed to by critics as a rationale for graduate assistants not needing collective bargaining rights, actually make these employees more vulnerable to exploitation. We also find that a climate of fear of retaliation amongst many graduate assistants leads them to refuse to speak out, especially in the forms of formal grievances or Congressional testimony.

These circumstances deter potential students and are also likely responsible for many students' decisions to leave UH and the state. Indeed, graduate student enrollment has significantly declined in recent years. Attempts by the GSO to improve these circumstances, especially pertaining to compensation, have been flatly denied by administration. Even a one-time adjustment in pay would not guarantee that similar problems would not continue to arise in the future. Through collective bargaining, this vulnerable population would be able to protect and promote its own interests, while simultaneously protecting the future of post graduate higher education for the state. Based on these reasons, we strongly support HB 1940.

Thank you,

Jonathan Dial
UH Mānoa Graduate Student Organization, President

Date: Tuesday, February 2, 2016
Time: 9:30 AM
Place: Conference Room 309

To: House Committee on Labor
Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
Representative Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Re: Support for HB 1940 Relating to Collective Bargaining

Dear Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Maja P. Schjervheim, and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) and Co-Chair of advocacy for the GSO. I am writing in strong support of HB 1940 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i (UH).

During my time as Co-Chair of Advocacy for the GSO at UH Mānoa, I have met with and been approached by many GAs who are desperately seeking advice on how to cope with hours far beyond their contract, a lack of funds for basic living, and unpredictable or unsafe working conditions. Fortunately, there is also GAs who are treated well in their assistantships but these are still struggling with low wages that makes their life in grad school difficult, being one disaster away from not affording rent or food. However, the number of GAs who feel exploited and powerless in the UH system is shocking, as well as bad for the reputation of UH as a potential grad school for prospective new students. I want to give these students a voice because sadly many of them are reluctant to submit testimony because they fear the repercussions it will have.

I see three broad issues amongst the many graduate assistants who have had a hard encounter with their assistantships. The first is regarding wages that does not cover basic needs when you live in the increasingly expensive state of Hawai'i. This issue will be echoed by almost any GA you encounter. Moreover the students I talk to humbly do not expect more than decent, livable pay that resonates with the cost of food and housing. Furthermore I have not been able to find one student that has been offered even a possibility of getting a raise according to the pay scale. This means that when you evaluate the wage situation of GAs you should consider the higher steps of the pay scale inapproachable. GAs, including myself, cannot afford basic food and housing on GA pay and often cannot get a second job because of demanding hours in their GA ship!

That leads to the second issue of the extreme amount of hours many of UHM GAs are asked to work. Most contracts state that the GA is expected to work 20 hours a week. However the case for a large amount of GAs is that they are expected (often expressed explicitly) to work close to 40, 60 or even 80 hours a week on top of their academic

obligations. Such a workload is compromising the academic performance of students and keeps many from graduating at expected time. Moreover it is compromising their health and sanity! As a GA without a union you are completely powerless in resisting such demand. Those who try to ask for a workload closer to the 20 hour limit have often faced threats of being laid off or have actually lost their GA ship, which is a tragic event for a student who cannot pay their tuition otherwise. If you are an international student, as I am, you will lose your student visa if you cannot get another GA ship instantly. Disproportionate GA work pressure also keeps graduate students from graduating which does not benefit the Hawaii's economy.

The third issue that was expressed by many graduate assistants is the despair of working under unsafe or unstable working environments. A daunting amount of students have expressed having to put up with flaky or cruel bosses, arbitrary decisions, or harassment. By this I mean both the overhanging threat of losing your GA ship without justifiable cause as well as how power is abused by those who are in charge of the GAs. A certain power imbalance is of course expected, but the extreme power imbalance GAs are facing now cultivates a culture where it is "OK" to treat student workers poorly and exploitatively. Having a union would give GAs the support and security they need to have a safe and secure working environment.

This all comes down to decency and basic rights. Granting students the right to collectively bargain and form a union will offer them a way to collectively work for these basic rights. I can't tell you how powerless and in despair some of these students feel. They are in a position where they have the choice between taking poor treatment and unlivable wages or quitting school. This is not a real option! Just the fact that so many students are afraid to speak the truth in front of the legislators shows you that there is something wrong with the current system and that these students deserve to be able to form a union. These students are a priceless part of University of Hawaii Manoa and they deserve at least the chance to stand together for better conditions. Many brilliant and hard working students have already quit because of unbearable conditions, which is a shame as UHM is otherwise a great place to be for a graduate student. Please help us and give graduate students a voice.

