

MARCUS R. OSHIRO
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HAWAII LABOR RELATIONS BOARD
KA PAPA LIMAHANA O HAWAII

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Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education
The Honorable Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
The Honorable Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair
and
Senate Committee on Labor and Technology
The Honorable Henry J.C. Aquino, Chair
The Honorable Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 8, 2024 at 3:05 p.m.
Conference Room 229, State Capitol
and Videoconference

by Marcus R. Oshiro
Chairperson, Hawaii Labor Relations Board

S.B. No. 3317, Relating to Collective Bargaining

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, Chair Aquino, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committees:

The Hawaii Labor Relations Board (HLRB or Board) takes no position on S.B. No. 3317 and defers to the Legislature to determine whether a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawaii and community college system should be established.

However, the HLRB would like to clarify that the Board did not order that a new bargaining unit for graduate assistants at the University of Hawaii should be established but instead ruled that graduate assistants are public employees as defined under section 89-2, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), which provides:

“Employee” or “public employee” means any person employed by a public employer, except elected and appointed officials and other employees who are excluded from coverage in section [89-6(f)].

Subsection 89-6(f), HRS, currently provides 18 categories of individuals who are not included in any appropriate bargaining unit and are not entitled to coverage under Chapter 89, HRS.

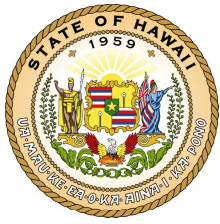
The Board further declared that graduate assistants are **not** included in any of the following bargaining units identified in subsection 89-6(a), HRS: (1) nonsupervisory employees in blue collar positions; (2) supervisory employees in blue collar positions; (4) supervisory employees in white collar positions; (5) teachers and other personnel of the department of education; (6) educational officers and other personnel of the department of education; (9) registered professional nurses; (10) institutional health and correctional workers; (11) firefighters; (12) police officers; (14) state law enforcement officers; or (15) state and county ocean safety and water safety officers.

The Board was not asked to rule on whether graduate assistants should be included in bargaining units: (3) nonsupervisory employees in white collar positions; (7) faculty of the University of Hawaii and the community college system; (8) personnel of the University of Hawaii and the community college system, other than faculty; or (13) professional and scientific employees, who cannot be included in any of the other bargaining units, as identified in subsection 89-6(a), HRS.

Board Order No. 4019, issued on January 4, 2024, in Case No. 23-DR-00-120, Academic Labor United v. University of Hawai‘i; Board of Regents, University of Hawai‘i; David Lassner, President, University of Hawai‘i; Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME, Local 152, AFL-CIO; American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO; and University of Hawaii Professional Assembly, is attached.¹

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on S.B. No. 3317.

¹An Errata to Order No. 4019, also issued on January 4, 2024, is not attached. The Errata corrected an inadvertent typographical error in the case ID on page 10. The correct case number is 23-DR-00-120.



EFiled: Jan 04 2024 11:03AM HAST
Transaction ID 71742983
Case No. 23-DR-00-120

STATE OF HAWAII

HAWAII LABOR RELATIONS BOARD

In the Matter of

ACADEMIC LABOR UNITED,

Petitioner,

and

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII; BOARD OF REGENTS, University of Hawai'i; DAVID LASSNER, President, University of Hawai'i; HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION, AFSCME, LOCAL 152, AFL-CIO; AMERICAN FEDERATION OF STATE, COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO; and UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII PROFESSIONAL ASSEMBLY,

Intervenors.

CASE NO. 23-DR-00-120

ORDER NO. 4019

FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND DECLARATORY ORDER

FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND DECLARATORY ORDER

1. Introduction and Statement of the Case

Petitioner ACADEMIC LABOR UNITED (Petitioner or ALU) asks the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board (Board) to issue three declaratory rulings in its Petition for Declaratory Ruling (Petition). The Board does not have jurisdiction to weigh in on the constitutional issues ALU raises, but in this Decision the Board issues its Declaratory Rulings on the remaining issues that arise under Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) Chapter 89.

1.1. Statement of the Case

After ALU filed its Petition with the Board, five parties submitted Petitions for Intervention. No one opposed the Petitions for Intervention.

At the status conference on September 26, 2023, the Board granted the Petitions for Intervention from Intervenors UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I (UH); BOARD OF REGENTS, University of Hawai'i (BOR); and DAVID LASSNER, President, University of Hawai'i (Lassner, and collectively with UH and BOR, UH Intervenors); Intervenor HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION, AFSCME, LOCAL 152, AFL-CIO (HGEA); Intervenor AMERICAN FEDERATION OF STATE, COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO (AFSCME); and Intervenor UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII PROFESSIONAL ASSEMBLY (UHPA, and collectively with the UH Intervenors, HGEA, and AFSCME, Intervenors).

