

LATE



SB919

RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I BOARD OF REGENTS

Senate Committee on Higher Education

January 31, 2019

2:45 p.m.

Room 229

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) Beneficiary Advocacy and Empowerment Committee will recommend that the Board of Trustees **SUPPORT** the proposed inclusion of an at-large seat on the University of Hawai‘i (UH) Board of Regents with demonstrated expertise in Native Hawaiian traditional and customary practices, as proposed by SB919. OHA does not take a position on the other provisions in this measure.

An at-large member with expertise in Native Hawaiian traditional and customary practices will provide the UH Board of Regents with invaluable and relevant insight in its academic and extracurricular decision making. For example, UH’s Strategic Directions for 2015-21 identify four priorities developed by the UH Board of Regents for the University; one such priority is UH’s commitment to being a foremost indigenous-serving institution, by embracing its unique responsibilities to Hawai‘i’s indigenous Native Hawaiian people. Accordingly, having an individual with expertise in Native Hawaiian traditional and customary practices would help UH advance this priority.

In addition, UH also administers lands and resources of particular significance in Hawaiian culture, and for Native Hawaiian traditional and customary practices. Most notably, Maunakea, a place with great historical and cultural significance to the Native Hawaiian people, has been subject to UH control and management for decades; the failure of UH to ensure the cultural and environmental integrity of Maunakea, including through the protection of traditional and customary rights and practices, has led to significant controversy in the Native Hawaiian community. The administration of other UH-controlled lands and programs may also impact, positively and negatively, Native Hawaiian traditional and customary practices and underlying cultural sites and resources. An individual with expertise in Native Hawaiian traditional and customary practices, and familiarity with issues of importance to the Hawaiian community, will help to ensure that UH operations better recognize the cultural significance of places such as Maunakea, and protect the cultural practices associated with such places.

Accordingly, OHA urges the Committee to **PASS** SB919 with regards to the proposed at-large seat and attendant qualifications on the UH Board of Regents. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify on this measure.