Respectfully submitted,

Maja P. Schjervheim
majaps@hawaii.edu

Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
Representative Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair
Committee on Labor and Public Employment

House of Representatives of the State of Hawai'i

Lance D. Collins, Ph.D
Law Office of Lance D Collins

Tuesday, February 2, 2016
Support H.B. 1940, Relating to Collective Bargaining

My name is Lance D. Collins. I am an attorney in private practice. I strongly support this bill.

Graduate students perform the same work as other public employees who work for the University of Hawai'i. In most instances, this work is done with the same level of supervision or less as other public employees at the University of Hawai'i. The only difference between graduate student employees and others is that the graduate students have no protection from arbitrary and capricious employment decisions and often must suffer poor and sometimes illegal working conditions to maintain their employment.

Over the years, the University has stated that its purpose for graduate assistantships is to train and mentor graduate students for their professional careers. Taking collective action for the betterment of working conditions and collective bargaining should be included in that training. Being subject to arbitrary and capricious employment decisions and poor and abusive working conditions only trains graduate students to accept that such harmful conduct is a necessary component to academic life – when it, in fact, is not.

In 1968, the people of Hawai'i amended the Hawai'i State Constitution to provide public employees the right to collectively bargain. Article XIII, Section 2 of the Hawai'i State Constitution. Nevertheless, the implementing statute has been interpreted to exclude graduate students from the ambit of the public employee collective bargaining statute.

That interpretation exceeds the powers of the legislature and violates such a right. “[T]he framers [of the constitution] were not in favor of granting the legislature the ultimate power to deny the right to organize for the purpose of collectively bargaining.” *UPW v. Yogi*, 101 Haw. 46, 52 (2002)

HB 1940 will amend Chapter 89, HRS, to properly include graduate students in their own collective bargaining unit so that they may exercise their constitutional right to organize and collectively bargain for better working conditions.

Mahalo.

//

Date: Tuesday, February 2, 2016
Time: 9:30 AM
Place: Conference Room 309

To: House Committee on Labor
Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
Representative Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Re: Support for HB 1940 Relating to Collective Bargaining

Dear Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Benton Rodden, and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM). I am writing in strong support of HB 1940 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i (UH).

Graduate assistants are not given guaranteed sick days, paid sick leave, or parental leave. Graduate assistants do not get paid for overtime work, but are expected to work extra hours whenever asked. These are issues that unions have been able to address in a wide variety of industries. Graduate assistants are not paid anywhere near the cost of living and have not received a pay increase in the past 12 years. UH Executive Management consistently tells graduate students that there is no money to fund graduate education, yet Executive Management found a way to give themselves a \$1 million raise this year.

The issues I have listed above are the very issues unions have addressed for countless workers around the globe. The right to collectively bargain is about more than just pay; it's about treating workers with respect and dignity. Whether we are teaching the next generation, performing cutting edge research, or out helping to improve the quality of life in the community, we care about our work. We just want to be treated with a little respect and dignity while working for you.

Graduate students are an integral part of the UH system and the local economy. While attending UH, we constitute a committed learning community, do important research, and perform a substantial proportion of the teaching duties. Unfortunately, we are poorly compensated and are vulnerable to exploitation and poor treatment. As individuals, we stand little chance of success in demanding better treatment and compensation, and the long history of failed attempts at improvements proves this to be true. Our only hope for improving our own situations, then, is to collectively bargain with the University administration. For these reasons, I strongly urge you to support HB 1940.

Respectfully submitted,

Benton Rodden
bentonrodden@gmail.com
206.229.0226

LABtestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, February 01, 2016 12:17 PM
To: LABtestimony
Cc: lauradun@hawaii.edu
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB1940 on Feb 2, 2016 09:30AM

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

HB1940

Submitted on: 2/1/2016

Testimony for LAB on Feb 2, 2016 09:30AM in Conference Room 309

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Laura Dunn	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Date: Tuesday, February 2, 2016 Time: 9:30 AM Place: Conference Room 309 To: House Committee on Labor Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair Representative Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair Re: Support for HB 1940 Relating to Collective Bargaining Dear Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment, Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Laura Dunn, and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM). I am writing in strong support of HB 1940 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i (UH). Graduate students are an integral part of the UH system and the local economy. While attending UH, we constitute a committed learning community, do important research, and perform a substantial proportion of the teaching duties. Unfortunately, we are poorly compensated and are vulnerable to exploitation and poor treatment. As individuals, we stand little chance of success in demanding better treatment and compensation, and the long history of failed attempts at improvements proves this to be true. Our only hope for improving our own situations, then, is to collectively bargain with the University administration. For these reasons, I strongly urge you to support HB 1940. Respectfully submitted, Laura Dunn lauradun@hawaii.edu

