



Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

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Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Higher Education

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

April 12, 2021

Support for GM 575

Since 1953, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) has been strengthening higher education, workforce development, and behavioral health throughout the Western region. As an interstate compact, WICHE partners with states, territories, and postsecondary institutions to share knowledge, create resources, and develop innovative solutions that address some of our society's most pressing needs. With a mission to expand educational access and excellence for all residents of the West, WICHE's 16 members include: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawai'i, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, and the U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States (i.e., Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands).

As president of WICHE, I submit this testimony in support of Dr. David Lassner's nomination to the WICHE Commission. Dr. Lassner is a dedicated and committed leader in his dual capacity as president of the University of Hawai'i (UH) and as leader of UH Mānoa, and he brings those same attributes to WICHE in his role as Commissioner. He currently serves as Vice Chair of the WICHE Commission and as a member of the Executive Committee, providing guidance and valuable input on matters of importance to Hawai'i and the entire region. In particular, Dr. Lassner's unique background in information technology and communications is beneficial to the West as our states, territories, and institutions grapple with how they will emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic so they can best support students in their academic and professional endeavors. Dr. Lassner is a valued colleague among the WICHE Commissioners for his leadership and insights, and he represents and serves the state of Hawai'i in the best ways possible.

Thank you for your time and attention to his nomination.

Demarée K. Michelau
President

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Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education
April 13, 2021
by
Debora Halbert
Individual
WRITTEN ONLY

GM 573 – Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Western Interstate Higher Education Commission (WICHE), Gubernatorial Nominee, David Lassner, for a term to expire June 30, 2022.

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in **strong support** of Governor’s Message 573 and the nomination of University of Hawai‘i (UH) President David Lassner to serve on the Western Interstate Higher Education Commission (WICHE).

As Associate Vice President for Academic Programs and Policy for the UH System, I have worked under the leadership of President Lassner since his initial appointment and my testimony is provided in a personal capacity based on my professional role at UH System. President Lassner already plays a strong national leadership role, including with WICHE, that this nomination would allow to continue. In addition to his ongoing work with WICHE, he has recently assumed the position of Chair for the National Association of System Heads (NASH).

In his role as President for the UH System and more recently as the Chief Executive Officer for UH Mānoa, President Lassner has charted a course through substantial reorganization of the Mānoa campus, WASC accreditation, a pandemic, and the subsequent budget crisis. For over four decades he has dedicated himself to the mission of providing higher education for the citizens of Hawai‘i and has demonstrated his commitment to the critical values of equity and access to higher education. He is an important voice for Hawai‘i at the regional and national level and continues to allow the UH System lead in student success innovations. I have appreciated the continuity and stability of his leadership over the last eight years.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support of Governor’s Message 573 and I respectfully urge you to consent to President Lassner’s nomination to serve on the WICHE Commission.