



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Thursday, February 16, 2023 at 3:00 p.m.

By
Dr. Lori M. Ideta
Vice Provost for Student Success
University of Hawai'i Mānoa

SB 500 – RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Chairs Kim and San Buenaventura, Vice Chairs Kidani and Aquino, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill (SB) 500 relating to the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. We are grateful to the members of the Senate who introduced this bill in support of our students. We support the bill and offer the following comments.

SB 500 appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) to establish three (3) additional permanent mental health practitioner positions within the Division of Student Success' Counseling and Student Development Center (CSDC).

College students are facing greater and more complex challenges in their personal and academic lives. During the 2020–2021 school year, more than 60% of college students met the criteria for at least one mental health problem, according to the Healthy Minds Study, which collects data from 373 campuses nationwide ([Lipson, S. K., et al., *Journal of Affective Disorders*, Vol. 306, 2022](#)). In another national survey, almost three-quarters of students reported moderate or severe psychological distress ([National College Health Assessment](#), American College Health Association, 2021). The Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors (AUCCCD) Annual Survey: 2021 reports the most frequent presenting concerns among college counseling center clients are anxiety with 61%, followed by stress (47%) and depression (44%). In addition, approximately 11% of counseling center clients reported suicidal thoughts (Gorman, K. S., et. al., Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors [Annual Survey: 2021](#), 2021).

Our students are presenting with identical issues including anxiety, stress management, and depression at similar levels nationwide. We work hard to attend to all of our students. Our current team of psychologists, a half-time psychiatrist, and trainees do an amazing job with limited resources.

CSDC currently has 5.0 FTE faculty positions, 0.85 FTE temporary faculty positions, and 5.5 FTE supervised trainees. The nationally recommended ratio of mental health professionals to students is one full-time equivalent (FTE), not including trainees, per 1,500 students. The UHM total student enrollment for Fall 2022 semester was 19,074 which results in a ratio of one mental health professional per 3,815 students. Adding three FTE positions would result in a ratio of one per 2,384 students which gets us much closer to the national best practice standard.

In the 2021-2022 academic year, CSDC provided a range of direct clinical services to approximately 933 students including 7,548 appointments scheduled. In the Fall 2022 semester, the need for CSDC outreach efforts that support students' mental health and well-being increased as well. This resulted in a 69% increase in facilitation or participation in workshops, training sessions, and resource fairs hosted by clinical faculty and trainees. Through these efforts, the CSDC has interacted with 3,687 UHM students and community members, which translates to a 244% increase in the number of participants reached as compared to the previous year.

The primary responsibility of the CSDC faculty is to provide direct service to students. Adding three full-time mental health professionals will allow more latitude in providing clinical support (i.e., long-term therapy, more frequent therapy sessions, crisis intervention) to students who present with higher levels of concerns and severity of symptoms. As students in distress tend to impact multiple UHM academic departments, services, and programs, a larger cadre of clinicians is needed to provide essential direct services but also to respond to the resulting mental health consultations requested by faculty, staff, and administrators as well as concerned students and parents.

Any efforts to increase the availability of services to our students would be very much appreciated. These new positions will help to alleviate the current heavy workload on our clinicians and increase our abilities to reach out to the campus through proactive educational efforts. Your investment in the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa will have a long-lasting impact and will create a legacy of those who supported the students of higher education in our state.

We support the intent of this legislation provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in the University's Board of Regents Approved Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.

Members of the Health & Human Services Com and Higher Education Com,

I am writing to express my strong support for SB 500, which would direct funds to establish three additional permanent full-time equivalent (3.0 FTE) mental health practitioner positions within Counseling and Student Development Center (CSDC) at the University of Hawai'i Mānoa

As the Associated Students of the University of Hawai'i President, I have seen firsthand the increasing need for mental health resources on our campus. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the mental health of students, resulting in increased anxiety, depression, and other related issues. This has created a great demand for behavioral health support, which is especially challenging for the most vulnerable in our society who may not have had the greatest access to health services to begin with.