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

Do not reply to this email. This inbox is not monitored. For assistance please email webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov

Date: Tuesday, February 2, 2016

Time: 9:30 AM

Place: Conference Room 309

To: House Committee on Labor

Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair

Representative Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Re: Support for HB 1940 Relating to Collective Bargaining

February 1, 2016

Dear Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment,

My name is Jeanette Purvis and I am a Ph.D. student in Social Psychology at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. I am writing in support of HB1940 to advocate for bargaining rights for graduate assistants, research assistants, and teacher's assistants at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

It is important that as workers, we have the right to advocate for fair and equal treatment by our employers. Right now, we suffer from inadequate wages. Last year as a GA, I absolutely could not afford to live in Hawaii with a position that only paid 1200 a month after taxes (the average 1-bedroom apartment in Hawaii rents at \$1,877 a month). As such, along with working 20 hours a week as a GA, I also had to work full time in the community. This was on top of going to school full time and trying to complete one of the most grueling and demanding degree programs in the nation. I would leave the house at 6AM and return at midnight and on average clocked in 80 hours of work a week. This took an incredible toll on my health, both mentally and physically. This is **not** how we are supposed to treat individuals who are trying to work for their education.

The reason I had to endure this was because the University of Hawaii's current business model capitalizes on the labor of underpaid and vulnerable students. We cannot work together to demand better pay. We cannot work together to bargain better benefits or compensation plans. It is every worker for themselves, which leaves those of us most vulnerable with no power to act or change things. I am a worker at the University of Hawaii, and my labor supports the University and the services it provides. Without my direct labor, the University cannot provide the services it has promised its students. As a worker at the University of Hawaii, I believe HB1940 will recognize my right as a laborer employed by the state

government to collectively bargain. I urge you to support this bill as it directly supports some of the most promising and hard working individuals in our state to achieve their dreams without being exploited along the way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeanette Purvis". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent loop at the end of the word "Purvis".

Jeanette Purvis, MA.

Date: Tuesday, February 2, 2016
Time: 9:30 AM
Place: Conference Room 309

To: House Committee on Labor
Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
Representative Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Re: Support for HB 1940 Relating to Collective Bargaining

Dear Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Jeanette Hall and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM). I am writing in strong support of HB 1940 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i (UH).

As a graduate assistant for the past four years, it has been impossible for me to meet the cost of living in Hawai'i, despite working multiple jobs. My teaching assignments in particular have required working hours far above the hours for which I've been compensated. Graduate students are a necessary part of the university, and their labor is often invisible. This also makes it incredibly challenging to complete our degrees in a timely fashion, given the addition of multiple part-time jobs necessary to make ends meet. The need for us to collectively bargain is essential. The poor treatment of graduate students has gone on for too long.

Graduate students are an integral part of the UH system and the local economy. While attending UH, we constitute a committed learning community, do important research, and perform a substantial proportion of the teaching duties. Unfortunately, we are poorly compensated and are vulnerable to exploitation and poor treatment. As individuals, we stand little chance of success in demanding better treatment and compensation, and the long history of failed attempts at improvements proves this to be true. Our only hope for improving our own situations, then, is to collectively bargain with the University administration. For these reasons, I strongly urge you to support HB 1940.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanette Hall
halljt@hawaii.edu

LABtestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, February 01, 2016 8:56 AM
To: LABtestimony
Cc: johnk2@hawaii.edu
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB1940 on Feb 2, 2016 09:30AM
Attachments: TestimonyBillHB1940.odt

HB1940

Submitted on: 2/1/2016

Testimony for LAB on Feb 2, 2016 09:30AM in Conference Room 309

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
John Koblanski	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

Do not reply to this email. This inbox is not monitored. For assistance please email webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov

Date: Tuesday, February 2, 2016
Time: 9:30 AM
Place: Conference Room 309

To: House Committee on Labor
Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
Representative Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Re: Support for HB 1940 Relating to Collective Bargaining

Dear Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Vera Hanaoka, and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM). I am writing in strong support of HB 1940 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i (UH).

