



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

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. NO. 1795, RELATING TO COMMUNITY COLLEGE.

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

Chair Perruso and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments.

This bill: (1) establishes the Free Community College Working Group within the University of Hawai'i for administrative purposes to evaluate possibilities for making community college free for Hawaii residents; (2) requires as members, among others, the President of the University of Hawaii or the President's designee to serve as chairperson, the Director of the University of Hawaii's Institutional Research, Analysis, and Planning Office or designee, a chancellor of a community college or designee, and the Executive Director of the Hawaii P-20 Partnership or designee; and (3) requires the Free Community College Working Group to submit a report to the Legislature.

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.



STATE OF HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
PRINCESS VICTORIA KAMĀMALU BUILDING
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543
February 07, 2024

The Honorable Representative Amy A. Perruso, Chair
House Committee on Higher Education & Technology
The Thirty-Second Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Representative Perruso and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HB1795 RELATING TO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities **SUPPORTS HB1795**, which establishes a working group within the University of Hawai'i to evaluate possibilities for making community college free for Hawai'i residents.

The Council's support for HB1795 is rooted in the recognition of its positive impact on increasing access to post-secondary education for Hawai'i residents. Individuals with developmental disabilities (I/DD) often face barriers to pursuing higher education, and community colleges serve as a vital avenue when they do. Unfortunately, the prohibitive costs associated with post-secondary education pose a significant challenge, particularly for those relying on poverty-based systems and supports.

Many individuals with I/DD contend with financial struggles that make attending community college a daunting task. We believe that the proposed measure has the potential to alleviate this financial burden and, in turn, increase the likelihood of individuals with I/DD pursuing higher education. Furthermore, community college serves as a valuable transitional tool, providing a pathway for individuals with I/DD to enter universities and further their educational pursuits. This measure aligns with our commitment to advocating for inclusivity and opportunities for all, addressing the unique challenges faced by individuals with developmental disabilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB1795**.

Sincerely,

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator



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

HB 1795 – RELATING TO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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

The University of Hawai'i (UH) is in support of HB 1795, a bill that recognizes the importance of higher education in individual and societal success and aims to establish a working group to evaluate the feasibility of making community college free for Hawai'i residents.

As noted in the bill, there is a well-established correlation between higher education levels and higher earnings for individuals, transcending racial, ethnic, and gender groups. Furthermore, investing in higher education is linked to lower unemployment rates, reduced poverty, improved public health, and a decrease in incarceration rates.

UH is committed to serving a diverse student population and believes that access to affordable higher education is a key driver for individual and collective success. We appreciate the legislature's acknowledgment of the financial challenges faced by working families, particularly those earning less than \$30,000 annually, and the efforts to address the college-going rates for Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Filipino students.

While the Hawai'i Community College Promise Program was established to alleviate the high cost of obtaining a college education for low-income families, more needs to be done to make community college affordable for all students who wish to enroll. We support the initiative to evaluate possibilities for making community college free for Hawai'i residents.

In addition to supporting the bill, we would like to offer recommendations for the working group's consideration:

1. **Public Awareness and Outreach:** Ensure that the working group engages in robust public awareness and outreach efforts to solicit input from diverse communities, students, and stakeholders.
2. **Sustainability:** Evaluate the long-term sustainability of the proposed program to ensure its continued success beyond the initial pilot phase.

3. **Alignment with Existing Aid Programs:** Explore how the proposed program aligns with or complements existing financial aid programs to maximize support for students.

In conclusion, UH supports the passage of HB 1795 and appreciates the initiative to create a working group to evaluate the feasibility of making community college free for Hawai'i residents.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 1795.



TESTIMONY FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY

FEBRUARY 7, 2024

HB 1795, RELATING TO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i **supports** HB 1795, relating to community college. Pursuant to the “Education” section of the official Democratic Party of Hawai'i platform, the party supports “an excellent, free public education for students at every level.”

Strengthening access to community college is essential to delivering the promise of higher education to all Hawai'i residents. Too often, the cost of college tuition is unattainable to working families, many of whom are experiencing chronic financial hardship because of our islands' exorbitant and ever-increasing cost of living. Community colleges empower students to develop the skills needed to diversify our economy, achieve personal prosperity, and build a sustainable future for our state that meets the demands of the 21st Century.

Making community college free for our state's residents is surprisingly inexpensive. According to data obtained from the University of Hawai'i's Institutional Research, Analysis, and Planning Office, for the fall 2022 semester, UH reported that 12,449 classified students with Hawai'i residency were enrolled in community college, 4,930 of whom were registered as full-time students and 7,519 of whom were registered as part-time students. UH also reported that approximately 42 percent of community college students received financial aid to cover the cost of their tuition in the most recent year for which data is available and

that part-time residential community college students enroll in 6.6 credits per semester on average.

