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TESTIMONY TO THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, CULTURE AND THE ARTS

For Hearing on Monday, March 22, 2021 at 3:05 p.m.
Conference Room 225 (via video teleconference)

BY

RYKER WADA
DIRECTOR

**SCR168/SR133: URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT
TO REEXAMINE THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR STATE POSITIONS THAT ARE CURRENTLY
VACANT AND REPLACE THE QUALIFICATION OF A BACHELOR'S DEGREE WITH AN
ASSOCIATE DEGREE OR CERTIFICATE, WHERE APPLICABLE**

CHAIR TANIGUCHI, VICE-CHAIR IHARA AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

The Department of Human Resources Development appreciates the opportunity to provide **COMMENTS** on SCR168/SR133.

For the committee's edification, each executive branch department is required to review its position descriptions on a periodic basis to ensure that it reflects current duties and responsibilities of such positions. DHRD's Classification Branch, which assists such departments as part of that exercise, pays particular attention to ensuring that the minimum qualifications for all civil service classes are essential and job-related, reflect the knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies required to perform the work and do not pose artificial barriers (such as absolute educational requirements) unless they are bona fide requirements necessary for licensure.

With regard to substituting a bachelor's degree with an associate degree, where appropriate, as suggested by these resolutions, we note that many positions allow for the substitution of experience in lieu of the educational requirement. It is the responsibility of the examiners within DHRD's Employee Staffing Division to review and approve such substitutions on an application-by-application basis.

Despite the current budgetary challenges we face, DHRD remains committed to addressing the number of vacant positions in state government. This effort is all the more challenging because of the hiring freeze that remains in effect for the vast majority of positions, but we stand ready to assist departments when our budgetary situation changes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on these resolutions.



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION
AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

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The Thirty-First Legislature, State of Hawaii
The Senate
Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts
Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association
March 22, 2021

**S.C.R. 168/S.R. 133 – URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
DEVELOPMENT TO REEXAMINE THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR STATE
POSITIONS THAT ARE CURRENTLY VACANT**

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO would like to provide comments on S.C.R. 168 and S.R. 133 which urges the Department of Human Resources Development to re-examine the qualifications for vacant state positions and relate the qualification of a bachelor's degree with an associate degree or certificate where applicable.

The preamble of S.C.R. 168 and S.R. 133 identifies that our state government has over 27,700 current vacant positions and cites that the Department of Human Resources and Development (DHRD) has not conducted a comprehensive review of these positions to verify whether the job qualifications are current. The high vacancy rate is a serious problem both for the public to which government provides critical services, as well as current employees who are overburdened with fulfilling departmental missions with extremely limited resources. While we strongly support quickly filling all vacant positions, we respectfully question whether modifying minimum qualifications will yield the desired result, if the modification will result in a change of bargaining unit status and/or compensation for prospective employees, and the impact on existing employees who were hired with the existing qualifications.

We have consistently advocated that the state's recruitment process needs fundamental reform in large part because of its antiquated classification system. There are simply too many job classifications and the class specifications that exist are often outdated and no longer describe actual duties and responsibilities. Therefore, there is an urgent need to conduct a detailed review of the thousands of job classifications that comprise the state's workforce and figure out which ones warrant elimination, consolidation, or revision. DHRD must review and evaluate its and departmental hiring processes to streamline, coordinate, and prioritize must-fill positions. This will start a paradigm shift needed to create a leaner and more nimble classification and recruitment system. Other public sector employers have successfully reduced their classifications into consolidated job families where prospective employees can easily identify the occupational area in which they wish to work.

We share the concerns raised in S.C.R 168 and S.R. 133, however we prefer a holistic remedy that makes systemic and long-lasting changes.

Respectfully submitted,


Randy Perreira
Executive Director