Nationwide shortages in providers offering behavioral health care have underscored a large problem, especially for local residents and NHPI students. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, our nation's mental health resources were historically underfunded and strained. Now, in the post-COVID world, the need for mental health support has increased exponentially, further exacerbating the pre-existing strain on mental health resources. I am including an introduced resolution highlighting means to alleviate burden on UH Mānoa's CSDC via accessing Med-Quest, so in the future students could better resort to outside providers.

The additional FTEs provided by this bill will significantly improve counselor-to-student ratios and provide critical support to more students in need, especially with a national trend where students are finding difficulty to remain engaged and motivated in their studies from the disruption caused by the pandemic.

In closing, SB 500 is an important step in addressing increased demand for mental health resources, among other solutions like competitive compensation to attract and retain mental health professionals or workforce development for best practices supporting students with ADHD or qualifying psychological diagnoses. **Lastly, I express much mahalos to Senators Elefante, Aquino, Kanuha, Kim, Shimabukuro, Fukunaga, Ihara, and Wakai who introduced this bill in support of our students.** The additional FTEs will be extremely helpful in assisting counselors to reach more students, and I believe it will make a significant difference in the mental health at the state's flagship campus. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Rudy Ramirez
ASUH President



ASUH

Associated Students of the University of Hawai'i
YOUR STUDENT GOVERNMENT

**ASSOCIATED STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I AT MĀNOA
2465 Campus Road, Campus Center 211A
Honolulu HI 96822**

**In the Senate
February 13, 2023**

**Senate Resolution 11-23
For First Reading**

A RESOLUTION

**Comprehensively Addressing the Shortage of Mental Health Providers Accepting Med-Quest
in the State of Hawaii**

BE IT ENACTED BY THE UNDERGRADUATE SENATE:

WHEREAS, the Associated Students of the University of Hawai'i (ASUH) at Mānoa Senate is the elected body representing approximately 11,000 full-time classified undergraduate students; and

WHEREAS, barriers to accessible mental health resources for students and providers at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa (UHM), such as counselor-to-student ratio, competitive compensation for future counselors, and inaccessibility of care across different states has been an ongoing issue for many years

WHEREAS, access to mental health services through Med-Quest, a government-sponsored health insurance program for low-income individuals in the state of Hawaii, reducing financial burden, and providing UHM students with the resources they need to manage their mental health to be successful in their academic pursuits, and improve their overall well-being.

WHEREAS, there is a well known shortage of mental health providers who accept Med-Quest contributing to the mental health crisis in UHM students and residents in Hawai'i,

WHEREAS, one of the main reasons for the shortage of mental health providers who accept Med-Quest is due to low reimbursement rates.

BE IT RESOLVED,

that ASUH supports efforts to address the shortage of mental health providers who accept Med-Quest in the state of Hawaii through a multi-facet and comprehensive approach leveraging effective health policy, collaboration with the community, and initiatives set by the UH System to increase overall healthcare access and health outcomes to residents and, in particular, UHM students.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,

increasing net reimbursement rates could attract more providers to participate in the program. This could be done through negotiation with insurance providers or through direct funding from the state and identifying potential opportunities for providing tax breaks and tax credits to reduce overhead costs.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,

ASUH supports the state to consider expanding the network of mental health providers who accept Med-Quest by offering incentives for providers to participate in the program. This could include offering continuing education credits, increasing funding for administrative support, or offering loan forgiveness programs for mental health providers who serve Med-Quest patients.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,

improving the administrative and billing processes can make it easier for providers to participate in the program, leading to more providers accepting Med-Quest patients. This could involve streamlining the enrollment process, providing training and support for providers, and improving the speed and accuracy of payments.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,

addressing the overall workforce shortage of mental health providers by increasing funding for mental health programs within the UH System, providing incentives for students to pursue careers in mental health, and creating a more favorable regulatory environment for mental health providers will improve mental health outcomes.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,

the University of Hawaii at Manoa could also play a role in addressing the shortage of mental health providers who accept Med-Quest offering greater educational programs that prepare students for careers in the mental health field, including Bachelor's and Master's programs in psychology, counseling, and social work, as well as continuing education courses for current mental health providers. UHM could also engage in research that provides insights into the root causes of the shortage and ways to overcome it.

