



**TESTIMONY OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA  
THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE, 2024**

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**ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**

H.B. NO. 1779, RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII.

**BEFORE THE:**

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY

**DATE:** Wednesday, February 7, 2024      **TIME:** 2:00 p.m.

**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 309 and Videoconference

**TESTIFIER(S):** Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or  
Candace J. Park, Deputy Attorney General

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Chair Perruso and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments.

This bill: (1) establishes a three-year summer tuition pilot program to be implemented by the University of Hawai'i; (2) requires the University of Hawai'i to submit interim and final reports on the summer tuition pilot program to the Legislature; and (3) makes an appropriation for the program.

Article X, section 6, of the Hawai'i Constitution gives the Board of Regents of the University of Hawai'i "exclusive jurisdiction over the internal structure, management, and operation of the university." Section 6 further provides: "This section shall not limit the power of the legislature to enact laws of statewide concern. The legislature shall have the exclusive jurisdiction to identify laws of statewide concern." If the Committee decides to pass this bill, we recommend an amendment that adds a statement identifying this bill as a law of statewide concern.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.



# 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 7, 2024, at 2:00 p.m.

By

Debora Halbert

Vice President for Academic Strategy

University of Hawai'i System

and

Erika Lacro

Vice President for Community Colleges

University of Hawai'i System

#### HB 1779 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

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

The University of Hawai'i appreciates the intent of HB 1779 which establishes a three-year summer tuition pilot program to provide funding to the University of Hawai'i Community Colleges to offset the costs of aligning the resident tuition rates for the summer semester with the resident tuition rates for the spring and fall semesters at the community colleges. However, given our current plans to implement a pilot program, this bill is not necessary.

Independent of this bill, the University of Hawai'i Community Colleges are designing a pilot program that would provide the regular tuition rate in the summer to continuing students from the spring semester and entering high school students that register for the summer and fall semesters. Under this pilot, the lower summer tuition rate would target current students and local high school students. Those students attending a mainland college that return for the summer and take courses would continue to pay the higher summer tuition rate.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for HB 1779.

**HB-1779**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 10:43:07 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/7/2024 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Teresa Aquino	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Auinalā,

The greatest gift we can receive is knowledge. There is so much good that can come from having the opportunity to attend college/university. I have listed 4 topics on why this bill would benefit the students and community.

**1. Accessibility to Education:**

Cheaper summer college tuition opens the doors to higher education for a broader range of students. Many individuals, including myself, often face financial constraints that hinder our ability to pursue a full-time degree during the traditional academic year. By reducing the cost of summer courses, colleges and universities allow students to continue their education and fulfill their academic ambitions, regardless of financial limitations.

**2. Accelerated Graduation:**

Lower summer college tuition enables students to complete their degrees at a faster pace. By taking advantage of summer courses, students can earn additional credits, reducing the overall duration of their degree programs. This accelerated graduation not only saves time but also decreases the financial burden associated with prolonged years of education.

**3. Flexibility and Customization:**

Cheaper summer college tuition provides students with increased flexibility in designing their academic schedules. With reduced costs, students can opt to take summer courses that align with their interests or fill in gaps in their degree requirements. This customization allows students to explore diverse subjects and gain a more well-rounded education. Additionally, it provides an opportunity to lighten the course load during the regular academic year, allowing for a better balance between academic, personal, and professional commitments.

**4. Enhanced Learning Opportunities:**

Summer courses often offer unique learning experiences that may not be available during the regular academic year. Smaller class sizes, specialized topics, and more direct access to professors can create an enriched learning environment. With reduced tuition costs, students can take advantage of these opportunities without the worry of exorbitant expenses, fostering a deeper understanding of their chosen subjects and enhancing overall academic performance.

#### 5. Financial Relief:

Lower summer college tuition directly impacts students by alleviating the financial burden associated with education. Many students rely on part-time jobs or take out loans to cover their educational expenses. By reducing the cost of summer courses, students can save on tuition fees, ultimately reducing their reliance on loans or allowing them to allocate their earnings towards other pressing needs.