The salary for graduate students working as faculty members at UHM is not a living wage. I applied to several other graduate programs who offered me similar positions all with higher salaries in areas with lower cost of living than in Hawai'i. However, I chose to come to Hawai'i, due to the superior quality of the program. However, the cost of health insurance for my family of four, I have two young children, is 40% of my paycheck and the rest of my salary goes toward paying for food and other expenses, while rent and utilities comes from our savings. In addition, graduate students have no paid or unpaid leave including, sick leave, family leave, or maternity leave. Despite the fact that graduate students do a large amount of the teaching at UHM they receive only a fraction of compensation contributing to the exploitive hierarchical system of higher education in this country. Several other public universities have recently granted collective bargaining agreements to graduate student faculty, I hope to see UHM follow suit.

Graduate students are an integral part of the UH system and the local economy. While attending UH, we constitute a committed learning community, do important research, and perform a substantial proportion of the teaching duties. Unfortunately, we are poorly compensated and are vulnerable to exploitation and poor treatment. As individuals, we stand little chance of success in demanding better treatment and compensation, and the long history of failed attempts at improvements proves this to be true. Our only hope for improving our own situations, then, is to collectively bargain with the University administration. For these reasons, I strongly urge you to support HB 1940.

Respectfully submitted,

Vera Hanaoka

Date: Tuesday, February 2, 2016

Time: 9:30 AM

Place: Conference Room 309

To: House Committee on Labor

Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair

Representative Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Re: Support for HB 1940 Relating to Collective Bargaining

Dear Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment,

My name is Ed Hoogland, and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM). I am writing in strong support of HB 1940 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i (UH).

Graduate assistants at UH perform essential functions, such as teaching and research, yet are paid poorly. In a 2012 survey conducted by the UHM Graduate Student Organization (GSO), 90% of respondents indicated that their wages do not cover the cost of living in Hawai'i. Furthermore, graduate students have little job security, since they are rehired each year, and sometimes each semester. They also are not afforded sick days or family leave. As a result, sick graduate student employees risk being fired if they choose to stay home in order to avoid spreading illness to students. There is a real fear of retaliation.

The right to organize used to be an honored one, not one taken for granted or carelessly written off based on age, occupation or number of hours worked. The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa employs about 2000 graduate students as teaching assistants. We depend on this income for survival. In the recent past, the university has taken the easier method of balancing the budget by keeping its graduate assistants (GAs) as casual labor with no right to appeal unjust release. Please help grant GAs collective bargaining rights so that they can potentially form a union and write a fair collective agreement. When disputes occur, neutral mediators can arbitrate them. The alternative is a poor image for

the university, where student teachers have to demonstrate just to be heard by the administration. A more equal power relationship leads to better agreements, harmonious working conditions, and stability.

If we think of the employer-employee relationship like a marriage between equals, then the correct decision is clear: fair treatment through collective bargaining for honest work done on campus. In a marriage where only one person makes decisions by decree, we call it abusive. When will we stop the abuse of student teachers?

For these reasons, I strongly urge you to support HB 1940.

Respectfully submitted,

Ed Hoogland
EH30@hawaii.edu

Date: Tuesday, February 2, 2016
Time: 9:30 AM
Place: Conference Room 309

To: House Committee on Labor
Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
Representative Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Re: Support for HB 1940 Relating to Collective Bargaining

Dear Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Keith Scott, and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM). I am writing in strong support of HB 1940 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i (UH).

Since becoming an employee at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, I have been fortunate to work with a great staff and faculty, gain valuable skills and experience, and, most importantly, make a meaningful impact on the education of our wonderful students. It is a job I truly value. However, I feel as if the university does not equally value me. I have been forced to support my wife and child on what amounts to poverty wages. Making matters worse is that us graduate students employed as teaching and graduate assistants are constantly under threat of having our jobs eliminated.

Graduate students are an integral part of the UH system and the local economy. While attending UH, we constitute a committed learning community, do important research, and perform a substantial proportion of the teaching duties. Unfortunately, we are poorly compensated and are vulnerable to exploitation and poor treatment. As individuals, we stand little chance of success in demanding better treatment and compensation, and the long history of failed attempts at improvements proves this to be true. Our only hope for improving our own situations, then, is to collectively bargain with the University administration. For these reasons, I strongly urge you to support HB 1940.