The Board also granted the Petition for Intervention from INTERNATIONAL UNION, UAW (UAW); however, because UAW's interest focuses on providing information about national efforts in collective bargaining for graduate assistants, rather than specific questions about the HRS Chapter 89 issues, the Board limited UAW's participation to providing an amicus brief and did not add UAW as a named party to the proceedings.

The Board ordered that the parties simultaneously brief the HRS Chapter 89 issues raised by ALU, with no reply briefs accepted. After receipt of UAW's amicus brief and ALU and the Intervenors' briefs, the record was closed.

1.2. Issues

The issues in the Petition that the Board has jurisdiction over, and which the parties were asked to brief, are:

- 1) Whether ALU's graduate assistant members are "public employees" within the meaning of HRS Chapter 89; and
- 2) Whether ALU's graduate assistant members are **not**:
 - 'nonsupervisory employees in blue collar positions,'
 - 'supervisory employees in blue collar positions,'
 - 'supervisory employees in white collar positions,'
 - 'teachers and other personnel of the department of education,'
 - 'educational officers and other personnel of the department of education,'
 - 'registered professional nurses,'
 - 'institutional, health and correctional workers,'
 - 'firefighters,'
 - 'police officers,'

- ‘state law enforcement officers,’ or
- ‘state and county ocean safety and water safety officers

within the meaning of HRS § 89-6.

2. Background and Findings of Fact

2.1. Parties

ALU is an unincorporated organization that represents graduate assistants at the University of Hawai‘i (UH).

The UH Intervenors are members of the employer¹ group for bargaining units 7 and 8² (BU 7 and BU 8 respectively).

UHPA and HGEA are exclusive representatives³ for BU 7 and BU 8, respectively.

AFSCME is an international labor organization that has four Hawai‘i affiliates.⁴

2.2. Background

After the State of Hawai‘i amended its Constitution in 1968, public sector employees gained the right to collectively bargain as prescribed by law. To enact this change, in 1970, the Hawai‘i State Legislature (Legislature) created HRS Chapter 89, Collective Bargaining in Public Employment, which set forth the laws that govern how public employees may organize, collectively bargain, and strike.

Even though the Constitution and the relevant statutes give public employees a broad right to collectively bargain, those rights are not without exception. Certain groups of public sector employees have been excluded from collectively bargaining under HRS Chapter 89 since 1970.

However, for those public employees allowed to collectively bargain under HRS Chapter 89, the Legislature created a list of appropriate bargaining units. All employees who are allowed to collectively bargain under HRS Chapter 89 must be placed in one of those statutorily defined bargaining units. Because the bargaining units are statutorily defined, the Legislature is the only entity that can create new bargaining units.

In 1972, HLRB’s predecessor, the Hawai‘i Public Employment Relations Board (HPERB) dealt with cases involving the initial makeup of bargaining units, including BU 7 and BU 8.

The issue of graduate assistants' placement in BU 7 and BU 8 was raised and considered by HPERB, and various parties weighed in on the issues. In determining the proper composition of the bargaining units, HPERB did not decide whether graduate assistants were public employees under HRS Chapter 89 or whether they would be entitled to collective bargaining rights under another statutory scheme.

The Hawaii Federation of College Teachers argued that graduate assistants are teachers and are, therefore, part of the faculty; however, BOR and UHPA both argued that graduate assistants are not faculty members and thus should not be a part of BU 7. After the hearing, the HPERB Hearing Officer determined that graduate assistants should be excluded from BU 7 because they are classified on a different compensation schedule and because the nature of their appointments and work differed from that of the faculty. Based on those findings, HPERB found that graduate assistants were excluded from BU 7. *See Haw. Federation of College Teachers, et al.*, Board Case No. R-07-12, Decision No. 21, July 17, 1972 (<https://labor.hawaii.gov/hlrh/files/2018/12/Decision-No-21.pdf>) (Decision No. 21).

When considering the composition of BU 8, HPERB found that, once a graduate assistant completes their academic work, their employment is terminated and they have no possibility of continuing their employment with their department as a graduate assistant. HPERB further noted that graduate students were excluded from membership in the Hawai'i employees' retirement system under HRS Chapter 88, despite its broad definition of employees. Graduate assistants did not have social security deducted from their compensation and their salary could be exempt from federal income tax.

Additionally, HPERB recognized that the Constitution at that time required that BOR have the "power in accordance with law to formulate policy, and to exercise control over the university." The Legislature determined the initial bargaining units through considering occupational categories based on existing compensation plans. The salary schedule set up by BOR for graduate assistants differed from the other non-faculty personnel in the University of Hawai'i system. Further, UH treated graduate assistants differently than other non-faculty personnel in terms of access to benefits and the lack of social security and income tax withholdings. Additionally, any employment relationship established between a graduate assistant and the University of Hawai'i system was dependent on the student's status as a student, which made the graduate assistants primarily students, not employees.

