



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Higher Education  
April 13, 2021 at 3:00 p.m.

By  
David Lassner  
President, University of Hawai'i

GM 574 – Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Western Interstate Commission For Higher Education (WICHE), Gubernatorial Nominee, John Morton, for a term to expire June 30, 2024.

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 574 and the appointment of Dr. John Morton to serve on the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) for the State of Hawai'i.

I have known and worked with Dr. Morton for some 40 years. During his 49-year tenure at the University of Hawai'i (UH), Dr. Morton served as an exceptional and committed administrator who championed open access to higher education and placed a tremendous focus on providing education opportunity that would meet the State's workforce needs—a mission he has dedicated himself to for nearly five decades.

From 2005 through his retirement in 2019, as Vice President for Community Colleges, Dr. Morton led the community colleges through some of the most challenging and transformative years. His work included efforts to decrease the cost of attending college and increasing access to higher education, including the launch of the Hawai'i Promise scholarship. He also launched innovative approaches to increase student success such as the implementation of co-requisite instruction for remedial education.

Dr. Morton also brought respect and recognition to the University of Hawai'i with his long-standing and active leadership role as a commissioner of the Accrediting Commission for Community Colleges and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), as well as his participation in the Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders, where he worked with the WICHE-region community colleges and technical schools as well as the state coordinating and governing boards.

Dr. Morton has extensive experience working with both public and non-profit sector Boards so he can be an effective WICHE Commission from Day 1. These experiences have included his service as the longtime chair of the Board of Trustees of the Assets School, chair of the Board of Directors of the Hawai'i Health Information Corporation, service on the Board of Directors of the High Technology Development Corporation, a Governor of the Pacific & Asian Affairs Council, and his active participation as a member of the Mānoa Wai'oli Lion's Club.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in **strong support** of Governor's Message 574, and I respectfully urge you to consent to Dr. John Morton's nomination to serve on the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education.



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. John Morton's nomination to the WICHE Commission. Dr. Morton brings nearly 50 years of community college knowledge and experience, both at the campus and system levels, which is of great value to the WICHE Commission. In addition, his deep understanding of Hawai'i's context and needs will allow him to fully represent the state in Commission matters and conversations.

Thank you for your time and attention to his nomination.

Demarée K. Michelau  
President

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