

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR



RYKER WADA  
CHIEF NEGOTIATOR

**STATE OF HAWAII  
OFFICE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING  
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**  
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February 20, 2018

TESTIMONY TO THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS  
For Hearing on Wednesday, February 21, 2018  
10:10 p.m., Conference Room 211

By

RYKER WADA  
OFFICE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, CHIEF NEGOTIATOR

**Senate Bill No. 2585  
Relating to Collective Bargaining**

(WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY)

CHAIRPERSON DELA CRUZ, VICE CHAIR KEITH-AGARAN, AND MEMBERS OF  
THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS:

Senate Bill No. 2585 proposes to establish a collective bargaining unit for  
graduate student assistants employed by the University of Hawaii.

The Office of Collective Bargaining (OCB) has begun collaborative work with  
proponents of this measure to find mutually agreeable solutions for the concerns raised  
by their prior testimony. However, pending an agreement, OCB **DOES NOT SUPPORT**  
this bill in its' current form for the following reasons:

- Unlike other public employees, who are career, long term employees  
engaged in collective bargaining, a graduate student employment is  
temporary and is not a career or profession. However, the OCB defers to

the University of Hawaii on the definition of employee versus graduate students.

- 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, condition of employment, and fringe benefits.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on this measure.



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
February 21, 2018 at 10:10 a.m.

By

Donald O. Straney

Vice President for Academic Planning and Policy  
University of Hawai'i System

and

Michael S. Bruno

Vice Chancellor for Research  
Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

### SB 2585 SD1 – RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and members of the committee:

The University of Hawai'i (UH) writes in opposition to SB 2585 SD1, which would establish a collective bargaining unit for graduate student assistants employed by the University of Hawai'i.

UH employs three types of graduate student assistants, defined in Executive Policy 5.223:

- Graduate Assistants (GAs) providing academic and program support to units of the university. Their duties are not directly related to teaching or research and include academic advising, program planning, advising student groups, and assisting with the administration of student services offices.
- Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) work under the supervision of a faculty member and they may teach sections of a multi-section course, assist a faculty member in grading assignments or exams, advising students, and performing course-related administrative and support duties. All new GTAs are required to attend a training session offered by the Office of Faculty Development and Academic Support - Center for Teaching Excellence.
- Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs) usually support the research activities of a faculty member who is the Principle Investigator on an extramurally funded grant. Their duties vary with the subject matter of the grant and may be related to the subject of the student's thesis or dissertation.

### Graduate Student Welfare in General

Not all graduate students at the University are employed as graduate student assistants. At UH Mānoa in Fall, 2017, only 1237 of the 4731 graduate students were employed as graduate student assistants; nearly three-quarters of graduate students are not employed by UH. In addition, graduate students can be hired as hourly

employees on campus through the same process used for undergraduate students. The university provides extensive support for student welfare through policies and programs.

The Office of Graduate Education at UH Mānoa is responsible for providing extensive services to all graduate students, including orientation programs for new students, professional development sessions on thesis/dissertation writing, research presentations, creating a resume, University research compliance matters, personal wellness and career/life balance, as well as workshops on Title IX that are available to all students. The Office of Graduate Education web site (<https://manoa.hawaii.edu/graduate/>) provides information on Title IX and sexual harassment laws, policies and resources specifically tailored to graduate students. One of the seven Deputy Title IX Coordinators at UH Mānoa is the Associate Dean in the Office of Graduate Education. She provides ready access for graduate students to the Title IX resources on campus and is typically the first point of contact to help resolve any issues brought to the attention of OGE.

UH Mānoa provides confidential support and advocacy in specific areas of student concern. All students can access Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Student Services, the Office of Gender Equity, the Prevention, Awareness, and Understanding (PAU) Violence Program, and Student Parents at Mānoa. These units provide advocacy, support, referrals, and direct student services to graduate students. The Counseling and Student Development Center offers confidential counseling and emotional support to students, and they offer walk-in appointments for urgent or emergency/crisis services. University Health Services Mānoa is staffed by physicians, nurse clinicians, nurses and other staff to offer a wide range of medical services and programs that graduate students can access.

Many of these offices and programs have outreach and communication events to help students understand policies and laws as well as resources and how to access them. As an example, the Title IX office at UH Mānoa has delivered 19 in-person, department-specific training programs on Title IX for graduate students only. Their plans are to increase the number of training sessions, and to hold some that are open to all graduate students.

All students at UHM can utilize the Academic Grievance Procedure to pursue concerns about grades and course-related matters. In addition, graduate students also pursue grievance through the Office of Graduate Education's Academic Grievance process for concerns about graduate program requirements, qualifying or comprehensive examinations, composition of their thesis or dissertation committee, final defense of their thesis or dissertation, or infringement of intellectual property. Grievances involving professional practices within a specific graduate program are handled by the program, with final authority resting with the Dean.

The academic interests of graduate students at UH Mānoa are represented by The Graduate Student Organization, comprised of representatives from each graduate department. As part of the academic governance process at UH Mānoa, they provide input on all issues affecting graduate students. Members of GSO have seats on over 40 campus committees. GSO has two seats on the Graduate Council, which meets monthly to advise the Graduate Dean on matters related to graduate education. GSO members have a voice, then, in the Council's work reviewing existing graduate programs, new graduate courses and programs, and the modification of courses and programs. Active in an array of student, campus, and community events, GSO also manages a robust grants and awards program to help foster research excellence among graduate students.

