



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

### Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Higher Education & Technology  
Wednesday, February 8, 2023, at 2:15 p.m.

By

Erika Lacro, Vice President for Community Colleges  
University of Hawai'i System

#### HB 1148 – RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

Chair Perruso, Vice Chair Kapela, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of HB 1148, which supports and expands the mental health technician certificate of competence at Windward Community College (WCC) through the hiring of a mental health technician certificate coordinator, establishment of a scholarship program, and any other necessary administrative costs.

WCC developed the Mental Health Technician (MHT) Certificate in collaboration with the Hawai'i State Hospital (HSH) in order to provide a foundation of knowledge and increase skills for those serving the mentally ill on our islands. The program consists of three focused courses, available in person and online. Students learn fundamentals of psychology and psychological functioning, as well as conflict resolution and communications. This allows them to understand situations that arise at work, to more effectively deal with patients and to prevent escalation of conflict in tense situations. This leads to a safer workplace and a more supportive therapeutic environment.

This addresses the severe shortage of mental health workers during a time when our State has dire needs for mental health support due to the impacts of the pandemic, socio-economic stressors, high job turnover, and a lack of workforce skilled in this area. It serves not only Hawai'i State Hospital, the second largest employer in Windward O'ahu, but also other mental health related employers such as Windward District Health, Hina Mauka and others. Our online asynchronous offerings allow current workers to grow their skills through course offerings maximally adaptable to their schedules and further allow for this program to be expanded statewide.

The program was first implemented in Spring 2022, which resulted in 2 graduates in the first semester; both continued their employment at the HSH with their improved skills and knowledge. In Fall of 2022, 23 more students graduated with the MHT certificate. Nine of these graduates were employed at HSH. Already in its first year, this program has had a large impact on the capacity of Windward O'ahu to care for those suffering from mental health issues and to increase workplace satisfaction and safety in the workplace.

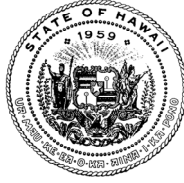
The MHT certificate creates a pathway to further training and higher education. A one year certificate currently under development will build on the certificate by adding clinical skills and knowledge necessary to perform higher job requirements in more advanced clinical settings. These certificates are specifically designed to advance students to increasingly higher qualifications, such as degrees in psychology, social work and mental health counseling. This grows the overall capacity of our state to address mental health challenges and needs.

A Coordinator allows for this program to be made available statewide through our sister community college and partnerships with mental health related agencies and workplaces. The Coordinator can further oversee the implementation of a scholarship program, ensuring access for unemployed, underemployed and low wage earners, creating a pathway out of poverty.

This bill supports the Mental Health Tech certificate program at WCC to address an immediate, critical workforce need for preparing potential employees and upskilling existing employees. It builds the capacity of our State to implement effective, supportive care for those suffering from mental illness.

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of HB 1148, on the condition that any funds appropriated in support of this program does not supplant any portion of the University's budget request.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 1148.



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
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WRITTEN  
TESTIMONY ONLY

**Testimony COMMENTING on H.B. 1148  
RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH**

REPRESENTATIVE AMY A. PERRUSO, CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY

Hearing Date, Time and Room Number: February 8, 2023 at 2:15 p.m.in Room 309/VIDEO

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The Department of Health (“Department”) requests that this measure be  
2 considered as a vehicle to provide this needed funding so long as it does not supplant the  
3 priorities and requests outlined in the Governors executive budget request.

4 **Department Position:** The Department strongly supports this measure and offers comments.

5 **Department Testimony:** The Adult Mental Health Division (AMHD) provides the following  
6 testimony on behalf of the Department.

7 The Department strongly supports this measure which appropriates funds to support  
8 and expand the Windward Community College (WCC) mental health technician (MHT)  
9 certificate program through the hiring of a mental health technician certificate program  
10 coordinator, establishment of a scholarship program, and any other necessary administrative  
11 costs.

12 The Department recognizes that education and training and important parts of building  
13 the mental health care workforce. We understand that education and training should not stop  
14 when someone is hired for employment. Ongoing opportunities to provide training and  
15 professional development can help to address staff retention concerns while also supporting

1 employees who want to learn additional skills through convenient learning modes that provide  
2 work-life balance (e.g., online distance learning).

