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March 20, 2019

TO: The Honorable Representative Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

FROM: Pankaj Bhanot, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 50 SD2 – RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES**

Hearing: March 21, 2019, 10:00 a.m.  
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this bill appropriating funds to the University of Hawaii's Hawaii Nutrition Employment and Training (HINET) program available to recipients or those eligible to receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

DHS is working to reduce the incidences and impact of intergenerational poverty. The one proven pathway out of poverty is through education. The HINET program provides additional financial and one-to-one support to help college students attend to their basic needs, like finding child care, and assists with job matching.

State and private funds that are invested into the HINET program may be eligible for reimbursement from the federal government up to 50 percent. The funds requested will be used to expand the program to additional community college campuses. As of January 2019, there were approximately 11,078 adults born in the years 1987 – 1996 who receive SNAP benefits in Hawaii, and who are potentially eligible to participate in HINET. Investing in the education and work skills of SNAP eligible or SNAP recipients will have positive benefits for the residents and economy of Hawaii.

**PURPOSE:** Appropriates funds to the University of Hawaii for the Hawaii nutrition employment and training program. The Senate Committee on Ways and Means changed the appropriation amount to an unspecified sum, defected the effective date, and made technical changes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this matter.



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness  
March 21, 2019 at 10:00 a.m.

By  
John Morton  
Vice President for Community Colleges  
University of Hawai'i System

### SB 50 SD2 – RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Nakamura, and members of the committee:

The University of Hawai'i (UH) supports the intent of SB 50 SD2 to provide positions and funds for the Hawai'i Nutrition Employment and Training Program (HINET). HINET is an innovative interagency partnership that leverages UH Community College (UHCC) and Department of Human Services (DHS) resources to assist SNAP eligible recipients through a college career pathway leading to self-sufficiency by lowering costs.

Although Hawai'i SNAP recipients receive basic living benefits from DHS, their access to Higher Education is limited, due in part to the USDA's 20-hour work requirement. Concurrently, many Community College students struggle with paying rent and other basic living needs forcing them to either drop from college or attend only part-time. Through HINET, SNAP recipients in Hawai'i now have greater access to college and are able to receive an exemption to the USDA 20 hr. work requirement. In addition, our current students are qualifying for SNAP and receive assistance with their food, transportation, childcare, basic living needs and some educational expenses as well. UHCC HINET staff work closely with DHS to recruit SNAP recipients and help current eligible college students navigate the DHS SNAP application process. HINET staff also provide comprehensive wrap-around student support services and develop workforce employment plans to help students achieve self-sufficiency. Key to student success is the frequent monitoring and documentation of student progress allowing HINET and DHS to prescribe support resources when needed.

HINET will be able to scale its enrollment count and intervention services by bringing additional federal funds to the State through the USDA reimbursement program. USDA will provide a 50% reimbursement of any State or private funding expended by the HINET program or its students. USDA reimbursements could establish student scholarships, support the program, or provide other financial assistance to HINET students.

Though HINET is only a few years in development, the program is demonstrating an overall fall-to-fall persistence rate that is 20% higher than the Community College system average. In addition, UH has a unique responsibility to the indigenous people of Hawai'i, and early analysis is showing that 58% of HINET students are Native Hawaiian.

We support SB 50 SD2 on the condition that any requested positions or funds do not supplant any portion of the University's Biennium Budget request.

Thank you for considering this testimony in your deliberations. Aloha.