It concerns us that there are graduate students who do not know of the resources we provide for their welfare and that educational programs have not reached them. We take the testimony you received on this bill as a call to re-double our efforts to provide effective and pervasive education, training and support services to all students on Title IX, sexual harassment, workplace and family/acquaintance violence. Students cannot reach their full potential unless they are safe and know how to remain so.

### Graduate Student Employment

In addition to the concerns and experiences of graduate students in general, graduate student assistants have concerns related to their dual status as employees. Graduate student assistants receive either a 9- or 11-month appointment, generally with a work schedule of 20 hours per week or 0.50 full-time equivalence. They are supervised by a regular faculty member, or for GAs, a staff member or manager. Recruitment and hiring decisions, such as pay rates and work assignments, are made at the department level, or for GRAs, by Principle Investigators on grants. Pay rates must conform to the minimum stipend associated with each of the 20 steps in the graduate student assistant schedule, as described later in this document.

University policy and campus administrative practice define the following aspects of graduate student assistant employment:

1. *Minimum qualifications and eligibility.* Students must be enrolled in a graduate program in a discipline closely related to their duties, be in good academic standing, carry at least 6 units of graduate course credit.
2. *Work assignment.* Graduate student employees are usually hired on a 0.50 FTE basis (20 hours/week). Approval from the Office of Graduate Education is required to appoint a GTA to more than or less than this norm. During non-instructional periods, GTAs may work up to 40 hours/week. GTAs close to finishing their degree may petition the Office of Graduate Education to work up to 40 hours per week if the additional work is related to their thesis or dissertation. GRAs often are appointed at 40 hours/week.

3. *Overload pay.* Graduate student assistants who work for more hours than they are appointed to work must be compensated with overload pay at the overload rate used for lecturers.
4. *Outside work.* Graduate student assistants may hold only one assistantship at a time and may not be employed in another capacity at the University while they hold an assistantship. Work outside the University is discouraged as the priority for the University is the student's degree completion. However, in 2016, the University recognized the competing priority of students meeting their financial obligations and outside work is not prohibited.
5. *Tuition waiver.* Graduate student assistants receive a waiver of tuition for courses taken at their campus. There is a 100% tuition exemption for graduate students with a 0.50 FTE (20 hours/week) appointment and a 50% tuition exemption for graduate students with a 0.25 FTE (10 hours/week) appointment. Graduate student assistants still must pay the required student fees.
6. *Reappointment and step increases.* Appointments may be continued annually, based upon satisfactory performance and contingent on availability of funds and continuing need. After the first year, advancement to the next step in stipend (see below) shall be considered and the supervisor would request approval by the dean or equivalent. The maximum total time a student may be a graduate student assistant is three years for a master's degree student and 6 years for a doctoral or other terminal degree student.
7. *Stipend schedule.* The University establishes the minimum stipend to be paid for each of the 20 steps in the graduate student assistant schedule. There is a 4% differential between steps. This schedule is for 0.50 FTE appointments for either 9 or 11 months, and the stipend for 11-month appointments is 17% greater than that for 9-month appointments. The schedule was last adjusted in Fall 2016 and is due to be reviewed by the Office of Academic Policy and Planning before the end of the 2017-18 academic year. (see [https://www.hawaii.edu/policy/docs/temp/Attachment A Graduate Assistant Pay Schedule.pdf](https://www.hawaii.edu/policy/docs/temp/Attachment_A_Graduate_Assistant_Pay_Schedule.pdf))

In 2013, UH Mānoa Chancellor Tom Apple adjusted the schedule then in effect by raising the stipend for all graduate students appointed at steps 1 through 5 to the stipend associated with step 6. With this change, the stipend for entering graduate student assistants also rose from step 1 to step 6. Consequently, since Fall, 2013 the minimum stipend for a 0.50 FTE graduate student assistant at UH Mānoa has been \$17,502. Some of the testimony on this bill used the step 1 stipend when comparing UH Mānoa stipends with other campuses, but 0.50 FTE graduate student assistants should not have been paid at that low rate for the past 4 years.

8. *Benefits.* Graduate student assistants with 0.50 FTE appointment who serve for a minimum of three months are eligible for health plan benefits. Graduate student assistants who meet the eligibility requirements for the Family and Medical Leave

Act or Hawaii State Family Leave may request leave following University procedures. They do not qualify for retirement benefits.

9. *Schedule accommodation and duties coverage.* Graduate assistants do not earn vacation or sick leave. In situations where a graduate assistant is unable to attend work due to illness or emergency, they are to contact their supervisor, who is designated when they are appointed (e.g., department chair, principal investigator, etc.), who will identify a way to provide accommodations in the graduate student assistant's work schedule. In the case where there are critical teaching or research deadlines, the graduate assistant shall work with the designated supervisor to identify resources to provide the critical teaching or research coverage. This procedure is analogous to how faculty are required to notify their supervisor of absences because of illness.
10. *Employment-related grievances.* The University has had a grievance procedure in place since 1983 for employment-related grievances for persons (including applicants for positions) not covered by collective bargaining agreement grievance procedures or other applicable University procedures.