The reduced financial burden also provides me with peace of mind, knowing that I can pursue my educational goals without excessive debt. Overall, cheaper summer college tuition is a significant development in higher education, benefiting students like me and paving the way for a more inclusive and affordable academic experience.

**HB-1779**

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 12:34:51 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/7/2024 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
David Ball	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this important legislation.

With aloha,

David Ball

Waiālae-Kahala

**HB-1779**

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 10:55:28 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/7/2024 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kainoa Kaeha	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Kainoa Kaeha, and I am the current student government president at Leeward Community College. I was affected by the summer tuition during my time in the DMED program. The way my school schedule was going, I was going to have a whole semester of just one class, which of course would be a waste of time for me which also means waste of money. So I thought, a summer school class so that I can offset this one class would allow me to save money, graduate earlier or on time, and accelerate my education which I value. So I took my summer class only to then after realize that it costed half of what my normal full time student tuition costs, for one class. It was a huge blow to me and my family who I am fortunate enough to have help paying for my tuition. It was very important for me as I do not want to take only 1 class a semester, which of course would cost more, and mess up financial aid or scholarships by not being able to meet part/full time requirements. So it was really disheartening to have to lug out half of my tuition on a summer course, and from that point I could not take a summer class whatsoever. It just wasn't financially viable for me to take anymore summer courses, so I'm glad I only ever needed one. But I do fear when other students not as fortunate as I am, need that one course to save more money in the long term. It would be a huge benefit to the student's education, as well as to the school because students will be more likely to take summer classes if they are cheaper, which means more class availability and diversity, as well as more opportunities for teachers who really should be paid more, can get more work opportunities for those summers.

Thank you,

Kainoa

**HB-1779**

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 12:46:10 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/7/2024 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jenny Brown	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Dear Chair Perruso and Vice Chair Kapela,

I am writing to express my strong support for the establishment of a three-year summer tuition pilot program, as proposed in 1779 HB. I believe that this initiative is crucial in addressing the financial challenges faced by students attending the University of Hawaii (UH) community colleges during the summer semester.

The proposal to align resident tuition rates for the summer semester with those for the spring and fall semesters at the community colleges is a commendable step towards fostering educational equity and accessibility. It recognizes the importance of providing students with consistent and affordable access to higher education throughout the entire academic year.

The financial burden on students attending summer classes has been a longstanding concern, often hindering their ability to pursue additional coursework or expedite their degree completion. By appropriating funds for this pilot program, the state demonstrates a commitment to supporting the educational aspirations of its residents and investing in the future workforce.

The three-year duration of the pilot program is particularly noteworthy, as it allows for a comprehensive evaluation of its impact on student enrollment, retention, and academic success. This timeframe enables data-driven decision-making, ensuring that any adjustments or improvements can be made to optimize the program's effectiveness.

In conclusion, I urge you to lend your support to the establishment of the three-year summer tuition pilot program. By doing so, you will contribute to making higher education more accessible and affordable for students attending UH community colleges, ultimately fostering a more educated and skilled workforce for our state.

Thank you for your dedication to improving higher education in Hawaii. I appreciate your time and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Jenny Brown

Current UH CC Student





**HB-1779**

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 5:58:43 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/7/2024 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jueri Kamiya	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this testimony.

**HB-1779**

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 5:59:00 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/7/2024 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kizuki Suga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this testimony.

Representative Amy A. Perruso, Chair

Representative Jeanne Kapela, Vice Chair

Committee on Higher Education & Technology

Zachary Gibson

Tuesday, February 6, 2024

Support for H.B. No. 1779, Relating to the University of Hawai'i

In Fall of 2023, our Student Congress executive team at Kapi'olani Community College began working on this initiative to lower summer tuition. As the Vice-President, I was heavily involved in this process and feel that I should share my experience.

