



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
The Senate
Committee on Ways and Means

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 26, 2016

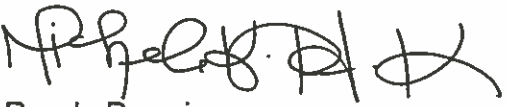
S.B. 2398, S.D. 1 – RELATING TO
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

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 S.B. 2398, S.D. 1.

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 S.B. 2398 is the most viable legislation 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 to resolve differences in negotiations.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of S.B. 2398, S.D. 1.

Respectfully submitted,

for 
Randy Perreira
Executive Director



Date: Friday, February 25, 2016

Time: 9:45 AM

To: Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Senator Jill N. Tokuda, Chair
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Vice Chair

Re: Support for SB2398 Relating to Collective Bargaining

My name is Benton Rodden, and I am the Employment and Compensation Chair for the graduate organization, as well as a Graduate Student. I am writing to you today to express my strong support for SB2398, which would grant Graduate Students the right to collective bargaining.

In my capacity as Employment and Compensation Chair for the Graduate Student Organization (GSO), I have spoken with numerous graduate students about the grievances they have with the University. They fall into the following categories:

- Graduate Assistants are not provided guaranteed sick days and have been threatened with termination for calling in sick.
- Graduate Assistants are not provided paid sick leave and have threatened with unpaid sick leave if they do not check out of the hospital earlier than advisable.
- Graduate Assistants are routinely pressured to work overtime hours that they are not paid for.
- Graduate Assistants are, on average, paid two to six weeks late.
- Graduate Assistants are not permitted any paid parental leave.
- Graduate Assistants are not compensated enough to afford the minimum cost of living.
- Graduate Assistants are hired for short terms without the security of being rehired and with the knowledge that they may have their assistantships terminated midway through the academic year.

We seek collective bargaining simply because the above list of grievances represents the very issues labor unions have addressed for countless workers. For us, this is a very pragmatic decision.

Graduate Assistants have not received a pay increase since 2004, during which time the cost of living according to the consumer price index (CPI) has increased 74%. The current pay amounts to 43% of the minimum living wage for a single person. Compared to the University's peer and benchmark institutions, this leaves UH at second to the bottom. UH is only able to compete with the University of Mississippi, which happens to be in a right to work state.

University management has argued that Graduate Assistants are not employees of the University of Hawai'i. The majority of teaching assistants (TA) are in charge of

teaching their own classes. They do all the grading and lecturing, as well as design the syllabus and maintain decorum in the classroom. Our research assistants are often working on independent projects of their own at the direction of an assigned supervisor. Other Graduate Assistants are working in administrative offices performing the same duties as any administrative office worker.

Graduate Assistants in every role meet the common law test's criteria for employment as well as the so-called ABC test's criteria. Graduate Assistants do not control their own hours and have employment taxes withheld from their State of Hawai'i issued paychecks. Graduate Assistants are required to attend trainings and undergo periodic evaluations. A Graduate Assistants' supervisor, often a University recognized employee, controls the means and manner in which a Graduate Assistant carries out their work.

Some have taken issue with the temporary nature of our positions. I want to make clear that we are here not in spite of this, but precisely because the temporary nature of our jobs places us in a position of particular vulnerability. Negotiating longer terms of employment would be a priority of any union that should form. Guarding against the exploitation of temporary workers ought to be a goal of this body as well.

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 SB2398.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Benton Rodden
206.229.0226
bentonrodden@gmail.com

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [WAM Testimony](#)
Cc: bp32@hawaii.edu
Subject: *Submitted testimony for SB2398 on Feb 26, 2016 09:35AM*
Date: Thursday, February 25, 2016 5:36:46 PM

SB2398

Submitted on: 2/25/2016

Testimony for WAM on Feb 26, 2016 09:35AM in Conference Room 211

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Bret Polopolus-Meredith	Individual	Support	Yes

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

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [WAM Testimony](#)
Cc: dylanarm@hawaii.edu
Subject: *Submitted testimony for SB2398 on Feb 26, 2016 09:35AM*
Date: Thursday, February 25, 2016 8:45:08 PM

SB2398

Submitted on: 2/25/2016

Testimony for WAM on Feb 26, 2016 09:35AM in Conference Room 211

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Dylan Armstrong	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: Friday, February 26th, 2016

Time: 9:35 AM

Place: Conference Room 211

To: Committee On Ways and Means
Senator Jill N. Tokuda, Chair
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Vice Chair

Re: Support for SB 2398 Relating to Collective Bargaining

My name is Jennifer Michalski. I am a graduate student studying entomology at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM). I am writing in strong support of SB 2398 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i (UH).

The passing of this bill is of critical importance to the survival of graduate students at UH Manoa. Many graduate students move thousands of miles away from home to pursue the laudable goal of completing an advanced degree at UH, but are met with ambiguous terms of employment. Notwithstanding, we contribute a substantial amount of teaching hours, research, and support to the academic community. This contribution marks a great sacrifice due to the minimal compensation we receive. Finishing a degree under these circumstances can be insurmountable. I am one of many who are questioning the completion of an advanced degree due to less than ideal compensation.

This bill grants us protection, recognition, and VALIDATION as employees of the University of Hawaii at Manoa. It provides personal and professional stability, and gives us back some of the sanity we lose each semester. I strongly encourage you to give a voice to the graduate students at UH, and support SB 2398.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my opinions in regard to this critical legislative movement.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Michalski
Email: Jrmichal@hawaii.edu