To summarize this procedure (see A9.110 for further details), a graduate student assistant or their representative files a written statement of the grievance with a Vice President (for system-related grievances) or a Chancellor (for campus-related grievances) within 20 days of the action complained of. The Vice President's or Chancellor's written decision is made within 20 days of receipt of the grievance. The graduate student assistant may appeal that decision to the President in writing within 15 days. The President or designee renders a final and binding decision within 30 days.

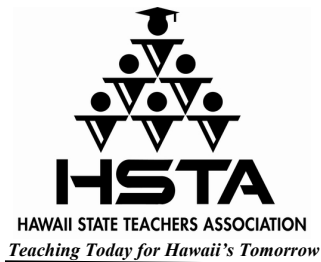
The University believes that we have policies and practices in place that treat graduate student assistants fairly. We undertook a major revision of our policies for graduate student assistants in 2016 and those revisions are reflected in many of the points listed above. It is clear from the testimony on this bill that we have more work to do in communicating our policies and practices on employing graduate student assistants. Toward that end, the Office of Graduate Education at UH Mānoa convened two task forces in Fall, 2017 to develop: 1) materials and training modules on the best practices for faculty mentoring of graduate students and 2) developing policies and procedures on how to improve the mentoring process campus-wide, including the response to cases where inadequate mentoring is taking place. The Office of Graduate Education works with the faculty on the Graduate Council and the larger Graduate Assembly (composed of the faculty Chairs of all graduate programs on campus) to improve existing practices and to identify new policies and practices that will enhance the welfare of all graduate students, not just those employed by the university.

The Regents budget request submitted to the Governor last year and this year included funds to increase graduate student stipends. UH continues to request funds for this purpose.

We commit here to a focused effort over the next three months that will bring together the administrative, faculty, and student entities having responsibility for the education and welfare of our graduate students, with the aim of ensuring effective communication of current university policies and practices, as well as facilitating input and feedback on new and proposed policies and practices.

We thank you for this opportunity to testify on this measure.





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Corey Rosenlee  
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Executive Director

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
WAYS AND MEANS

RE: SB 2585, SD 1 - RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2018

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT  
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **supports SB 2585, SD 1**, relating to collective bargaining.

Collective bargaining is a human right. According to Article 23(4) of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, “everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.” Likewise, the International Labor Organization, the UN agency responsible for safeguarding international labor standards, states in its Constitution and Declaration of Principles that the freedoms to associate and bargain collectively are fundamental rights of workers worldwide.

Graduate student assistants at the University of Hawai‘i must no longer be denied their fundamental human rights. Besieged by budget cuts over the past decade, graduate students have borne increased class sizes and workloads, while suffering the same low pay of \$17,500 since the 2003-2004 academic year. Like educators throughout Hawai‘i, they have seen their purchasing power crushed beneath our state’s highest-in-the-nation cost of living.

Graduate student assistants are vital to the university community, performing instruction, research, and administrative work. Their labor, like all labor, should be publicly recognized by guaranteeing the right to bargain for fair wages and work conditions. To give graduate student assistants the ability to protect their interests and promote higher education, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.



# Academic Labor United

[www.academiclaborunited.org](http://www.academiclaborunited.org)

Testimony from Academic Labor United  
Wednesday, February 21st, 2018  
10:10 AM, Room 211

Attention: Committee on Ways and Means  
Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair  
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

Re: **Strong Support for SB2585 Relating to Collective Bargaining**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Academic Labor United (ALU) stands in **strong support** of this bill. ALU is working to improve the lives of the 1250+ graduate assistants employed at the University of Hawaii and gain recognition for the work we do.

SB2585 will amend HRS 89-6 to create bargaining unit 15 for graduate assistants and provide a conflict resolution mechanism for said bargaining unit that is consistent with other units representing workers employed at the University of Hawaii. This will enable graduate assistants to organize for the purposes of collective bargaining.

The majority of teaching assistants (GTA) are in charge of teaching their own classes. They do all the grading and lecturing, as well as design the syllabus and manage the classroom. Our research assistants (GRA) are often working on multiple independent projects, performing cutting-edge research, at the direction of an assigned supervisor. Other graduate assistants (GA) are working in administrative offices and running key facilities, performing the same duties as any administrative office worker. Many GAs in fact work as replacements for positions that were once performed by better-paid, unionized faculty.

Article 13 Section 2 of the Hawaii State Constitution states “Persons in public employment shall have the right to organize for the purpose of collective bargaining as provided by law.” (Hawaii. Const. art XIII, sex. 2) 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 Hawaii issued paychecks. graduate assistants are required to attend trainings and undergo periodic evaluations. A graduate assistant’s supervisor, often a University recognized employee, controls the means and manner in which a graduate assistant carries out their work. Graduate assistants further qualify as employees under HRS 377-1 and HRS 377-4.6(C). They are recognized as employees by National Labor Relations Board, the State of Hawaii, and the University of Hawaii. It is clear that graduate assistants have a constitutionally guaranteed civil right to organize for the purposes of collective bargaining. (Hawaii. Const. art XIII, sex. 2)

In August 2016, the National Labor Relations Board reversed a Bush-era decision that had prevented graduate assistants at private universities from engaging in collective bargaining.