Respectfully submitted,

Keith Scott
keithgs@hawaii.edu

Date: Tuesday, February 2, 2016
Time: 9:30 AM
Place: Conference Room 309

To: House Committee on Labor
Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
Representative Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Re: Support for HB 1940 Relating to Collective Bargaining

Dear Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Penn Pantumsinchai, and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM). I am writing in strong support of HB 1940 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i (UH).

I have had the opportunity to be a Graduate Assistant and a Teaching Assistant during my graduate studies at UH. While I have learned a great deal from both these positions, each time I suffered some troubling working conditions. I was only making a third of the appropriate living wage at UH and had to seek external funding in addition to my appointments in order to make rent. While I was grateful for the opportunity, my boss made the working conditions very stressful. There was no oversight for the amount of hours I worked. Even though I was contracted to work 20 hours a week, I easily worked 30 or 40 sometimes, particularly when my colleagues were let go and I was forced to take on the extra work load without extra compensation. There were also no set working hours so I found myself working past midnight many times trying to finish a last minute demand. These were very stressful working conditions that led to the deterioration of my mental well-being. It was difficult to negotiate for better conditions because I could easily not be renewed as my contract was up for review every six months.

These conditions made me feel unappreciated, despite the reality that graduate students are an integral part of the UH system and the local economy. While attending UH, we constitute a committed learning community, do important research, and perform a substantial proportion of the teaching duties. Yet we are poorly compensated and are vulnerable to exploitation and poor treatment. As individuals, we stand little chance of success in demanding better treatment and compensation, and the long history of failed attempts at improvements proves this to be true. Our only hope for improving our own situations, then, is to collectively bargain with the University administration. For these reasons, I strongly urge you to support HB 1940.

Respectfully submitted,

Penn Pantumsinchai
ppantum@hawaii.edu

LABtestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Sunday, January 31, 2016 10:08 PM
To: LABtestimony
Cc: jasonmye@hawaii.edu
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB1940 on Feb 2, 2016 09:30AM

HB1940

Submitted on: 1/31/2016

Testimony for LAB on Feb 2, 2016 09:30AM in Conference Room 309

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Jason Myers	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments: Date: Tuesday, February 2, 2016 Time: 9:30 AM Place: Conference Room 309 To: House Committee on Labor Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair Representative Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair Re: Support for HB 1940 Relating to Collective Bargaining Dear Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment, Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Jason Myers and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM). I am writing in strong support of HB 1940 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i (UH). Although I appreciate the ability to have employment at the beautiful UHM campus, I feel Hawai'i state law and UHM put graduate student assistants in difficult and, at times, unfair situations. I can give you one example from my own recent personal experience. Due to the high cost of living in Hawai'i, I am attempting to complete my graduate degree in as timely a fashion as possible, so that I can re-enter the work force as soon as possible and earn a living wage. Given the very limited monthly pay of graduate assistants at UHM of less than \$1,500 (and a take home pay of ~\$1,200 after taxes and insurance), I am forced to take on additional student loans in order to be able to complete my studies. I am happy to do so if it is furthering my education and makes economic sense in the long term. However, in order to be eligible for student loans, I am required to take 8 credit hours of classes; the graduate assistantship limits its funding to 9 credit hours of classes. Any more and I have to pay out of pocket for tuition. Although I would like to learn more and more efficiently complete my degree while also borrowing less, the university effectively forbids it. Therefore, despite the fact that many universities throughout the country are moving to streamlined master degrees of 12-18 months in order to decrease costs and time burdens placed on students, UHM enforces strict policies to do just the opposite and force students to often attend for 24 months for a master degree (and even longer at times). Even more oddly, the entire summer has to be sat out for many graduate students, as the university refuses to fund summer tuition for assistants either. In this case, the university also kicks the student out of housing as well, whether or not children are present. This, in my opinion, is a perversion of the university's role as the steward of the student body and university employees. Many public universities throughout the U.S. are allowing collective rights for graduate assistants. We are taxed as employees and treated as employees in every other way here at UHM (and in fact, often much more is expected of us than any employee would be required to complete). We deserve to be able to have rights that allow us to take a stand against the unfair policies that the university has toward graduate assistants. Graduate students are an integral part of the UH system and the local economy. While attending UH, we constitute a committed learning community, do

important research, and perform a substantial proportion of the teaching duties. Unfortunately, we are poorly compensated and are vulnerable to exploitation and poor treatment. As individuals, we stand little chance of success in demanding better treatment and compensation, and the long history of failed attempts at improvements proves this to be true. Our only hope for improving our own situations, then, is to collectively bargain with the University administration. For these reasons, I strongly urge you to support HB 1940. Respectfully submitted, Jason Myers 808-203-4060
jasonmye@hawaii.edu

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov

Date: Tuesday, February 2, 2016
Time: 9:30 AM
Place: Conference Room 309

To: House Committee on Labor
Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
Representative Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Re: Support for HB 1940 Relating to Collective Bargaining

Jan 31, 2016

Dear Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Billie Lee and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM). I am writing in strong support of HB 1940 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i (UH).

