



**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. 1779, H.D. 1, RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII.

BEFORE THE:

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

DATE: Friday, February 23, 2024 **TIME:** 10:00 a.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 308 and Videoconference

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

Chair Yamashita 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.



2023-2024 Kapi'olani Community College - Student Congress Executive Team

Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair
Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

Kapi'olani Community College – Student Congress

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

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

With unwavering support for HB 1779, the State of Hawai'i is challenged by dynamic economic and environmental conditions that are acutely felt as a collection of isolated islands in the Pacific Ocean. Our hope is that we can bridge the isolation our residents are feeling towards their aspirations.

In Fall of 2023, Student Congress executives, the official voice at Kapi'olani Community College, began working on this initiative to lower summer tuition. As the executive team leading this initiative, we were heavily involved in this process and feel that we should share our insights learned along the way.

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, 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", meeting with all seven community colleges student leadership and their students voiced similar concerns.

In collaborative efforts with all UH community colleges, we conducted video interviews, created surveys to capture data, and met with various Admin within the UH System. These meetings were with 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 Marten to share our student concerns. With their recommendation, we began crafting the proposal for this bill.



2023-2024 Kapi'olani Community College - Student Congress Executive Team

Hawaii State Workforce Development Unified Plan, Goal 2: Build stronger bridges to Hawai'i's Educators states "It is crucial for aligning educational offerings with real-world economic and cultural needs and ensuring that Hawai'i's future workforce is well-prepared." We 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 Hawai'i P-20's '55 by 25' by helping students maintain enrollment year-round with the aim of dampening the 5.36% Summer Melt and ~35% full-time and ~55% part-time students who don't return after the first academic year.

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. Consider if families had the quality time to evaluate their child's needs more thoroughly, perhaps, then they could aid in training phonological skills and letter knowledge. Ensuring a more successful adaptation towards rigorous work.

Our concern with this not being adopted at the state level, and that rigor mortis will set in, and our students' voice will go unheard, leading to further disunity. We see this as a seamless pipeline into the career and technical education programs offered at the University of Hawai'i Community College System. We are here to share our 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. On behalf of the student voice at Kapi'olani Community College, we request your support for HB 1779.

Mahalo,

Student Congress Executive Team
Kapi'olani Community College



UNIVERSITY OF
HAWAII
STUDENT CAUCUS

Date 02/23/2024

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Relating to HB 1779 HD 1

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and Members of the Committee:

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

The University of Hawai'i Student Caucus (UHSC) is formally authorized to serve as a system-wide association of all University of Hawai'i campus student governments, representing approximately 46,400 students across the 10 campuses of the UH System.

The UHSC unanimously shares a position of strong support for HB 1779 HD 1.

Financial insecurity affects a large number of Community College students, many of whom struggle to afford the base tuition rate. When these same students are put into a situation where they have to choose between a degree/technical certificate and raising a family/work multiple jobs to make ends meet, many will walk away from higher education.

Community Colleges are more than a pathway to 4-year institutions. They offer trade and technical certificates, such as nursing, cosmetology, culinary, and more than could be reasonably listed. By offsetting the financial barrier to entry that is the current summer tuition rates, this could supplement the workforce by accelerating the degree/certificate pipeline in UH Community Colleges by almost half a year.

This bill represents an investment in not just the academic future of Hawai'i, but the economic future of Hawai'i.

Sincerely,

Ronald Sturges, Domineque Bonifacio
Legislative Action Committee, UH Student Caucus



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 Finance
Friday, February 23, 2024, at 10:00 a.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 HD1 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i appreciates the intent of HB 1779 HD1 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 HD1.

Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair
Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

Ratana Kim

Wednesday, February 21, 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-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 6:22:22 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marie Cris Vibas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill because it will allow students like me to take summer classes without having to worry about the cost. It will help us graduate faster and allow us to work sooner.

HB-1779-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 6:45:14 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cara Tamaye	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a resident of Hawaii and current community college student, I strongly agree on lowering the summer tuition bill. It would be of great help to those of us on our own, living in hawaii, striving to get the highest education possible. It will lend us a hand to step out of the hole a lot of us may already be in due to student loans and debt.

HB-1779-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 6:48:59 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Oyadomari III	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Today, we are expected to have at least a bachelor's degree to be considered for most jobs to meet the cost of living here in Hawaii. We want to expedite our education goals by attending summer school. Many courses and programs have pre- or co-requisites, and we need summer school to keep on track. Summer school tuition is significantly higher, although the classes are much more accelerated. We need access to more affordable tuition during the summer school session.

HB-1779-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 6:56:10 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kailee Murakami	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Good evening, thank you for hearing my testimony.

I am a student at Kapiolani Community College in the Registered Nursing program. Prior to beginning the program in Fall 2023, I needed to take a Summer course to satisfy my prerequisites. It was a 3 until course taken online at UH Mau,i and because I took it over the summer, the course was almost \$800. Ordinarily it would have cost half that. Many students like myself use the Summer to catch up on courses in order to graduate on time or to supplement their education. It is unfair to have to pay so much more money to take courses in the summer, and the cost can be prohibitive to many students who are only working part-time or who are already struggling to make ends meet, as was the case for me.

I support the decision to make Summer UH courses the same price as Fall and Spring course tuition.