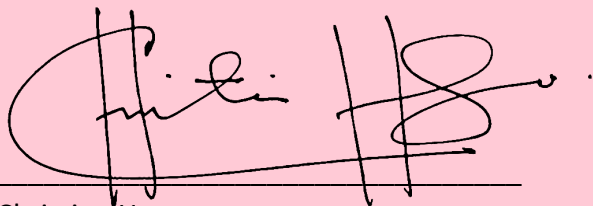
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,

partnering with local mental health organizations, the state of Hawaii, and other stakeholders, the university could leverage its resources and expertise to support initiatives that incentivize mental health providers to participate in the Med-Quest program. This could include offering scholarships, stipends, and other forms of financial support to providers who are committed to serving low-income and underserved populations.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution shall be sent to:

the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents Chair Randolph Moore and Members, President David Lassner, Provost Michael Bruno and Provost Council Members including Vice-Provost Laura Lyons, Vice-Provost for Student Success Lori Ideta, AVP for Student Success & Dean of Students Dr. Theresa Crichfield, Kalbert Young, the Graduate Student Organization, Kualii Council, Governor Joshua Green, Lt Gov Sylvia Luke, Majority and Minority Senate Leaders, Senate Committee on Higher Education Members, Majority and Minority House Leaders, House Committee on Higher Education and Technology, Hawaii Congressional Delegation, State & National Democratic Party, State & National Republican Party, State & National Libertarian Party, State & National Green Party, Cathy Betts, Chiquita W. Brooks-LaSure, Hawaii Public Radio, Civil Beat, KHON, HNN, KITV, and Ka Leo O Hawai'i.

INTRODUCED BY



Christian Hermoso
Introducing Member
Senator-at-Large



Quinn Goo
Introducing Member
Vice-chairperson, External Affairs
Committee
Senator, College of Arts & Science



Nikhil Stewart
Introducing Member
Chairperson, Student Affairs Committee
Senator, College Arts & Science



Hayden Kasal-Barsky
Introducing Member
Vice-President



Miguel Vizcarra
Introducing Member
Chairperson, External Affairs Committee
Senator, College of Arts & Science



Hannah Sambrano
Introducing Member
Senator, College of Arts & Science



Riley Tollett
Introducing Member
Senator, Hawai'iuniakea School of Hawaiian Knowledge



Albert Yee
Introducing Member
Senator, College of Arts & Science

SB-500

Submitted on: 2/15/2023 11:25:18 AM

Testimony for HRE on 2/16/2023 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Riley Tollett	Testifying for UH Manoa ASUH	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Members of the Health & Human Services Com and Higher Education Com,

I am writing to express my strong support for SB 500, which would direct funds to establish three additional permanent full-time equivalent (3.0 FTE) mental health practitioner positions within Counseling and Student Development Center (CSDC) at the University of Hawai'i Mānoa.

As the Associated Students of the University of Hawai'i President, I have seen firsthand the increasing need for mental health resources on our campus. *The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the mental health of students, resulting in increased anxiety, depression, and other related issues.* This has created a great demand for behavioral health support, which is especially challenging for the most vulnerable in our society who may not have had the greatest access to health services to begin with.

Nationwide shortages in providers offering behavioral health care have underscored a large problem, especially for local residents and NHPI students. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, our nation's mental health resources were historically underfunded and strained. *Now, in the post-COVID world, the need for mental health support has increased exponentially, further exacerbating the pre-existing strain on mental health resources.* I am including an introduced resolution highlighting means to alleviate burden on UH Mānoa's CSDC via accessing Med-Quest, so in the future students could better resort to outside providers.

The additional FTEs provided by this bill will significantly improve counselor-to-student ratios and provide critical support to more students in need, especially with a national trend where

students are finding difficulty to remain engaged and motivated in their studies from the disruption caused by the pandemic.

