



**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. 2719, RELATING TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION.

BEFORE THE:

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY

DATE: Wednesday, February 14, 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 requires the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents to establish and report on a community college tuition waiver pilot program for eligible students admitted and enrolled full-time at a University of Hawai'i community college campus located in a county having a population of fewer than 100,000 residents.

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.



‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAI‘I

Legislative Testimony

Hō‘ike Mana‘o I Mua O Ka ‘Aha‘ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education and Technology
Wednesday, February 14, 2024, at 2:00 p.m.

By

Debora Halbert, Vice President for Academic Strategy
University of Hawai‘i System

HB 2719 – RELATING TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on House Bill 2719, which establishes a pilot program to offer tuition waivers for certain community college students starting in fall 2025.

The University of Hawaii (UH) is in support of conducting a review of providing certain community colleges with free tuition, and submitting its findings and recommendations to the legislature however feels that the bill may be unnecessary and would like to respectfully suggest that in lieu of this measure, a concurrent resolution be introduced for this purpose.

In reference to the establishment of the pilot program starting in Fall 2025, UH would respectfully request that this be delayed until after the review is complete.

If the committee is inclined to pass this measure, UH has suggested amendments for your consideration.

First, the requirement for students to submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) under Section 2(b)(2)(A) to the Board of Regents (BOR) is confusing. While federal funding provided by filling out the FAFSA can offset the costs of housing and other expenses associated with going to college if tuition is otherwise covered, it is unclear why the FAFSA would be submitted to the BOR. This requirement may create confusion among students, require additional administrative costs, and deter eligible individuals from applying for the waiver. Therefore, reconsidering the necessity of submitting the FAFSA application to the BOR is recommended or providing clear guidance on its purpose and relevance within the context of the bill.

Second, to align this measure with the current residency requirements as outlined in the Hawai‘i Administrative Rules (HAR) on residency, in Section 2(b)(2)(B) we suggest changing the requirement of living in the county from two years to one. We also suggest

students shall meet the residency criteria that include graduating from a high school in that particular county and residing in the state for at least one year.

Finally, a general fund appropriation of approximately \$2,300,000 (based on FY2023 enrollments), would be required to make up for lost revenue for this campus.

Thank you for your consideration of these suggested amendments and the opportunity to testify on this measure.

HB-2719

Submitted on: 2/13/2024 9:43:24 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/14/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erin Mendelson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee on Higher Ed. & Tech:

Tuition waivers to community colleges would encourage wider college attendance by removing financial barriers. I support HB2719 for many reasons, including:

1. It tackles the recent enrollment drop at community colleges, providing wider access to education and potentially revitalizing this important sector.
2. Community college equips individuals with valuable training, qualifications, and critical thinking skills, benefitting both graduates and our economy.
3. It breaks down barriers for groups of students who are historically underrepresented in higher education, creating a more diverse and inclusive learning environment.

Access to community college should be a state priority.

Thank you for your time,

I hope HB2719 moves forward,

Erin Mendelson

K-12 Educator