# Academic Labor United

www.academiclaborunited.org

They found that it “deprived an entire category of workers of the protections of the Act without a convincing justification.” (National Labor Relations Board, 2016) We are now seeing unions form at private universities such as Columbia University, Harvard University, and many more.

There are currently 33 graduate assistant unions at public universities in the United States. They include the University of California System, the University of Iowa, University of Washington, University of Illinois Chicago, and many more. (CGEU, 2018) Graduate assistant unions have existed for 50 years. We are not seeking to depart from the norm. Collective bargaining for graduate assistants has become the norm.

While executive management has argued that they are better at handling workplace issues than organized workers, they have consistently failed to obtain any wage increases for graduate assistants while organized workers represented by a union have received regular wage increases. The combination of stagnant wages well below the minimum cost of living, zero job security, and the absence of basic benefits like sick, medical, and parental leave, make the University of Hawaii uncompetitive when it comes to recruiting and retaining graduate students.

In an effort to assuage the Governor’s concerns, we are amenable to carving bargaining unit 15 entirely out of the Employee Retirement System. We recognize that this is a significant concession and one that we should not have to make in order to access constitutionally guaranteed civil rights.

Graduate assistants are denied paid sick days, medical leave, and parental leave. (University of Hawaii, 2016) According to a recent campus climate survey one in six graduate students experiences sexual harassment. (Loui et al. 36) Additionally, their harassers were significantly more likely to be employees at the university in positions of greater authority than others surveyed. (Loui et al. 38) Graduate assistants start at \$17,502 for a 9 month contract at UH Manoa and \$14,382 for a 9 month contract at UH Hilo. (University of Hawaii, 2016) They have not received a pay raise since 2004 while executive management have continued to see raises. Graduate assistants lack recourse when faced with administrative decisions that jeopardize their wellbeing and safety. They have no formal protection guaranteeing their right to free inquiry and expression. These are issues that unions have had success resolving.

Graduate assistants are an integral part of the UH system and the local economy. While attending UH, we constitute a committed learning community, conduct important research, and perform a substantial proportion of teaching and administrative duties. Unfortunately, we are poorly compensated and are vulnerable to capricious and arbitrary behavior by our employer. 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 best hope for improving our own situations, then, is to come together and collectively bargain for a better university. **For these reasons, we strongly urge that SB2585 be passed.**

Sources:

1. Hawaii. Const. art. XIII. sec. 2
2. “NLRB.gov” *Board: Student Assistants Covered by the NLRA / NLRB*. N.p.,n.d, Web. 23 Jan. 2018.
3. “Coalition of Graduate Employee Unions.” *United States- Coalition of Graduate Employee Unions*. [www.thecgeu.org/wiki/United\\_States](http://www.thecgeu.org/wiki/United_States).



# Academic Labor United

[www.academiclaborunited.org](http://www.academiclaborunited.org)

4. "Executive Policy EP 5.223, Graduate Assistants." University of Hawaii.  
<https://www.hawaii.edu/policy/index.php?action=viewPolicy&policySection=ep&policyChapter=5&policyNumber=223&menuView=closed>. n.d. Web Jan 23 2018
5. Loui, Patricia, et al. *REPORT ON UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII STUDENT CAMPUS CLIMATE SURVEY ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE*. Omni Trak Group, 2018.

**SB-2585-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/19/2018 3:51:38 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/21/2018 10:10:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Janet Graham	Testifying for Academic Labor United	Support	No

Comments:

Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
Conference Room 211

Chair: Sen. Donovan M. Dela Cruz  
Vice Chair: Sen. Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran  
Wednesday, February 21, 2018 at 10:10 am

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I write in strong support of SB2585. SB2585, if passed, will create a new bargaining unit, 15, for graduate assistants in Hawaii. I am a PhD student and graduate assistant at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. I teach undergraduate students and the university increasingly relies on graduate labor like mine to run. We deserve a collective seat at the table when decisions are made that affect my life, those of my students, and the broader community. Unfortunately, graduate assistants are poorly compensated, with wages that are far below a living wage and far below competitive standards of other universities. Graduate assistant compensation has neither kept up with inflation, the cost of living, or rising productivity. Additionally, graduate assistants are vulnerable to capricious and arbitrary decisions and attacks from management, including sexual harassment, without a proper mechanism for pursuing grievances.

In 2016, the National Labor Relations Board reversed the decades-long ban on private university graduate unions at places such as the University of Chicago, Harvard, and Yale, declaring that graduate assistants are workers that deserve the right to unionize. There are currently dozens of graduate unions across the country at public and private institutions, in states such as California, Oregon, Washington, New York, Illinois, Montana, Massachusetts, Iowa, and many more. Graduate assistant unions have existed for 50 years, and all scholarly research has shown that unionized graduate assistants report higher levels of personal/professional support and higher pay that improves educational outcomes, and that faculty report that unionization does not inhibit their ability to advise, instruct, or mentor.