My graduate career is dependent on my income as a graduate assistant. Yet, the income that we receive is not enough to live on in the state of Hawai'i. In addition, our GAships are not guaranteed year after year. Many of us live in a constant state of precarity that our graduate careers will not be able to continue if we are not to receive our GAships. Furthermore, many of us juggle two or three jobs, or accumulate tremendous debt just to complete our degree and to enter a competitive and dwindling job market. We need a higher living wage as graduate students.

Graduate students are an integral part of the UH system and the local economy. While attending UH, we constitute a committed learning community, do important research, and perform a substantial proportion of the teaching duties. Unfortunately, we are poorly compensated and are vulnerable to exploitation and poor treatment. As individuals, we stand little chance of success in demanding better treatment and compensation, and the long history of failed attempts at improvements proves this to be true. Our only hope for improving our own situations, then, is to collectively bargain with the University administration. For these reasons, I strongly urge you to support HB 1940.

Respectfully submitted,
Billie Lee
Blee7@hawaii.edu

LABtestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Sunday, January 31, 2016 8:32 PM
To: LABtestimony
Cc: pwegesen@hawaii.edu
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB1940 on Feb 2, 2016 09:30AM

HB1940

Submitted on: 1/31/2016

Testimony for LAB on Feb 2, 2016 09:30AM in Conference Room 309

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Pablo Wegesend	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Please pass HB 1940 to give collective bargaining rights for Graduate Assistants at UH! They currently don't get sick leave nor do they have a reliable avenue to pursue workplace grievances. That needs to change now!

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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Date: Tuesday, February 2, 2016
Time: 9:30 AM
Place: Conference Room 309

To: House Committee on Labor
Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
Representative Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Re: Support for HB 1940 Relating to Collective Bargaining

My name is Hannah, and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM). I am writing in strong support of HB 1940 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i (UH).

I support this bill on behalf of all of my fellow graduate students because of my personal experiences. Last semester, I was hospitalized for two weeks due to my appendix rupturing. Upon emailing my supervisor who oversees my graduate assistantship, I was told that I was missing too much work, and that I would likely be put on unpaid leave. Consequently, I had to return to work about a week before my doctor recommended. I write about this very personal experience because currently graduate assistants are not afforded sick leave. This is unfair and has a truly serious impact on our everyday lives. If GA's receive the right to collectively bargain, we will be able to negotiate better working conditions; including sick leave. It is my hope that by passing HB 1940, other graduate assistants will not face what I went through in the future.

Graduate students are an integral part of the UH system and the local economy. While attending UH, we constitute a committed learning community, do important research, and perform a substantial proportion of the teaching duties. Unfortunately, we are poorly compensated and are vulnerable to exploitation and poor treatment. As individuals, we stand little chance of success in demanding better treatment and compensation, and the long history of failed attempts at improvements proves this to be true. Our only hope for improving our own situations, then, is to collectively bargain with the University administration. For these reasons, I strongly urge you to support HB 1940.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to express my opinion.

Respectfully submitted,

Hannah
hannahli@hawaii.edu

LABtestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Sunday, January 31, 2016 3:32 PM
To: LABtestimony
Cc: lukesarvis@gmail.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB1940 on Feb 2, 2016 09:30AM*

HB1940

Submitted on: 1/31/2016

Testimony for LAB on Feb 2, 2016 09:30AM in Conference Room 309

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Luke Sarvis	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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Date: Tuesday, February 2, 2016

Time: 9:30 AM

Place: Conference Room 309

To: House Committee on Labor
Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
Representative Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Re: Support for HB 1940 Relating to Collective Bargaining

Dear Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment,

I am Ryan Dorrill, a graduate student in the Particle Physics program at University of Hawai'i at Manoa. I'm writing in my support of HB 1940 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by UH.