Thank you,

Kailee Murakami

HB-1779-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 8:02:34 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Peter	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm supporting this bill as I believe that lowering summer tuition will benefit everyone hoping to achieve a greater education at a community college. I myself wanted to obtain college credits over the summer but held off on doing so as the tuition was too expensive. This barrier meant that I would need to spend more time stagnant in my education, and since I also plan on moving from Hawaii soon it also means that I won't be able to complete my education here. Becoming a productive member of the workforce should be something that's attainable to everyone. By giving more opportunities like this people will be more capable at building their future.

Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair
Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

Shannon Sakaue, EdD

Wednesday, February 21, 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.

My primary role is to support the onboarding process for students who are returning to college after stopping out. This population is extremely large, with at least 4,000 students applying each academic year to return to Kapi'olani Community College. 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 instead will 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 the enrollment numbers melt down over the summer, and there is a decrease in the number of students who do not return in a subsequent fall semester.

Streamlining a student's educational experience to pay 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. The root of some economic problems in Hawai'i can be directly addressed by providing further support to the community colleges. Students would take less time to graduate, and use less state resources to stay in the UH

system. There would be an increase of college educated people in the workforce, helping the economy of Hawai'i to become stronger and more resilient.

In reviewing the [2020-2024 Strategic Plan of the Workforce Development Council](#), initiative 2.3 (page 21) specifically focuses on diversifying the workforce to be stronger in industries beyond tourism. The industries identified in this initiative can be supported by the educational opportunities at the community colleges, but the options must be affordable for people to commit to completing college degrees or training programs that enhance 21st century skills. The workforce of Hawai'i is dependent on strong educational partnerships, as described in the Strategic Goal 2 of the [Hawaii State Workforce Development Plan for 2024-2027](#).

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

HB-1779-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 9:57:51 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Flomi Esah	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The cost of summer tuition has deeply affected my college experience, especially during the start of my sophomore year. I took one college course during the summer and because it was in the summer, for some reason my financial aid didn't cover it and the balance was much greater than I expected. The cost of the singular course matched my tuition for my fall semester when I was registered for three courses. I found it crazy and mind-boggling that the cost of one course was more expensive than taking 3 courses in the fall semester. The tuition later went over to my fall semester and I was only lucky enough that I happened to receive a scholarship for that school year. Before I received the scholarship, I was stressed and felt deep anguish about the expensive cost of summer tuition. I was prepared to pay for it once fall semester and I was planning on using a payment plan to help me cover it because I couldn't afford to pay for it all in one sitting. This was a stressful start for the semester and I was fully prepared to use all of my paychecks in full to pay. Because of this one experience, I haven't taken any summer classes again. **PLEASE LOWER SUMMER TUITION!** If summer tuition were lowered, I feel like I would be more supported and successful as a student. Summer is a time when I am free most of the time and my workplace on campus isn't as busy. So it could be a time to retake or take a class because it's a better time. As a pacific islander student, it is a privilege to be able to even have our tuition paid for because we can not afford it. As we all know, living in Hawaii is not cheap. Growing up, I was raised to be someone who can help our family and now that I am older, I have to chip in for bills. When I thought I would pay for my tuition, I had to save my paychecks and sacrifice bills that I was in charge of paying for. As the oldest daughter and child of my family, this was a huge responsibility and the fact that I could not afford to help pay our phone bills or chip in for rent had a big impact on my family. Having tuition lowered in the summer would be such a great help for not only pacific islander students but also students who need financial assistance. **I am in favor of this bill because it could help more students to be successful and achieve their goals.** As a state, I think it is only right that we provide as much assistance needed for our youth to accomplish their goals because **we are the future leaders of Hawaii.**

HB-1779-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 10:37:50 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chen Hsi Sylvaine Ou	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

With the lowering of summer tuition rates to align with that of the fall semester, more students could afford to take classes with reduced financial strain. This change enables a greater number of students to pursue summer coursework, potentially enhancing their academic progress and opportunities.

HB-1779-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2024 11:23:40 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
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!

HB-1779-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 12:09:31 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 10:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

My name is Maria Schmitz, and 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.

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, or accelerate their academic progress. 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.

Reducing the financial strain of summer tuition fees can empower a broader spectrum of individuals to pursue higher education, thereby equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in various industries. This bill presents a opportunity to cultivate a more diverse and talented workforce, as it enables individuals from all socio-economic backgrounds to access quality education and training programs. 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.

Furthermore, a more affordable education system can incentivize individuals to pursue lifelong learning and skill development, essential components for remaining competitive in today's rapidly evolving job market. Investing in education is to invest in the continuous growth and adaptability of our workforce.

I urge you to consider the profound impact that this bill can have in our society. Prioritizing educational accessibility and affordability, we not only empower individuals to achieve their full potential but also lay the foundation for a more prosperous and resilient community.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Maria Schmitz

Current UH CC Student

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.

HB-1779-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 7:53:20 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michelle Aquino	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in full support of this bill for the students in higher education.

Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair
Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

Zachary Tyler Gibson

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

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

I believe that by lowering summer tuition to the same rate as fall and spring, more residents will be encouraged to pursue completing their degrees, return to school, and seize the opportunity to envision a better life for themselves. While struggle may be subjective, class price are not.

Mahalo,
Zach (UHCC Student)

HB-1779-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2024 10:06:25 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Teal Seychell Hoffman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill because it would help me be more flexible with my schedule. I choose not to take summer classes since it is almost double the price of fall and spring. Lowering summer tuition would give me the ability to take classes that I was not able to during the fall or spring due to life interference.