We began by discussing the Spring Survey 2023 results, which indicated students were facing harsh financial difficulties, as one in three students were missing at least one meal in a week due to money constraints. In addition to handling other obligations outside of school, such as helping with siblings, taking care of their own children, or their parents and grandparents. We also noted that 47% of our student body was working either part-time or full-time.

These are our friends, neighbors, brothers/sisters, aunties/uncles, trying to develop the foundations for a better life, and they are struggling.

We met with Jenny Brown, the previous Vice-President, and shared thoughts and experiences on how to help our students and their families in our community. She had worked on an initiative to lower summer tuition, coined "Summer Classes for the Masses". She met with all seven community colleges student leadership and their students voiced similar concerns.

We conducted video interviews, created surveys to capture data, and met with various Admin within the UH System. This included the Chancellors of each campus, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Associate Vice President for Administrative Affairs. These discussions included areas such as class modality, class length per topic, family responsibilities, and employment.

However, our attempt was met with a roadblock, a financial hurdle we'd need to overcome. Our team then had the opportunity to meet with Rep. Amy Perruso and Rep. Lisa Martin to share our student concerns. With a new avenue to approach we began to craft a proposal.

I strongly believe that providing our residents with a more affordable summer rate can help alleviate the strain on resources needed for everyday survival. This can also help aid in other education campaigns such as 55 by 25 by helping students maintain concurrent enrollment year-round with the aim of dampening the Summer Melt. Perhaps, this would provide career opportunities that allow families to be more self-sufficient for our growing economy. Parents wouldn't need to take on multiple jobs or work as many hours, allowing them quality time to be present in their children's or own development. A growing concern revolves around childhood development, and its play in mental disabilities – such as developmental dyslexia.

My concern with this not being adopted at the state level, is that rigor mortis will set in, and our students' voice will go unheard, leading to further disunity. Our community is striving for better while receiving a relentlessly disingenuous answer to concern. I'm here to share my experience, shaped by the experience of our students, and to ignore the possible benefits from a three-year pilot would surely be a missed opportunity and call to action.

**HB-1779**

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 8:55:02 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/7/2024 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Maegen E Walker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Student Congress executive team at Kapi'olani Community College began working on the HB 1779 initiative to lower summer tuition in Fall of 2023. Since inception, these student leaders have conducted video interviews, created surveys to capture student data, and met with various Admin within the UH System.

The results of their efforts are clear: One in three students miss at least one meal in a week due to money constraints. Furthermore, 47% of the students surveyed are working either part-time or full-time, in addition to handling other obligations outside of school, such as helping with siblings, taking care of their own children, or their parents and grandparents.

It is worth noting that stressors such as hunger, poverty, and exhaustion are several major factors that impair health and wellness, limit resilience, and prevent individuals from thriving in their environments.

Therefore, it should go without saying that these constraints are only compounded by the added cost of summer tuition. Indeed, this high cost proves to be a significant hurdle for many and an outright roadblock for others. Students who do not have the ability to take on a full course load during the regular fall/spring semesters rely on summer classes to stay on track for graduation. We owe it to our students to support them on their journey and alleviate obstacles where possible.

Please, vote in favor of HB 1779. I urge you all to truly consider those who are impacted the most by this bill. It is your duty to enact policy that, as much as possible, promotes positive outcomes and limits harmful outcomes. Help support the youth of our communities, the future leaders of our state, and those who will - eventually - be the policy makers for generations to come.

Representative Amy A. Perruso, Chair  
Representative Jeanne Kapela, Vice Chair  
Committee on Higher Education & Technology

Ratana Kim

Tuesday, February 06, 2024

Support for H.B. No. 1779, Relating to the University of Hawaii.

As a graduate of Kalani High School, a current student at Kapiolani Community College, and a proud member of our community, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to share my perspective on the importance of H.B. 1779.

This bill proposes a three-year Pilot Program that resonates with me on a profound level. It's not just about educational policies; it's about offering hope, opportunity, and a chance for a brighter future to countless individuals across our islands.