I know you're already aware that graduate student pay at UH is not up to national standards. It may seem like a trivial matter to members of the House or the community at large, but as graduate students we find ourselves responsible both for the education of the young people at UH and the research that brings in millions of dollars in grants. While programs like the athletics department continue to ask for millions more dollars and collect higher and higher fees, the graduate students still cannot even fight for wages or benefits.

My salary when I started at UH three years ago was approximately \$16,800 a year, which later has taxes, health insurance (almost \$100 a month), and student fees (~\$840 a year) come out of it. This is such a low amount of money for TA's in our field that my advisors at Johns Hopkins insisted it would be better for me to apply to schools elsewhere than to bring my skills to UH Manoa. They cited the extremely high cost of living as a major concern, and noted that a school in our situation would normally be paying almost double this amount.

Nonetheless, I chose join our university and have been rewarded with some of the most wonderful and talented friends and colleagues that I've had the pleasure to meet. The Hawaiian people and their land have truly welcomed me with kindness. I love it here in Hawaii, but as the years pass I've had to watch talented friends return to the mainland to go to other schools or more lucrative jobs at places like Lockheed Martin and UC Santa Cruz. Myself, I want to stay, but with the ever increasing burden of inflation, the skyrocketing athletic fees and cost of rent and groceries, I feel my career is truly in jeopardy if we go another few years without even a raise for cost of living. Taking out loans for the privilege of doing my own job is not an option.

Thank you for you time and support,

Ryan Dorrill
dorrill@hawaii.edu

808-780-2705

LATE

TESTIMONY BY WESLEY K. MACHIDA
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
STATE OF HAWAII
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 1940

February 2, 2016

RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

This measure allows graduate students employed by the University of Hawaii (UH) to collectively bargain by amending Chapter 89-6, HRS, to remove the exemption from collective bargaining for graduate students employed by UH and authorizing a new Bargaining Unit 15.

The Department of Budget and Finance opposes this measure. UH has outlined several reasons why it is best to keep collective bargaining out of the management of these student-employees in their testimony. The cost implications of allowing graduate students to collectively bargain are a special concern, especially in UH's current fiscal situation.

The Twenty-Eighth Legislature
Regular Session of 2016



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Committee on Labor and Public Employment
Rep. Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
Rep. Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair
State Capitol, Conference Room 309
Tuesday, February 2, 2016; 9:30 a.m.

**STATEMENT OF THE ILWU LOCAL 142 ON H.B. 1940
RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

The ILWU Local 142 **supports** H.B. 1940, which establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate student assistants employed at the University of Hawaii.

UH graduate assistants are entitled by law and the State Constitution to organize and form a union for purposes of collective bargaining. H.B. 1940 will create a new bargaining unit to allow graduate assistants the right to collective bargaining that other public employees enjoy. The fact that graduate assistants may not be employed in their positions for a long period of time should not deny them the right to be able to negotiate for wages, benefits, and working conditions as other public employees do.

The ILWU urges passage of H.B. 1940. Thank you for the opportunity to share our views on this issue.

LATE

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, February 01, 2016 7:46 PM
To: LABtestimony
Cc: bp32@hawaii.edu
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB1940 on Feb 2, 2016 09:30AM*

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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HB1940

Submitted on: 2/1/2016
Testimony for LAB on Feb 2, 2016 09:30AM in Conference Room 309

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Bret Polopolus-Meredith	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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LATE

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
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To: LABtestimony
Cc: unheelim@gmail.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB1940 on Feb 2, 2016 09:30AM*

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HB1940

Submitted on: 2/1/2016
Testimony for LAB on Feb 2, 2016 09:30AM in Conference Room 309

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Unhee Lim	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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LATE

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII
PROFESSIONAL ASSEMBLY

The House Committee on Labor & Public Employment
Tuesday, February 2, 2016
9:30 a.m.
Rm 309

HB1940, Relating to Collective Bargaining

Attention: Chair Person Mark Nakashima, Vice Chair Jarrett Keohokalole and
Members of the Committee

The University of Hawaii Professional Assembly (UHPA) urges the committee to **support passage of HB1940** that amends Section 89-6 of the Hawai'i Revised Statute to advance the interests of graduate assistants. These employees are essential to instruction and research that contributes to the overall success of the University of Hawai'i. Graduate Assistants are employees in the full sense of the term with continuing access to positions based on job and academic performance.