Based on this information, HPERB found that graduate assistants were excluded from BU 8. *See Haw. Federation of College Teachers, et al.*, Board Case No. R-08-13, Decision No.25, December 1, 1972 (<https://labor.hawaii.gov/hlrh/files/2018/12/Decision-No-25.pdf>) (Decision No. 25).

2.3. UH's Present Treatment of Graduate Assistants

The treatment of Petitioner's graduate assistants has evolved over the years. So too must the law and interpretation of HRS Chapter 89 adapt. The law, while codified in statute and supported by case law, is also meant to evolve in interpretation with changes in facts and circumstances to accomplish the goals of the statutory scheme.

Unlike the graduate assistants that HPERB considered in 1972, the current graduate assistants represented by ALU have a much wider range of duties and responsibilities. Graduate assistants today typically are given a nine or eleven-month appointment, and their duties may range from assisting faculty members to serving as the instructors of courses.

Today, graduate assistants have a multi-step salary schedule set by BOR. This salary schedule is based on considering graduate assistants 0.50 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. While graduate assistants who are full-time students are exempt from the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) tax, graduate assistant salaries are subject to both federal and state income tax withholding.

Graduate assistants also are eligible for benefits including tuition exemptions, health plan benefits, and other types of leave.

UH has also set out a grievance procedure that graduate assistants may use if issues arise.

3. Analysis and Conclusions of Law

3.1. Declaratory Ruling Standards; Jurisdiction

Declaratory rulings have a unique and independent role in the statutory scheme; namely, declaratory rulings are determinations of whether and in what way a statute, agency rule, or order, applies to the factual situation raised by an interested person. *See Citizens Against Reckless Dev. v. Zoning Bd. of Appeals*, 114 Hawai'i 184, 197, 159 P.3d 143, 156 (2007).

Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR) § 12-43-50 states that "[a]ny employee, public employee, public employer, exclusive representative, or interested person who has standing under this chapter may petition the [B]oard for a declaratory ruling as to the applicability of any statutory provision or of any rule or order of the [B]oard subject to its jurisdiction." In turn, HRS § 89-5 establishes the Board's authority over Chapter 89, HRS, including the authority to "[r]esolve controversies under this chapter[.]" HRS § 89-5(i)(3). However, the Board, as an administrative agency, can only wield powers expressly or implicitly granted to it by statute. *TIG Ins. Co. v. Kauhane*, 101 Hawai'i 311, 327, 67 P.3d 810, 826 (App. 2003).

The Board finds that ALU does have standing to pursue a declaratory ruling as the Petitioner is an interested person. *See, Asato v. Procurement Policy Board*, 132 Hawai'i 333, 344,

322 P.3d 228, 239 (2014). However, the Board does not have jurisdiction to decide any constitutional issues, and, therefore, declines jurisdiction over all such issues. Haw. Gov't Emp. Ass'n, AFSCME Local 152 v. Lingle, 124 Hawai'i 197, 207, 239 P.3d 1, 11 (2010). Constitutional analyses are unnecessary for the Board to decide statutory issues presented under HRS Chapter 89. *Id.* at 207, 239 P.3d at 11.

In construing and applying HRS Chapter 89, “our foremost obligation is to ascertain and give effect to the intention of the legislature, which is to be obtained primarily from the language contained in the statute itself. And we must read statutory language in the context of the entire statute and construe it in a manner consistent with its purpose.” Ka Pa‘akai O Ka‘Aina v. Land Use Commission, 94 Hawai'i 31, 41, 7 P.3d 1068, 1078 (2000). The Board notes that while it must follow this rule of statutory construction, it also acknowledges that the law does evolve over time with changing facts and circumstances. To this end, the Board believes that the law, including HRS Chapter 89, was never intended to be stagnant.

HPERB's Decision No. 21 and Decision No. 25 are not final determinations of whether graduate assistants are employees under HRS Chapter 89. Acad. Lab. United v. Bd. of Regents of the Univ. of Haw., 153 Hawai'i 202, 209, 529 P.3d 680, 687 (2023). Rather, they are determinations that graduate assistants did not belong in BU 7 or BU 8. *Id.*

The Board is not bound by the determinations in Decision No. 21 and Decision No. 25 that graduate assistants do not belong in BU 7 or BU 8 because the Board can and has amended the composition of bargaining units. *See, e.g., Bd. of Regents, Univ. of Haw.*, Board Case No. RA-07-186, Decision No. 322 (January 15, 1992) (<https://labor.hawaii.gov/hlrp/files/2018/12/Decision-No-322.pdf>); Bd. of Regents, Univ. of Haw. v. Haw. Gov't Emp. Ass'n, Board Case No. RA-08-188, Decision No. 328 (October 29, 1992) (<https://labor.hawaii.gov/hlrp/files/2018/12/Decision-No-328.pdf>). Accordingly, Decision No. 21 and Decision No. 25 are not relevant to this proceeding.