My journey to higher education has been one marked by perseverance, sacrifice, and the unwavering determination to overcome financial obstacles. Throughout my junior and senior years in high school, I worked multiple jobs to support myself. From serving lunch in the cafeteria to cleaning classrooms after school, and even taking on a part-time position at Jamba Juice to earn extra income.

My acceptance to Kapiolani Community College in the fall of 2021 was a moment of immense pride and relief. It was a validation of years of hard work, perseverance, and sacrifices. The realization that I could attend college for my first year without the burden of tuition fees, thanks to the Pell Grant, was like a weight lifted off my shoulders. For the first time, I dared to envision a future filled with possibilities and opportunities.

However, that sense of relief quickly turned to disbelief and despair when I discovered the extremely high cost of summer tuition. It was a hard reminder for students like me, from a low income family.

Instead of planning my summer courses and furthering my academic journey, I found myself faced with a choice to work full-time and alleviate the financial strain, or risk accumulating debt that could jeopardize my long-term goals. It was a choice no student should ever have to make.

The three-year Pilot Program outlined in H.B. 1779 offers a beacon of hope to individuals like myself—individuals who strive for self-improvement, who seek for knowledge, and who understand the transformative power of education. By alleviating the financial burdens associated with summer tuition, this program has the potential to unlock opportunities for countless Hawaii residents, enabling them to pursue their educational goals without fear of financial strain.

Education should not be a privilege reserved for the wealthy; it is a fundamental right that should be accessible to all. By supporting H.B. 1779, you have the opportunity to uplift our communities, empower our youth, and pave the way for a future where every individual has the chance to thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**HB-1779**

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 9:05:03 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/7/2024 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mohammadamin Mahmanzar	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

House Chairs and Committee members,

I believe that the alignment between summer tuition and fall/spring should be the same. This will provide myself and other the opportunity to take on more classes during the summer semester, graduating sooner and being able to provide a better life for me and my future family. I hope this becomes a reality sooner than later as time is the foundational non-renewable requirement.

**HB-1779**

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 9:16:27 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/7/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Maria schmitz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Maria Schmitz, and I am writing this not only as a concerned student but also as a member actively involved in this process. As a Communications Officer of Kapi'olani Community College Student Congress, I want to express my support to this bill as I believe that it holds significant promise in addressing a critical issue affecting countless resident students across our state.

Our Journey towards this bill began with a profound realization during our Spring 2023 Survey: many of our students were facing financial difficulties. With this information we started working on an initiative from our previous Student Congress, and all other seven Community Colleges student leaders, the "Summer Classes for the Masses".

We started conducting interviews with students and gathering more information. To then meet with various Admin within the UH System - this including the Chancellors of each campus, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Associate Vice President for Administrative Affairs - to share our concerns. We then encountered a new problem, how to offset the cost of lowering this summer tuition. As we had an opportunity to meet with Rep. Amy Perruso and Rep. Lisa Martin, and shared our students' concerns, has helped us start to craft our proposal.

The current difference in resident tuition rates between summer and fall/spring semesters is an unfairness that disproportionately affects resident students who rely on summer coursework to fulfill degree requirements, accelerate their academic progress, or maintain financial aid eligibility. Summer tuition costs are higher, by as much as 90%, making it financially burdensome for students already struggling to afford the cost of higher education.

This bill represents a critical step towards creating a more equitable and accessible higher education system. By addressing the disparity in summer tuition costs, we can unlock the full potential of countless students, promote academic success, and foster economic prosperity for generations to come.

I'm concerned that if this issue isn't addressed at the state level, our efforts might stagnate, and our students' voices could fade. I'm here to share my firsthand experience, which is shaped by the experiences of our students. Supporting this three-year pilot program would be a step forward into making higher education more accessible.



Thank you for your time and consideration,

Maria Schmitz

Current UH CC Student

**HB-1779**

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 9:16:54 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/7/2024 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Darrell DeMarcus Aquino	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Growing up in Hawaii, I have felt the lack support to earn a college degree and pursue further education. Many of us Graduate high school and stop of education there because of the steep prices of tuition. I support this bill to help Hawaii support our Keiki!