In closing, SB 500 is an important step in addressing increased demand for mental health resources, among other solutions like competitive compensation to attract and retain mental health professionals or workforce development for best practices supporting students with ADHD or qualifying psychological diagnoses. *Lastly, I express sincere mahalo to Senators Elefante, Aquino, Kanuha, Kim, Shimabukuro, Fukunaga, Ihara, and Wakai who introduced this bill in support of our students.* The additional FTEs will be extremely helpful in assisting counselors to reach more students, and I believe it will make a significant difference in the mental health at the state's flagship campus. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Riley Tollett

Riley Tollett

Senator for the College of Hawaiian Studies

SB-500

Submitted on: 2/15/2023 6:45:37 AM

Testimony for HRE on 2/16/2023 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
amy agbayani	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

My name is Amy Agbayani, Emeritus Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Diversity, UHM . I strongly support SB500 providing 3 positions at the Manoa Student Affairs counselling center. I was a Student Affairs administrator for over four decades and am active in various community activities. I know first-hand that many students experience mental health issues during their time in college and even after graduation when they are employess, employers, and professionals. Students who are stressed and dealing with difficult mental health issues need access to mental health services. There is need for these services as mental health problems affect all demographics on campus. Providing these services will help vulnerable but resilient students to complete their studies and become productive contributing members of our workforce and community.

Amy Agbayani

Chair Representative , Donna Mercado Kim
Vice Chair Representative, Michelle N. Kidani
Committee on Higher Education

Support for S.B. No. 500, RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF
HAWAII.

Aloha Chair and member of the committee,

My name is Nicole Munoz. I am currently a student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa in the school of Social Work. I am also a constituent of Senator Kurt Fevella in district 20 and Representative Rose Martinez in district 40. First I would like to Thank you for giving me this opportunity to give my input today. That being said, I support Senate Bill 500. Senate Bill 500 is about hiring three additional practitioners with the focus in mental health within the Division of Student Success' Counseling and Student Development Center at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa.

I support Senate Bill 500 because I personally sought out mental health care at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and my experience was amazing. I have been dealing with so much the past year and just being able to express and talk about what it was that was bothering me helped my mental health in so many ways. The benefits of having the additional three mental health practitioners is that this opportunity will provide more care to a lot more students that are in need of mental health care. Studies have shown that mental health care in Universities have improved student academic performances and supported student mental well-being.

In closing, I support Senate Bill 500.

Thank you again for allowing me to put my input,
Nicole Munoz
(808)260-3082
nicoleraemunoz@gmail.com

SB-500

Submitted on: 2/15/2023 12:36:33 PM

Testimony for HRE on 2/16/2023 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelly Chan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Bill Number: SB500

Measure Title: Relating to Mental Health at the University of Hawai‘i

Hearing Date and Time: February 16th, 2023, 15:00

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Committee Chair: San Buenaventura, Joy A.

Committee Vice Chair: Aquino, Henry J.C.

Members: Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Maile S.L. Shimabukuro, Brenton Awa

Dear Senator San Buenaventura and Senator Aquino, and members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Kelly Chan and I support SB500, *Relating to Mental Health at the University of Hawai‘i*.

I am currently a graduate student at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, however my testimony is not affiliated with the university. I’m in support of the bill to establish additional permanent mental health practitioner positions because mental health is extremely important for students while completing their degrees. I have struggled with mental health while completing my undergraduate degree and seeing a mental health practitioner has greatly assisted my stress related to not only academics, but also in my personal life, to continually keep me motivated towards goals that I want to accomplish. This bill can help 19,074 and counting that are currently enrolled at the University of Hawai‘i as of Fall 2022 with their mental health, with their goals, and beyond.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention in 2022 found that:

- In 2021, adults both men and women aged 18-44 were more likely to have received mental health treatment compared to 2019.

- COVID-19 has greatly highlighted the importance, need, and acceptance in seeking mental health treatment.

Once again, I am in support of SB500 to provide additional accessibility for mental health to students across the University of Hawai'i. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to address the Committee on SB500.

Sincerely,

Kelly Chan

Melissa Rivas
94-294 Makapipipi St
Mililani, HI 96789
United States

SB500-
Relating to Mental Health at the University of Hawai'i

Thursday, Feb 16, 2023.
3:00 PM, CR 229 & Videoconference.

Chair Buenaventura, Chair Kim, and members of the Health and Human Services and Higher Education Committees:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify on SB500. My name is Melissa Rivas and I am currently an MSW graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and am speaking to you on behalf of myself as a promising Social Worker licensed in the state of Hawai'i.