Hawaii led the way in breaking ground in supporting public sector unions. For the cutting-edge research and instruction graduate assistants do, the ability to collectively

bargain over compensation, benefits, and working conditions is essential and long overdue.

I feel vulnerable in the classroom due to unfortunate incidents involving fascist, white supremacist, and anti-gay hate speech and weak university responses to such speech. I am also very concerned about Ken Marcus serving as Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education because he doesn't support the student political speech on campus. We need affordable legal representation that a union would provide.

For all of these reasons, I urge you to pass SB2585.

Mahalo for reading this,

Janet Graham



46-063 Emepela Pl. #U101 Kaneohe, HI 96744 · (808) 679-7454 · Kris Coffield · Co-founder/Executive Director

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**TESTIMONY FOR SENATE BILL 2585, SENATE DRAFT 1, RELATING TO  
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

**Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
Hon. Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
Hon. Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair**

**Wednesday, February 21, 2018, 10:10 AM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 211**

Honorable Chair Dela Cruz and committee members:

I am Kris Coffield, representing IMUAlliance, a nonpartisan political advocacy organization that currently boasts over 400 members. On behalf of our members, we offer this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 2585, SD 1, relating to collective bargaining.

There is a power in a union.

Today, political pundits prognosticate about the possible onslaught of austerity facing our nation. Many of these same pundits believe that labor unions are an impediment to economic prosperity, arguing that collective bargaining sets wages and work conditions above what the free market demands.

They couldn't be more wrong. Collective bargaining is a civil right. Unionized employees' compensation and work protections, moreover, are essential to creating an upwardly mobile middle class and continually increasing economic prosperity. As economist Paula Voos of Rutgers University School of Management and Labor Relations notes, "It is no accident that the prosperity and consumer boom of the 1950s—a period of unprecedented middle-class expansion, broad business growth, increased home ownership, rising consumer spending, and the shared expectation that a college education was within the reach of everyone and that the lives of our children would be better than our own—followed the greatest sustained expansion of unionization in American history."

Unsurprisingly, decreasing American middle-class incomes and the rapidly widening wealth gap in our country parallel a significant decline in union membership. It is imperative, then, that we promote higher productivity by strengthening labor-management relations. Through a union, employees have a means to engage with management about workplace problems, inefficient

processes, unfair work conditions, and unsupportive compensation. Unions also reduce employee turnover and increase the retention of highly experienced employees, creating circumstances that favor professional development and mutual trust in the workplace.

Graduate student assistants at the University of Hawai'i have earned the right to demand respect from university management. In providing instruction to students and research that expands our society's knowledge base, graduate students tirelessly toil on behalf of the university community, often under fear of retaliation because of a lack of organizing power in resisting exploitation. Graduate student assistants are short-term positions. Yet, the duration of graduate positions only heightens the urgency of establishing collective bargaining protections, as temporary employees too often fall prey to employers who exploit the precarious nature of these positions and assume student workers will simply "deal with the pain and move on," as one graduate assistant member of IMUAlliance maintains. Most startlingly, UH graduate assistants currently earn an average of \$18,256 per year, according to Glassdoor.com, a number that has not significantly increased since the 2003-2004 academic year. At the sunrise of 2018, that amount carries nearly \$6,000 less purchasing power than it did fourteen years ago *before* adjusting for Hawai'i's high cost of living. Even for students, it is nowhere near a livable wage.

Thomas Jefferson wrote, "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." The same is true with basic civil rights, including the rights to freely associate and bargain for fair pay and work conditions, which are constantly under assault by a corporate mindset that puts dollars before democracy. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of this bill.

Sincerely,  
Kris Coffield  
*Executive Director*  
IMUAlliance



**SB-2585-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/19/2018 12:22:23 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/21/2018 10:10:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Lani Hernandez	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments:

**From:** [Nathan Yuen](#)  
**To:** [academiclaborunited@gmail.com](mailto:academiclaborunited@gmail.com); [WAM Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** In Support of SB2585  
**Date:** Monday, February 19, 2018 4:46:09 PM

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 **Testimony in support of SB2585**

Name	Nathan Yuen
Email	808nateyuen@gmail.com
Address	Street Address: 91-233 Hanapouli Cir #29T City: Ewa Beach State / Province: HI Postal / Zip Code: 96706

**Testimony Message** Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
Dear Chair Donovan M. Dela Cruz and Vice  
Chair Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran:

I strongly support SB2585 which creates a new bargaining unit under the Hawaiian Governments Employee Association for graduate assistants at the University of Hawaii.

Graduate assistants are important to the functioning of the University of Hawaii. Every undergraduate student is taught by graduate teaching assistants. Graduate students also work as research assistants on research projects and as administrative assistants who run campus facilities.

It is fundamentally wrong to deny this class of workers the right to unionize just because they are students. The imbalance of power and inability to organize places graduate students at a severe disadvantage. It is no wonder that their pay has fallen behind over the decades and is not a livable wage.

Without a union to protect their interests, graduate students are especially vulnerable to harassment and predation from their superiors who are both their academic advisors and supervisors.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on this important bill. I urge you to pass SB2585 from your committee.