UHPA supports the rights of graduate assistants to organize and collectively bargain. Such a right is consistent with the labor tradition in our state and is compatible with an academic environment whereby the majority of employees have access to representation.

Respectively submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kristeen Hanselman".

Kristeen Hanselman
Executive Director

Date: Tuesday, February 2, 2016
Time: 9:30 AM
Place: Conference Room 309



To: House Committee on Labor
Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
Representative Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Re: Support for HB 1940 Relating to Collective Bargaining

Dear Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Viacheslav Li, and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM). I am writing in strong support of HB 1940 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i (UH).

Due to the current/upcoming hearings I would like to express one more time my strong opinion that graduate Teaching&Research assistants at the University of Hawaii should be allowed to form a union. It will make University of Hawaii education&research better, UH graduate schools more competitive, and might potentially lead to the stipend increase (currently ratio of physics GA stipend/cost-of-living is among the lowest in the US). The proposed bill should have a hearing. GAs at the University of Hawaii should be allowed to form a union.

Below is part of my testimony I provided the Board of Regents of the UH, at their meeting more than a year ago (Fall 2014). The situation has not been improved, I would say it has gotten worse.

It is my 5th year being a physics graduate student at UH Manoa, and I am homeless being at the highest possible pay rate (according to some non-written physics department policies being on top of the university policies).

Little that I knew how UH is far from most of other U.S. university standards before coming to Hawaii. Once I was very close to changing a grad school but decided to stay mainly due to the very unique project I am working on which is related to a non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

It is well-known that living expenses in Hawaii are extremely high.

If I knew how hard it would be I would choose another grad school (with similar level of very good research) despite research being so awesome here. Honolulu is the 3rd most expensive city in the U.S., technically 2nd (two other places Brooklyn and Manhattan are in New York)

<http://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/10-most-expensive-cities-in-america/4/>

For one person, it is the most expensive metro area in the US

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/get-there/wp/2015/08/26/the-most-expensive-cities-in-the-u-s-for-single-people-and-families/>

Most American grads are taking student loans, rely on their savings (if any) and/or support from their families.

Ratio stipend/expenses is the lowest among US physics grad schools. Student fees have been steadily increasing, including outrageous athletics fees.

Cost of the dorm&meal plan is larger than allocated in the I-20 form, and larger than a stipend most graduate

assistants receive. Probably UH is disregarding some of the US federal laws.

Personally, I am not able to afford even to fly back home once a year living on a stipend.

People like Tom Apple (got fired), William Ditto (resigned), Steven Rabinow (resigned), Pui Lam have been fighting for students, made some actual change which is still very small to do actually fix the big problem.

Tom Apple, in particular, played a crucial role in making positive changes for the school observed by students and faculty, and me personally.

We haven't received the clear reason for giving "unsatisfactory" grade to Chancellor Apple by Lassner.

I would like to give Lassner "unsatisfactory" grade, and call for an impeachment to the current UH president, and propose to reinstate Tom Apple as a chancellor of UH Manoa.

JABSOM, cancer center are financial black holes and loops in our University.

Teaching over the summer with less positions than grad students doesn't give you opportunity to survive in expensive resort area.

Tutoring \$10/hour, 5 hours a week -- a maximum amount of overload I am allowed to work as a foreigner.

It is an impossibility to apply for most scholarships being non US citizen. It is an impossibility to take student loans for most international students, and an impossibility for most incoming foreign students open credit card bank account.

As a foreign student, I cannot even opt-out health insurance (I pay more than \$200 a month).

It should have been at least mentioned in the acceptance letter that grad student should expect their spendings to be \$10,000-\$20,000/year more than the provided stipend.

My job requires a lot of skills, and being paid at or below minimum wage is a humiliation, personally to me and to academic society as a whole.

As a final remark, current UH administration has too much power while the core of the University -- faculty and students -- people who care most about the School -- has almost no power. That is the main problem of this School. Moreover, current UH administration doesn't want to listen to concerns raised by many faculty and students. At the same time some of the tenured PIs are often held non-accountable. Beginning of the chaos? It is especially very sad and unfair to people who work on the big projects which bring money to the University, like the one I am working on.

For this reason I strongly support the bill.

Sincerely,

Viacheslav Li, MSc,
Graduate Research Assistant
Department of Physics and Astronomy
University of Hawaii at Manoa
2505 Correa Road, Honolulu, HI 96822
vli2@hawaii.edu
808-230-5251