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LATE

Senate Committee on Higher Education and the Arts
Senate Committee on Human Services
Thursday, February 11, 2016
In consideration of
HB493, HD1
Relating to the University of Hawaii

I strongly support HB493, which seeks to appropriate funding for an associate professor and assistant specialist position within the University of Hawaii Center on Aging (COA). With a rapidly aging local population, there is a demand for innovative and cost-effective programs to ensure care is available to all of Hawaii's older adults, research to support the escalating needs of our aging community, and publicly available and up-to-date information. Since its origin, COA's mission aims to fulfill this role throughout Hawaii. Unfortunately, COA's staffing has been scarce since the inception.

Currently, without base funding and support, COA's capacity continues to be limited with an interim director and administrative assistant, with previously employed researchers being funded through grants and contracts. Without a sufficiently staffed office, these limitations will have a profound impact on Hawaii's efforts to solidify long-term services and supports (LTSS) systems and an infrastructure capable of withstanding the escalating demands of those in need of support. If appropriated, this funding would significantly enhance the reach of COA to foster workforce development, strengthen local research and collaborations, build capacity within Hawaii's systems of care, and leverage additional funding to further expand COA's capabilities and ensure its sustainability.

Should you have any questions, you may reach me at heathmc1400@yahoo.com or (808) 286-2982. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Heather Chun, MSW