When these data points are considered, the cost of making community college tuition-free for Hawai'i residents can be estimated at less than \$20 million, even after accounting for first-year enrollment increases experienced by other states (typically around 10-15 percent) that have implemented free community college programs. In fact, the actual cost of making community college tuition free would likely be even lower than these numbers suggest, since many students received financial assistance from the military or from other scholarship programs.

Many states have implemented programs to make community college free for all or most students, including California, Delaware, Nevada, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Virginia, and Washington. Joining this movement by expanding access to the Hawai'i Community College Promise Program to all qualified applicants would increase Hawai'i's college-going rate, especially for students and families who are economically disadvantaged. The college-going rate currently stands at just over 50 percent for public high school graduates, despite the numerous programs that currently exist to incentivize higher education opportunities in Hawai'i.

As the College Board has noted, there is a correlation between higher levels of educational attainment and higher earnings for all racial and ethnic groups, as well as all genders. Additionally, the College Board states that the income gap between high school graduates and college graduates has increased significantly over time, while higher levels of education also correspond to lower levels of unemployment, poverty, public health risks, and incarceration throughout society. We need to reverse this trend for local communities and ensure that the dream of higher education is not reserved for the privileged few. For working families and their keiki, the chance to make community college free is an opportunity that our state cannot afford to miss.

Mahalo nui loa,

Kris Coffield

Co-Chair, Legislative Committee
(808) 679-7454
kriscoffield@gmail.com

Abby Simmons

Co-Chair, Legislative Committee
(808) 352-6818
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HOUSE BILL 1795, RELATING TO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

FEBRUARY 7, 2024 · HET HEARING

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 1795, relating to community college, which establishes a working group within the University of Hawai'i to evaluate possibilities for making community college free for Hawai'i residents.

Strengthening access to community college is essential to delivering the promise of higher education to all Hawai'i residents. Too often, the cost of college tuition is unattainable to working families, many of whom are experiencing chronic financial hardship because of our islands' exorbitant and ever-increasing cost of living. Community colleges empower students to develop the skills needed to diversify our economy, achieve personal prosperity, and build a sustainable future for our state that meets the demands of the 21st Century.

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Many states have implemented programs to make community college free for all or most students, including California, Delaware, Nevada, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Virginia, and Washington. Joining this movement by expanding access to the Hawai'i Community College Promise Program to all qualified applicants would increase Hawai'i's college-going rate, especially for students and families who are economically disadvantaged. The college-going rate currently stands at just over 50 percent for public high school graduates, despite the numerous programs that currently exist to incentivize higher education opportunities in Hawai'i.

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Kris Coffield · Chairperson, DPH Education Caucus · (808) 679-7454 · kriscoffield@gmail.com



AMERICANS FOR DEMOCRATIC ACTION

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Doug Pyle, Secretary	Robert Kinslow			

February 5, 2024

TO: Rep. Perruso, Chair & Members of the HET Committee

RE: HB 1795 Relating to Community College

Support for a Hearing on February 7

Americans for Democratic Action is an organization founded in the 1950s by leading supporters of the New Deal and led by Patsy Mink in the 1970s. We are devoted to the promotion of progressive public policies.

We support this bill as it would establish a working group within the University of Hawai'i to evaluate possibilities for making community college free for Hawai'i residents. We value higher education as it plays an important role in individual and societal success. According to the College Board, there is a correlation between higher levels of education and higher earnings for all racial and ethnic groups, as well as for men and women. This bill would move toward providing more students the benefits that higher education can provide.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Bickel, President

HB-1795

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 9:03:28 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deborah Anderson	Connections Public Charter School	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair Perruso, Vice Chair Kapela, Chris Todd and all HET Committee members,

As the Transition Teacher at Connections Public Charter School in Hilo, I am writing on behalf of our learners, 100% of whom qualify for free and reduced lunch. At our piko this morning, at least 20 h.s. students (around 1/3) raised their hands that they were in support of this bill.

Our high school students who are considering their post-secondary options have expressed that being able to afford tuition at Community College can be a barrier. We need more skilled workers on the Big Island, and our community would benefit from increasing our tax-paying employees.

Personally, from my time as Librarian at Waiakea Intermediate School, I know several adults who instruct at Hawaii Community College (HCC). If the University of Hawaii is able to provide tuition waivers for those in financial need especially, our Community College system could be strengthened also.

According to the College Board, there is a correlation between higher levels of education and higher earnings for all racial and ethnic groups, as well as for men and women. The College Board has also noted that the income gap between high school graduates and college graduates has increased significantly over time, while higher levels of education also correspond to lower levels of unemployment, poverty, public health risks, and incarceration. We as a community want to decrease the latter outcomes, while increasing individual and societal success, particularly for those aspirations of obtaining a higher education.

We support HB 1795, which Establishes a working group within the University of Hawaii to evaluate possibilities for making community college free for Hawaii residents.

Mahalo for your time, hard work and consideration, Chair Amy and VC Jeanne!

