
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO COMMUNITY COLLEGE.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that access to higher
2 education plays an important role in individual and societal
3 success. According to the College Board, there is a correlation
4 between higher levels of education and higher earnings for all
5 racial and ethnic groups, as well as for men and women. The
6 College Board has also noted that the income gap between high
7 school graduates and college graduates has increased
8 significantly over time, while higher levels of education also
9 correspond to lower levels of unemployment, poverty, public
10 health risks, and incarceration throughout society.

11 The legislature further finds that in April 2016, the
12 Institute for Research on Higher Education at the University of
13 Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education issued a study that
14 analyzed college costs in relation to family income level. The
15 study revealed that while Hawaii ranks high in college
16 affordability, higher education costs remain a major expense for
17 working families, especially those earning less than \$30,000



1 annually. The department of education also reported that the
2 college-going rate for the class of 2021 is fifty-one per cent,
3 with Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Filipino students
4 continuing to enroll in college at rates that are lower than
5 other ethnic groups.

6 Additionally, the legislature finds that the Hawaii
7 community college promise program was established to alleviate
8 the high cost of obtaining a college education for low-income
9 families. Yet the program, along with other financial aid
10 policies, has not made community college fully affordable for
11 all students who wish to enroll in a community college.
12 Currently, the State provides minimal need-based assistance to
13 offset the unmet direct cost of community college for qualified
14 students enrolled at any community college campus within the
15 university of Hawaii system, with the financial assistance
16 through the program contingent upon available funding.

17 The legislature also finds that some states, including
18 California, Delaware, Nevada, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island,
19 Tennessee, Virginia, and Washington, have implemented programs
20 to make community college free for all or most students. The
21 legislature finds that expanding access to the Hawaii community



1 college promise program to all qualified applicants would
2 increase Hawaii's college-going rate, especially for students
3 and families who are economically disadvantaged. Expanding
4 access would also provide the educational opportunities that are
5 necessary for the development of a sustainable and diversified
6 twenty-first century economy in the State.

7 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to create a working
8 group to evaluate possibilities for making community college
9 free for Hawaii residents.

10 SECTION 2. (a) There is established a free community
11 college working group within the university of Hawaii for
12 administrative purposes.

13 (b) The working group shall:

14 (1) Develop recommendations for making community college
15 free for Hawaii residents who are enrolled in a
16 classified degree or certificate program with six or
17 more credits per semester; provided that students
18 would only be eligible to participate in the program
19 for an equivalent of sixty credits;

20 (2) Evaluate the cost of making community college free for
21 Hawaii residents;



- 1 (3) Determine potential eligibility criteria for a free
2 community college program for students, including
3 whether or not such a program should operate as an
4 extension of or as a replacement for the Hawaii
5 promise program; and
- 6 (4) Perform an analysis of free community college programs
7 in other states to determine what aspects of those
8 programs may be beneficial to incorporate into a free
9 community college program for Hawaii.
- 10 (c) The working group shall consist of the following
11 members, or their respective designees:
- 12 (1) The president of the university of Hawaii or the
13 president's designee, who shall serve as chairperson
14 of the working group;
- 15 (2) The director of budget and finance, or the director's
16 designee;
- 17 (3) The superintendent of education, or the
18 superintendent's designee;
- 19 (4) The chairperson of the senate committee with primary
20 jurisdiction over higher education, or the
21 chairperson's designee;



- 1 (5) The chairperson of the house of representatives
2 committee with primary jurisdiction over higher
3 education and technology, or the chairperson's
4 designee;
- 5 (6) The director of the university of Hawaii's
6 institutional research, analysis, and planning office
7 or the director's designee;
- 8 (7) A chancellor of a community college that has
9 implemented a pilot project or other similar program
10 to make tuition free, or the chancellor's designee;
- 11 (8) The executive director of the Hawaii P-20 initiative,
12 or the executive director's designee;
- 13 (9) The president of the university of Hawaii professional
14 assembly, or the president's designee; and
- 15 (10) Other interested parties with experience in higher
16 education that the chairperson deems relevant to the
17 purposes of the working group, to be invited by the
18 chairperson.
- 19 (d) The members of the working group shall serve without
20 compensation but shall be reimbursed for expenses, including
21 travel expenses, necessary for the performance of their duties.



1 No member of the working group shall be subject to chapter 84,
2 Hawaii Revised Statutes, solely because of the member's
3 participation in the working group.

4 (e) The working group shall submit a report of its
5 findings and recommendations, including any proposed
6 legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior
7 to the convening of the regular session of 2025.

8 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.
9

INTRODUCED BY:


JAN 18 2024



H.B. NO. 1795

Report Title:

Community College; University of Hawaii; Working Group

Description:

Establishes a working group within the University of Hawaii to evaluate possibilities for making community college free for Hawaii residents.

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