Representative Amy Perruso, Chair  
Representative Jeanne Kapela, Vice Chair  
Committee on Higher Education & Technology

Shannon Sakaue, EdD

Wednesday, February 7, 2024

Support for HB 1779: Relating to the University of Hawai'i

My name is Dr. Shannon Sakaue, and I have been a counseling faculty member at the University of Hawai'i - Kapi'olani Community College since 2011; and the Faculty Advisor for the Associated Students of Kapi'olani Community College since 2015.

I am submitting this written testimony as an individual, not on behalf of the University of Hawai'i. This testimony is in support of HB 1779 in the 2024 legislative session, to reduce summer tuition at all University of Hawai'i Community College campuses through a pilot project for fiscal years 2025, 2026, and 2027.

Through my years of experience as a counselor at a community college, I would like to share my expertise and understanding of many student challenges that relate to the inflated cost of summer tuition. When doing academic plans with students, I often pause when discussing summer options, because I need students to be aware of the 90% increase in tuition from \$131 per credit during a standard fall or spring semester, to \$248 per credit in the summer session. Often, students are reluctant to pay nearly double the cost for a summer session class, and opt to add additional hours to their work schedules, or absorb additional responsibilities during the summer instead of moving forward with their academic progress. This unfortunate situation lends itself to a common trend of students not re-enrolling after a spring semester, a term we call, "summer melt", when students do not return in a subsequent fall semester.

We have a large number of students who are returning to college after not completing their college degree, and streamlining their educational experience to have a standard rate of tuition for all semesters would be an excellent step in the right direction to helping the workforce of Hawai'i to become more educated and qualified for employment. There are countless students who I have personally helped with academic planning, and decide not to enroll in the summer, solely because of the higher rate of tuition.

I am grateful for the state of Hawai'i to consider this bill and call for action to help the people of Hawai'i have more access and opportunity to a higher education.

Thank you,  
Shannon Sakaue, EdD

Representative Amy A. Perruso, Chair  
Representative Jeanne Kapela, Vice Chair  
Committee on Higher Education & Technology

In Mo Koo

Tuesday, February 6, 2024

Support for H.B. No. 1779, Relating to the University of Hawai'i

I am grateful that I get to share my experiences and have the chance to share my insights on why I believe in the important of bill H.B. 1779. The keyword I have is opportunity, I believe everyone deserves the opportunity to education and to learn because to learn is to grow and to be better not just for one's self but for their family or their peers.

In my home country I did not have the privilege to attend high-school because at the time my family did not have the financial capabilities to enroll me in school. We barely had any money for food or electricity. When my family did become financially stable I had already past the age for highschool but I did not have a diploma or any credentials for me to pursue higher education in my home country and that was when I acquired a G.E.D. and enrolled myself into Kapi'olani Community College and started my academic journey in the spring semester of 2022.

As an international student on an F-1 visa my tuition costs stay the same regardless of the spring and fall or summer credits, but I have had the privilege to hear the stories of many residents here in Hawaii and of their trials and tribulations when it comes to pursuing a better life for themselves. Many of them are my friends or classmates who have struggled to make ends meet due to financial constraints placed upon them from the responsibilities that they had to uphold from family. I think it's quite noble of them to work to provide for their families and I have an immeasurable amount of respect for their ability to keep up with their academics so that in the future they can do better for their loved ones. I can say for certain I would not have the same success in my academics without the help those same friends. I believe the least I can do is return the favour with this initiative.

The enactment of the three year pilot program to subsidize summer tuition outlined in H.B. 1779 would not only help my friends and classmates but countless of residents in their journey to to pursue higher education and to alleviate financial burdens. To create better opportunities for not only themselves but perhaps their families and future generations to come. I hope for the people of Hawaii that they will see a time where higher education is not just a dream but the standard for every household.