Sincerely,  
Nathan Yuen

Attending Hearing?

No

Optional

I permit ALU to use excerpts of my testimony  
on social media.

You can [edit this submission](#) and [view all your submissions](#) easily.

**From:** [David Stupplebeen](#)  
**To:** [academiclaborunited@gmail.com](mailto:academiclaborunited@gmail.com); [WAM Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** In Support of SB2585  
**Date:** Monday, February 19, 2018 11:17:21 PM

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 **Testimony in support of SB2585**

Name	David Stupplebeen
Position/Organization	Graduate Student
Email	david.stupplebeen@gmail.com
Address	Street Address: 2319 Ala Wai Blvd #102 City: Honolulu State / Province: HI Postal / Zip Code: 96815
Testimony Message	<p>Senate Committee on Ways and Means Conference Room 211</p> <p>Chair: Sen. Donovan M. Dela Cruz Vice Chair: Sen. Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran Wednesday, February 21, 2018 at 10:10 am</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I write in strong support of SB2585. SB2585, if passed, will create a new bargaining unit, 15, for graduate assistants in Hawaii. At some point every undergraduate student is taught by a graduate teaching assistant; graduate research assistants advance scientific frontiers; and graduate administrative assistants run key facilities on campus. The university increasingly relies on graduate labor to run. Graduate assistants deserve a seat at the table when decisions are made that affect their lives, those of their students, and the broader community. Unfortunately, graduate assistants are poorly compensated, with wages that are far below a living wage and far below competitive standards of other universities. Graduate assistant compensation has neither kept up with inflation, the cost of living, or rising productivity. Additionally, graduate assistants are vulnerable to capricious and arbitrary decisions and attacks from management, including sexual harassment, without a proper mechanism for pursuing grievances.</p>

As a former graduate research assistant, I can attest to the meager earning mentioned above. Originally, my husband had secured a full-time salaried position as an education director at the start of my doctoral studies in order to for me to complete my studies and supplement my GRA salary. Unfortunately, he lost that position during a reorganization, forcing him to return to haircutting. My husband was diagnosed with fibromyalgia and rheumatoid arthritis, which will only progressively get worse the more he performs his job, something that he has over 20 years of experience doing. His doctor recommended he switch careers. He both had to cut back on his work to slow the progression of these diseases, while at the same time start a new career as a student.

Meanwhile, to backfill our income, I had to take a full-time job, slowing my progress in completing my doctoral degree.

In 2016, the National Labor Relations Board reversed the decades-long ban on private university graduate unions at places such as the University of Chicago, Harvard, and Yale, declaring that graduate assistants are workers that deserve the right to unionize. There are currently dozens of graduate unions across the country at public and private institutions, in states such as California, Oregon, Washington, New York, Illinois, Montana, Massachusetts, Iowa, and many more. Graduate assistant unions have existed for 50 years, and all scholarly research has shown that unionized graduate assistants report higher levels of personal/professional support and higher pay that improves educational outcomes, and that faculty report that unionization does not inhibit their ability to advise, instruct, or mentor.

Hawaii led the way in breaking ground in supporting public sector unions. For the cutting-edge research and instruction graduate assistants do, the ability to collectively bargain over compensation, benefits, and working conditions is essential and long overdue. I urge you to pass SB2585.

Attending Hearing? No

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**From:** [Nicole Woo](#)  
**To:** [academiclaborunited@gmail.com](mailto:academiclaborunited@gmail.com); [WAM Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** In Support of SB2585  
**Date:** Monday, February 19, 2018 10:44:09 PM

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 **Testimony in support of SB2585**

Name	Nicole Woo
Email	woonicole@yahoo.com
Address	Street Address: 700 Richards Street City: Honolulu State / Province: HI Postal / Zip Code: 96813 Country: United States
Testimony Message	<p>Senate Committee on Ways and Means Wednesday, February 21, 2018 at 10:10 am Conference Room 211</p> <p>Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and members of the Committee:</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB2585.</p> <p>This bill would allow graduate student assistants at the University of Hawaii to collectively bargain. Graduate student worker unions have existed for almost 50 years at public universities. They are already unionized at close to 30 public institutions of higher education, including universities in California, Washington, Oregon, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Oregon and Pennsylvania.</p> <p>A survey of faculty at public universities that have graduate student unions found that over 90 percent responded that the unions do not inhibit their ability to advise or instruct or freely exchange ideas with their graduate students.</p> <p>Research has found that paying student workers adequate wages can improve their educational outcomes, too, because they are less likely to take additional jobs and there for have more time and ability to focus on their</p>

studies.

The long track record of graduate student unions on public university campuses, combined with academic findings about them, should put to rest any concerns about the potential effects of graduate assistant unionization.

Mahalo for your consideration of this testimony.

Attending Hearing?	No
Optional	I permit ALU to use excerpts of my testimony on social media.