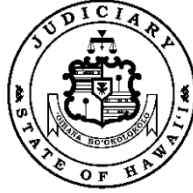
3 The WCC MHT certificate program began in Spring 2022. This program provides  
4 introductory training to those entering the mental health service field. Courses in psychology,  
5 communication, and conflict resolution and mediation offer a range of academic study and skill-  
6 based activities to strengthen knowledge about working through difficult situations in the  
7 workplace. Of these 25 graduates thus far, 11 are employed at the Hawaii State Hospital.

8 We are pleased with the interest that this program has received thus far and look  
9 forward to partnering with WCC to welcome prospective students as well as to congratulate  
10 future MHT certificate program graduates, including those who are currently employed or  
11 aspiring to be employed by the Hawaii State Hospital.

12 We believe appropriating funds to establish a program coordinator position will allow  
13 this program to expand and be offered at other community colleges, and thereby helping to  
14 address the need for health care workforce training throughout our state. We respectfully ask  
15 for the Legislature's support of this measure.

16 **Offered Amendments:** None.

17 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



*The Judiciary, State of Hawai'i*

**Testimony to the Thirty-Second Legislature, 2023 Regular Session**

**House Committee on Higher Education & Technology**

Representative Amy A. Perruso, Chair

Representative Jeanne Kapela, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 8, 2023 at 2:15 p.m.

State Capitol, Conference Room 309 & Videoconference

by:

Brandon M. Kimura

Deputy Administrative Director of the Courts

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY**

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**Bill No. and Title:** House Bill No. 1148, Relating to Mental Health

**Description:** Appropriates funds to support and expand the mental health technician certificate of competence program through the hiring of a mental health technician certificate program coordinator, establishment of a scholarship program, and any other necessary administrative costs.

**Judiciary's Position:**

The Judiciary supports the intent of this measure—to enhance the workforce across the state in the field of behavioral health care. This is a type of work critical to the efficiency and effectiveness of the justice system and to the larger community.

The Judiciary supports appropriate efforts to assist those suffering from mental health challenges before interaction with and/or outside the justice system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

**HB-1148**

Submitted on: 2/7/2023 10:12:19 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/8/2023 2:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Cindy Texeira	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**HB 1148 RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH**

**Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:**

**I am writing to express my strong support for HB1148, which supports and expands the mental health technician certificate of competence at Windward Community College (WCC). This bill has the potential to improve the availability and quality of mental health services for individuals in our state, and to provide valuable educational opportunities for aspiring mental health technicians.**

**Mental health is a critical issue in our communities, and the demand for qualified mental health technicians continues to grow. By establishing a scholarship program and hiring a mental health technician certificate coordinator, HB1148 will make it easier for individuals to enter this field and receive the education and training they need to succeed.**

**The mental health technician certificate of competence at WCC is a valuable resource for aspiring mental health technicians, providing them with the knowledge and skills they need to work in a variety of settings, including hospitals, mental health clinics, and community-based organizations. By expanding this program, we can help to increase the number of qualified mental health technicians in our state, and improve access to mental health services for those who need them.**

**In conclusion, I strongly encourage the legislature to pass HB1148, which will support and expand the mental health technician certificate of competence at Windward Community College, and help to ensure that individuals in our state have access to the mental health services they need to thrive. Thank you for considering this important legislation.**

**Sincerely,**

**Cindy Texeira**

**HB-1148**

Submitted on: 2/7/2023 1:46:11 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/8/2023 2:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Laurie Baron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha kākou. I'm writing in support of hb 1148. This one step will leverage our investment and make real progress in addressing the vast need for mental healthcare workers in our communities. Thank you for supporting.

**HB-1148**

Submitted on: 2/7/2023 5:02:56 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/8/2023 2:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nancy Taylor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support the request being made for funding to support and expand the mental health certificate program and Windward Community College. The need for mental health workers is critical and this bill would greatly enhance the efforts being made to help remedy this.



**HB-1148**

Submitted on: 2/8/2023 6:03:50 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/8/2023 2:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
James F Moonier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

i strongly support this bill

**HB-1148**

Submitted on: 2/7/2023 5:37:48 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/8/2023 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy Davlantes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**This bill supports the Mental Health Tech certificate program at WCC to address an immediate, critical workforce need for preparing potential employees and upskilling existing employees. It builds the capacity of our State to implement effective, supportive care for those suffering from mental illness.**

**HB-1148**

Submitted on: 2/8/2023 1:08:15 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/8/2023 2:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jody M Green	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this. Mahalo