

Date: February 11, 2016

Time: 1:15 PM

Place: Conference Room 224

LATE TESTIMONY

To: Committee on Judiciary and Labor & Committee on Higher Education and the Arts
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Chair Senator Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair
Senator Maile S.L. Shimabukuro, Vice Chair

Re: Support of SB 2398 Related to Collective Bargining

Dear Esteemed Senate Committee Members,

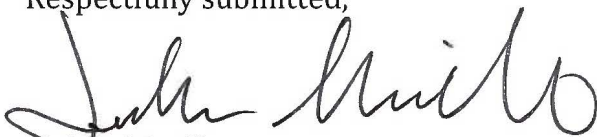
My name is Joshua Murillo, and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM). I am writing in strong support of HB 1940 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i (UH).

I along with many other, poorly funded, graduate students, teach a large majority of undergraduates at one point or another as teaching assistants. Undergraduate Physics labs, a core part of the Physics program at UH Manoa, are taught entirely by graduate students, myself included. We are the nurses to the lecturer practitioners. We see, and interact more directly with, individual students far more than any lecturer or Professor. As laboratory supervisors, the task falls on us to ignite that innate curiosity in a student through interactive, hands-on, experimentation. Graduate teaching assistants are an indispensable part of the undergraduate program at UH. Yet, as a teaching assistant, and Ph. D. Student at UH, I've been forced to go further into student loan debt due the abnormally large cost of living in Honolulu; coupled with the abnormally low level that the university compensates some of it's most valuable staff. My passion for Physics goes far beyond monetary considerations, however, life would be more bearable, and my outlook could be much brighter, if those ten's of thousands of dollars on my student loan statements did not keep stacking up.

Graduate students are not only an integral part of the UH system we are also a boon to the local economy. I've personally worked on multiple projects since starting at UH in 2010, so projects will bring in many hundreds of thousands, even millions, of dollars for research projects, that support staff at UH, contract local companies and engineering firms purchase raw materials from local distributors, and many more. Unfortunately, as graduate students, 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,



Joshua Murillo
Doctorate Student
Department of Physics and Astronomy
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
murillo@hawaii.edu

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Thursday, February 11, 2016 9:54 AM
To: JDLEstimony
Cc:
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB2398 on Feb 11, 2016 13:15PM

SB2398

Submitted on: 2/11/2016

Testimony for JDL/HEA on Feb 11, 2016 13:15PM in Conference Room 224

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Marguerite Butler	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Testimony in support of HB1940 and SB2398 Dear Chairs and Senators: I write to you in full support of SB2398 and the right of graduate students to organize under a collective bargaining unit. I fully believe that the ability to unionize will be of material aid to graduate students in obtaining fair and equitable working conditions. As a faculty member who actively recruits graduate students to come study at UH Manoa, I have been frustrated for many years regarding the treatment of graduate student workers. Graduate students do valuable work. Indeed we could not carry out our teaching and research missions without them. They bring to us great talent, intellect, energy and creativity. They are not merely assistants, but take on increasing responsibilities in teaching and the development of research programs. In short, they quickly become colleagues. It is in our interest to treat them as professionals as we only benefit from the increased caliber of their work. When I arrived at UH 9 years ago, I was shocked and appalled at the low wages and poor treatment of graduate students. Many students take jobs outside of the university in order to subsist. Sometimes they take 2 or 3 jobs. Bringing the best and the brightest to UH only to end up working in restaurants and bars does no one any good. It certainly does not contribute optimally to the undergraduates that they also teach, to their graduate education, their work quality, nor to their physical or mental health. I am tired of hearing about graduate students who opt out of health insurance because they simply cannot afford it. For those graduate students with families, the problems only intensify. This sad state of affairs truly hurts our ability to recruit the best and the brightest. When they receive better offers from other universities (nearly every other offer is better), it is impossible for UH to compete. I have tried my best as an individual faculty member to take care of my own students. I supplement their TA income to bring it to a livable wage. However, this is very difficult without institutional support, and is entirely dependent on my ability to obtain outside funding. What happens is that I split a research position among two students who are TA's in order to supplement their income. Teaching is extremely time-consuming, and this arrangement compromises research output. It is not a good system, but it is my only means of supporting students. Being a graduate student is not a 9-5 job. There are classes to take, classes to teach, and research to be done. All of this can take 60 hours a week or more. If we continue to pay such sub-standard wages to our graduate students, we will turn it into something achievable only by the independently wealthy, driving out most students by economic attrition. It is unconscionable to pay such sub-standard wages to our graduate students who work long hours to support teaching and research at UH. Sincerely, Dr. Marguerite Butler
mbutler808@gmail.com Associate Professor Dept. of Biology 2538 McCarthy Mall, Edmondson 215 University of Hawaii Honolulu, HI 96822

LATE TESTIMONY

February 11, 2016

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Labor
Senator Kieth-Agaran, Chair
Senator Maile Shimabukuro, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Higher Education and the Arts
Senator Brian Taniguchi, Chair

Re: Support for SB 2398 Relating to Collective Bargaining
Time: 1:15 PM
Location: Conference Room 224

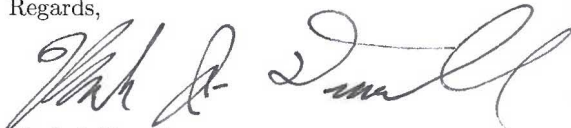
My name is Mark Duvall, and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM). I am writing in strong support of HB 1940 to grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i (UH).

Collective bargaining is necessary because grad students currently are poorly protected and woefully underpaid, and we have little means available for improving our situation on a broad scale. Many of us regularly work 60 hours per week or more, leaving very little time for campaigning to improve our circumstances. This also makes it unrealistic to get a second job, meaning that virtually all UH grad students live well below the approximately \$30,500 / year living wage for a single adult in Honolulu as calculated by MIT (livingwage.mit.edu). I myself took on more loan debt in my first two years alone at UH than I did in the four years I spent earning my two undergraduate degrees on the mainland. Like many others, I am proud of the research I'm doing at UH – I'm a physicist working on nuclear nonproliferation – but I am often frustrated by the conditions we face here and the apparent lack of any effective machinery to change them. The current situation is bad enough that my peers and I have reluctantly advised several talented prospective grad students that they would be better off studying elsewhere. Change is sorely needed.

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.

Regards,



Mark J. Duvall
UHM Dept. of Physics & Astronomy
mjduvall@hawaii.edu

From:
Sent: Thursday, February 11, 2016 10:38 AM
To: JDLTestimony
Subject: I support SB2398

I am in support of SB2398.

Sarita Rai

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Thursday, February 11, 2016 10:24 AM
To: JDLTestimony
Cc:
Subject: *Submitted testimony for SB2398 on Feb 11, 2016 13:15PM*

SB2398

Submitted on: 2/11/2016

Testimony for JDL/HEA on Feb 11, 2016 13:15PM in Conference Room 224

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Susan M. Schultz	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.

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LATE TESTIMONY

DATE: Thursday, February 11, 2016

TIME: 1:15 p.m.

PLACE: Conference Room 224, State Capitol, 415 South Beretania Street

To: Senate Committee on Judiciary and Labor
Senator Kieth-Agaran, Chair
Senator Maile Shimabukuro, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Higher Education and the Arts
Senator Brian Taniguchi, Chair

Re: Support for SB 2398 Relating to Collective Bargaining

Below is my testimony which I delivered last week at the House Committee on Labor and the House Committee on Higher Education,

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