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**From:** [Sharnelle Renti Cruz](#)  
**To:** [academiclaborunited@gmail.com](mailto:academiclaborunited@gmail.com); [WAM Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** In Support of SB2585  
**Date:** Monday, February 19, 2018 10:13:00 PM

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 **Testimony in support of SB2585**

Name	Sharnelle Renti Cruz
Email	sprc@hawaii.edu
Address	Street Address: PO Box 824 City: Kekaha State / Province: HI Postal / Zip Code: 96752 Country: United States
Testimony Message	<p>Senate Committee on Ways and Means Conference Room 211</p> <p>Chair: Sen. Donovan M. Dela Cruz Vice Chair: Sen. Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran Wednesday, February 21, 2018 at 10:10 am</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I write in strong support of SB2585. SB2585, if passed, will create a new bargaining unit, 15, for graduate assistants in Hawaii. At some point every undergraduate student is taught by a graduate teaching assistant; graduate research assistants advance scientific frontiers; and graduate administrative assistants run key facilities on campus. The university increasingly relies on graduate labor to run. Graduate assistants deserve a seat at the table when decisions are made that affect their lives, those of their students, and the broader community. Unfortunately, graduate assistants are poorly compensated, with wages that are far below a living wage and far below competitive standards of other universities. Graduate assistant compensation has neither kept up with inflation, the cost of living, or rising productivity. Additionally, graduate assistants are vulnerable to capricious and arbitrary decisions and attacks from management, including sexual harassment, without a proper mechanism for pursuing grievances.</p>

In 2016, the National Labor Relations Board reversed the decades-long ban on private university graduate unions at places such as the University of Chicago, Harvard, and Yale, declaring that graduate assistants are workers that deserve the right to unionize. There are currently dozens of graduate unions across the country at public and private institutions, in states such as California, Oregon, Washington, New York, Illinois, Montana, Massachusetts, Iowa, and many more. Graduate assistant unions have existed for 50 years, and all scholarly research has shown that unionized graduate assistants report higher levels of personal/professional support and higher pay that improves educational outcomes, and that faculty report that unionization does not inhibit their ability to advise, instruct, or mentor.

Hawaii led the way in breaking ground in supporting public sector unions. For the cutting-edge research and instruction graduate assistants do, the ability to collectively bargain over compensation, benefits, and working conditions is essential and long overdue. I urge you to pass SB2585.

Graduate assistants deserve to have a say in their futures and to be able to voice their concerns. Being unionized allows duties to be laid out in black and white so that graduate assistants won't be exploited or taken advantage of, graduate assistants on top of having to complete coursework as well as fulfill their responsibilities as assistants to professors, they should be compensated for their work and be recognized for their contributions.

Attending Hearing?	No
Optional	I permit ALU to use excerpts of my testimony on social media.

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**From:** [Carrie Bach](#)  
**To:** [academiclaborunited@gmail.com](mailto:academiclaborunited@gmail.com); [WAM Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** In Support of SB2585  
**Date:** Monday, February 19, 2018 6:05:42 PM

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 **Testimony in support of SB2585**

Name	Carrie Bach
Position/Organization	graduate student
Email	carriekb@hawaii.edu
Address	Street Address: 1616 Liholiho St. #1503 City: Honolulu State / Province: HI Postal / Zip Code: 96822 Country: United States
Testimony Message	<p>Senate Committee on Ways and Means Conference Room 211</p> <p>Chair: Sen. Donovan M. Dela Cruz Vice Chair: Sen. Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran Wednesday, February 21, 2018 at 10:10 am</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I write in strong support of SB2585. SB2585, if passed, will create a new bargaining unit, 15, for graduate assistants in Hawaii. At some point every undergraduate student is taught by a graduate teaching assistant; graduate research assistants advance scientific frontiers; and graduate administrative assistants run key facilities on campus. The university increasingly relies on graduate labor to run. Graduate assistants deserve a seat at the table when decisions are made that affect their lives, those of their students, and the broader community. Unfortunately, graduate assistants are poorly compensated, with wages that are far below a living wage and far below competitive standards of other universities. Graduate assistant compensation has neither kept up with inflation, the cost of living, or rising productivity. Additionally, graduate assistants are vulnerable to capricious and arbitrary decisions and attacks from management, including sexual harassment, without a proper</p>

mechanism for pursuing grievances.

**\*\*I personally have experienced negative effects stemming from the lack of a graduate student union on campus. I have been subjected to an unethical and dubious program policy requiring me to pay part of my graduate stipend under the table to other teachers in my program. This caused me to lose out on the equivalent of an entire paycheck in 2017--and because I was required to do so under the table, I now have to pay taxes on the income my program did not allow me to keep! I have been attempting to stand up for myself and to address the unethical policy, but unfortunately the changes that the program is making in response to my efforts actually makes the situation WORSE for graduate students (and more favorable to non-graduate student teachers) by requiring them to lose even more pay than before. Without a graduate student union fighting on the behalf of the graduate students in this program, I have little power to insist on a fair and ethical policy.**

**\*\*In addition, I would like to point out that a graduate student union is necessary to ensure that graduate student wages are on par with those of other graduate students in similar institutions. I was a graduate student 10 years ago at a public research university in New Jersey, and my stipend at the time was significantly larger than the stipend offered by UHM, despite inflation and a very real difference in cost of living. My yearly pay of less than \$17k (especially when unethical policies strip away an entire paycheck) is not enough in Hawaii, leading me to have to supplement my income with additional work. A graduate student union could advocate for fairer, livable wages, which would remove my need to work multiple jobs and would allow me to focus on completing high quality academic work.**