I am testifying in favor of the "Relating to Mental Health at the University of Hawai'i" SB500. In my years of undergraduate studies, I was also a student-athlete at the Saint Martin's University for the Women's Soccer program, and a member of the Student-Athletes Advisory Committee (SAAC). There were only two mental health practitioners on our campus, and none specialized for student-athletes. As a result, unfortunately I was forced to watch as my college roommate and teammate slowly slipped by as a result of mental health limitations. By our third year of college she had developed an eating disorder (ED) and was clinically ineligible to compete. It was soon after, where she was institutionalized for ED and major-depressive disorder (MDD) and I had lost my teammate and best friend. I strongly believe not having nearly enough mental health practitioners available on campus to treat our students and staff was a leading factor to my friend's story.

Mental Health is everywhere and although this took place elsewhere, the University of Hawai'i needs more mental health practitioners available on campus too. It is time to take care of our own. Our students need access to practitioners, rather than sit on a waiting list for several weeks at a time. Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I encourage you to favor SB500.

LATE

SB-500

Submitted on: 2/15/2023 8:08:39 PM

Testimony for HRE on 2/16/2023 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kyle Martin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a senator for the Associated Students of the University of Hawai'i, I strongly support this bill. UH has been trying very hard especially since the pandemic to communicate the counseling services available and many students due to recent financial hardships and other struggles have been utilizing these services. This bill that will provide additional FTEs for counseling will greatly improve student mental health and allow students to have less of a wait time to receive mental health services. Additionally, this will allow our student body at UH to improve mentally, emotionally, and even physically and should have a positive impact on academics and ensuring student success for years to come. This bill not only supports our student body at UH but it supports the future of Hawaii's workforce and even our nation's future leaders. Finally, I would like to personally commend Senators Elefante, Aquino, Kanuha, Kim, Shimabukuro, Fukunaga, Ihara, and Wakai who introduced this bill in support of our students. Thank you for improving the lives of our students and ensuring the success of UH and Hawaii's workforce.

LATE

SB-500

Submitted on: 2/16/2023 10:22:49 AM

Testimony for HRE on 2/16/2023 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Serena Kwong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

February 16, 2023

Aloha mai kākou.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and feedback to a very important bill, SB500. My name is Serena Kwong and I am a student at the Thompson School of Social Work at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. I will be testifying in strong support of this bill.

Over the years I have learned that mental health is a very important factor in someone's life. During my studies to be a social worker I have realized that more and more people are seeking help. My peers have been struggling to find mental health professionals in private practice but they are not accepting new patients. Having more mental health practitioners at the University will help provide more services to students who need them.

Thank you.

LATE

SB-500

Submitted on: 2/16/2023 11:21:04 AM

Testimony for HRE on 2/16/2023 3:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

The mental health care for students and faculty at UH is woefully inadequate and in a state of crisis. SB500 would greatly address the needs of the UH campus and address the shortfall of adequate mental health practioners and staff support.

LATE

SB-500

Submitted on: 2/16/2023 11:56:55 AM

Testimony for HRE on 2/16/2023 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
La Allen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

If we want to catch those with mental illness before they are on crisis we need to be proactive with creating support network at all levels. We have school counselors in lower levels then at a key transitional period in most young adults we dont have a support network ready/established but this would be a step in the right direction.

LATE

SB-500

Submitted on: 2/16/2023 12:01:41 PM

Testimony for HRE on 2/16/2023 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Fran Macalintal	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

LATE

SB-500

Submitted on: 2/16/2023 12:05:58 PM

Testimony for HRE on 2/16/2023 3:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

There is a desperate need for positions such as these. Mental Health is very undeserved population and it's my hope that with MH issues on the rise, that bills such as this will bring not only more awareness, but appropriate calls into action. I support this bill.

LATE

SB-500

Submitted on: 2/16/2023 4:50:34 PM

Testimony for HRE on 2/16/2023 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lauren Kawano	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a professional working in the mental health field, I can attest to how important it is to have mental health support for people of all ages. Mental health often goes under the radar because physical health issues are more easily recognizable, however, mental health issues continue to rapidly become more and more prevalent especially in today's young adults. I support this bill and support having more mental health supports in place for UH Manoa to best support the students and faculty, so that they may live their best life.