Deborah V. Anderson,

M.Ed., M.L.I.S., NBCT

Hello,

My name is Angelina and I am a graduate student at one of the universities here on Oahu. Today, I am submitting a written testimony for Bill HB 1795 - Relating to Community College. From my understanding, this bill is working towards granting individuals with access to community college for free. Specifically, those who are low-income and identify as Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, or Filipino. As a student, I find myself in support of this bill. I believe everyone should have access to free education. Though this bill would only cover one's community college expenses, I think it's a good starting point for many of these student's families located in Hawai'i. It allows them time to figure out their financial situations if the student wishes to continue on after community college. This would also grant these individuals a great opportunity to receive higher education in pursuit of their careers and provide them with a steady foundation. I'd like to hope that this bill allows them to feel seen in the sense that their family circumstance is not a hindrance to their achievements or discourage them from advancing their mind. Though, I would like to pose a question. Seeing as many families don't hold very much trust in areas surrounding the government, is this program genuinely going to be free for these low-income families? Because of this lack of trust, there may be hesitation from families and students if they suspect that fees could be applied or that it's not entirely taken care of like they believed and hoped. For many who identify as low-income, the word "free" usually comes with a catch. I believe that in order for this program to do well there needs to be full transparency on what is provided and what may be expected. The intention of this program seems very righteous and I hope that it continues on that way as it would benefit many individuals and their families.

HB1795

To Chair Perruso, Vice Chair Kapela and members of the Higher Education and Technology,

I am Corey Rosenlee, a teacher at Campbell High and I strongly support HB1795.

I have taught high school seniors for over two decades. The biggest stressors my students share is how they are going to pay for college. When I ask my students about their post-high school plans, only about half say they are going to go to college. When I ask my students if they would go to college if college was free, almost all of them raise their hands. President Biden as part of his Build Back Better Bill proposed two years of community college free for students. The evidence is clear that “free tuition for community college can combat the affordability gap and lead to higher college enrollment and, ultimately, higher wages for low-income students and students of color.”

Community College in Hawaii over the last ten years has seen enrollment drop by 31% from 34,100 to 23,409 in 2022. Only 1,863 Hawaii public high school seniors enrolled in Hawaii’s community colleges out of nearly 10,000 public school seniors.

National data shows that by making community college free would increase enrollment by 26%, and increase degree completion by 20%. Recently Windward Community College, using ESSER funds made community college free and saw an increase of 33% enrollment.

The Promise Scholarship is a great program, but is only applied after the fact. My students have never heard of the Promise Scholarship. Students may not even apply because they worry they would not qualify, even though many of them would qualify.

By making Community College free for all students, would increase the burden of cost and the intimidation of enrollment, and attract more low income students to enroll in Hawaii’s Community Colleges.

Leveraging FAFSA free community college would be very affordable, even with increased demand the cost would be between \$15-20 million. This task force would allow the legislature to have a definitive cost and procedures for implementation.

I ask the legislature to support. HB1795.

HB-1795

Submitted on: 2/4/2024 7:22:17 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1795. Please pass this bill.

Mike Golojuch, Sr.

HB-1795

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 12:25:11 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shannon Rudolph	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support

HB-1795

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 7:24:12 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leimomi Khan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support. Educating Hawaii's youth is a well spent investment. My father used to always encourage us to get a higher level education and to use it as a tool to achieve our aspirations. Further, Hawaii has a shortage of qualified applicants for many jobs that require higher level education. Providing the opportunity for higher level education may help to increase the applicant pool for such jobs and keep our youth home. No doubt, access to higher education plays an important role in individual and societal success. According to the College Board, there is a correlation between higher levels of education and higher earnings for all racial and ethnic groups, as well as for men and women. The College Board has also noted that the income gap between high school graduates and college graduates has increased significantly over time, while higher levels of education also correspond to lower levels of unemployment, poverty, public health risks, and incarceration. Accordingly, I urge you to pass HB 1795, which allows everyone in our state to achieve their aspirations of obtaining a higher education.

HB-1795

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 9:18:07 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daphne Barbee-Wooten	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill to make higher education available to all who want to extend their education beyond high school. The bill provides opportunities for education and learning.. An educated society makes for a better community and more job opportunities.. I support this bill, please pass it.

Sincerely,

Daphne Barbee-Wooten

HB-1795

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 12:36:54 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Ball	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Access to education is an investment in our future. I support this initiative to explore free tuition at Hawaii's community colleges, as other states have successfully implemented.

With aloha,

David Ball

Waialae-Kahala

HB-1795

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 6:08:33 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kendrick Farm	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure, please HB 1795 pass out of committee so we can start moving in the right direction policy-wise and know the true fiscal impacts.

HB-1795

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 6:50:18 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leilani Kailiawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha!

I am in strong support of this bill. This will allow individuals who have not had the financial resources to pursue higher education.

Mahalo

Leilani Kailiawa

Send DataSend Data