In 2016, the National Labor Relations Board reversed the decades-long ban on private university graduate unions at places such as the University of Chicago, Harvard, and Yale,

declaring that graduate assistants are workers that deserve the right to unionize. There are currently dozens of graduate unions across the country at public and private institutions, in states such as California, Oregon, Washington, New York, Illinois, Montana, Massachusetts, Iowa, and many more. Graduate assistant unions have existed for 50 years, and all scholarly research has shown that unionized graduate assistants report higher levels of personal/professional support and higher pay that improves educational outcomes, and that faculty report that unionization does not inhibit their ability to advise, instruct, or mentor.

Hawaii led the way in breaking ground in supporting public sector unions. For the cutting-edge research and instruction graduate assistants do, the ability to collectively bargain over compensation, benefits, and working conditions is essential and long overdue. I urge you to pass SB2585.

Attending Hearing?	No
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**From:** [Stacey Torigoe](#)  
**To:** [academiclaborunited@gmail.com](mailto:academiclaborunited@gmail.com); [WAM Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** In Support of SB2585  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 20, 2018 3:04:42 PM

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 **Testimony in support of SB2585**

Name	Stacey Torigoe
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Email	kehaulani.torigoe@gmail.com
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Testimony Message	<p>Senate Committee on Ways and Means Conference Room 211</p> <p>Chair: Sen. Donovan M. Dela Cruz Vice Chair: Sen. Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran Wednesday, February 21, 2018 at 10:10 am</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I write in strong support of SB2585. SB2585, if passed, will create a new bargaining unit, 15, for graduate assistants in Hawaii. At some point every undergraduate student is taught by a graduate teaching assistant; graduate research assistants advance scientific frontiers; and graduate administrative assistants run key facilities on campus. The university increasingly relies on graduate labor to run. Graduate assistants deserve a seat at the table when decisions are made that affect their lives, those of their students, and the broader community. Unfortunately, graduate assistants are poorly compensated, with wages that are far below a living wage and far below competitive standards of other universities. Graduate assistant compensation has neither kept up with inflation, the cost of living, or rising productivity. Additionally, graduate assistants are vulnerable to capricious and arbitrary decisions and attacks from management, including sexual harassment, without a proper mechanism for pursuing grievances.</p>

In 2016, the National Labor Relations Board reversed the decades-long ban on private university graduate unions at places such as the University of Chicago, Harvard, and Yale, declaring that graduate assistants are workers that deserve the right to unionize. There are currently dozens of graduate unions across the country at public and private institutions, in states such as California, Oregon, Washington, New York, Illinois, Montana, Massachusetts, Iowa, and many more. Graduate assistant unions have existed for 50 years, and all scholarly research has shown that unionized graduate assistants report higher levels of personal/professional support and higher pay that improves educational outcomes, and that faculty report that unionization does not inhibit their ability to advise, instruct, or mentor.

Hawaii led the way in breaking ground in supporting public sector unions. For the cutting-edge research and instruction graduate assistants do, the ability to collectively bargain over compensation, benefits, and working conditions is essential and long overdue. I urge you to pass SB2585.

Additionally, graduate assistantships are essential for pursuing a higher education graduate degree and minimizing crippling student debt. These opportunities are critical for local students in particular--without a graduate assistantship, I would not have been able to leave work and return to school to further my career and malama 'aina work in Hawai'i. However, if graduate assistants remain unable to unionize, these positions will become even less viable for local students--who are already facing student loan debt and a rising cost of living--as options to return to school and further research and innovation in Hawai'i, their home. I am thankful for the assistantship and the opportunities it has afforded, but hope that it will remain an option for future generations of local graduate students, and unionization is critical to enable graduate students to organize for more competitive wages and working conditions.

Attending Hearing? No

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**From:** [Ryan Mudd](#)  
**To:** [academiclaborunited@gmail.com](mailto:academiclaborunited@gmail.com); [WAM Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** In Support of SB2585  
**Date:** Monday, February 19, 2018 7:43:51 PM

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 **Testimony in support of SB2585**

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**Testimony Message** Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
Conference Room 211

Chair: Sen. Donovan M. Dela Cruz  
Vice Chair: Sen. Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran  
Wednesday, February 21, 2018 at 10:10 am

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I write in strong support of SB2585. SB2585, if passed, will create a new bargaining unit, 15, for graduate assistants in Hawaii.

The university increasingly relies on graduate labor to take care of core University functions such as teaching at a variety of levels, administrative tasks, and intensive, often dangerous manual labor. Administrators continually distort the truth that graduate student work is some opportunity they should be lucky to have, while many graduate students are consistently exploited for their labor at the free will of faculty. Meanwhile, administrators give themselves raises and faculty keep their research money for their summer salaries while graduate students do their labor. Graduate students are more often than not provided with jobs that have very little to do with educational enrichment, so its time to stop supporting our ballooning administration and their false notions of labor relations.

Attending Hearing? No

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