3.2. HRS § 89-2 Definition of “Public Employee”

The first question that the Board considers is whether ALU's graduate assistant members are “public employees” within the meaning of HRS Chapter 89. Based on the evidence, the Board finds the graduate assistants represented by ALU are public employees under HRS §§ 89-2 and 89-6 and, therefore, have the right to organize for collective bargaining.

HRS § 89-2 sets out that “‘Employee’ or ‘public employee’ means any person employed by a public employer, except elected and appointed officials and other employees who are excluded from coverage in section [89-6(f)].” Therefore, the relevant issue to determine whether graduate assistants are employees under Chapter 89 requires the Board to look at the exclusions under HRS § 89-6(f).

HRS § 89-6(f) provides:

- (f) The following individuals shall not be included in any appropriate bargaining unit or be entitled to coverage under this chapter:
- (1) Elected or appointed official;
 - (2) Member of any board or commission; provided that nothing in this paragraph shall prohibit a member of a collective bargaining unit from serving on a governing board of a charter school, on the state public charter school commission, or as a charter school authorizer established under chapter 302D;
 - (3) Top-level managerial and administrative personnel, including the department head, deputy or assistant to a department head, administrative officer, director, or chief of a state or county agency or major division, and legal counsel;
 - (4) Secretary to top-level managerial and administrative personnel under paragraph (3);
 - (5) Individual concerned with confidential matters affecting employee-employer relations;
 - (6) Part-time employee working less than twenty hours per week, except part-time employees included in unit (5);
 - (7) Temporary employee of three months' duration or less;
 - (8) Employee of the executive office of the governor or a household employee at Washington Place;
 - (9) Employee of the executive office of the lieutenant governor;
 - (10) Employee of the executive office of the mayor;
 - (11) Staff of the legislative branch of the State;
 - (12) Staff of the legislative branches of the counties, except employees of the clerks' offices of the counties;
 - (13) Any commissioned and enlisted personnel of the Hawaii national guard;
 - (14) Inmate, kokua, patient, ward, or student of a state institution;
 - (15) Student help;
 - (16) Staff of the Hawaii labor relations board;

- (17) Employees of the Hawaii national guard youth challenge academy; or
- (18) Employees of the office of elections.

The Board finds that none of the exceptions in HRS § 89-6(f) are applicable to graduate assistants. Therefore, graduate assistants employed by UH are employees under HRS Chapter 89.

Most of the exceptions under HRS § 89-6(f) clearly do not apply to ALU's graduate assistant members. The UH Intervenors argued that certain exceptions do apply to the graduate assistant members, but the Board must reject those arguments.

HRS § 89-6(f)(14) and (15) prevent both students of state institutions and student help from qualifying as employees under HRS Chapter 89.

The phrase "student help" is not defined in HRS § 89-6(f); accordingly, when there is doubt, doubleness of meaning, or indistinctiveness or uncertainty of an expression used in a statute, an ambiguity exists. State v. Choy Foo, 142 Hawai'i 65, 72, 414 P.3d 117, 124 (2018). When there is ambiguity, the meaning of ambiguous words may be sought by examining the context or resorting to extrinsic aids to determine legislative intent. Citizens Against Reckless Dev. v. Zoning Board of Appeals, 114 Hawai'i 184, 194, 159 P.3d 143, 153 (2007).

The relevant language of HRS § 89-6(f) could have been written by the Legislature to specifically exclude graduate assistants from being eligible to engage in collective bargaining. It could have been accomplished by listing graduate assistants or by including such individuals in definitions of student help or student of a state institution. The Legislature chose not to do so. The history of the statute does not indicate a clear intent of the Legislature to exclude graduate assistants from collective bargaining.⁵

Based upon the totality of circumstances, the Board concludes that graduate assistants are not "students of a state institution" or "student help" for purposes of exclusion from collective bargaining pursuant to HRS § 89-6(f)(14) and (15). There is a lack of any specific exclusion for graduate assistants in HRS § 89-6(f) and no evidence has been presented that the Legislature intended to exclude graduate assistants from the right to collective bargaining.

The Board finds that the Petitioner's graduate assistant members are public employees employed by a public employer. *See*, HRS § 89-2; Columbia University, 364 NLRB No. 90 (2016). The fact that graduate assistants also have some other non-employment relationship with the University is irrelevant to this determination.

3.3. HRS § 89-6 Appropriate Bargaining Units

As for the determination of what categories the graduate students are **not** included in, it appears to be undisputed among the parties and the Board agrees that the declarations submitted and the facts clearly demonstrate that the Petitioner is not described in any of the bargaining units listed by Petitioner and included in HRS 89-6.

Specifically, Petitioner’s graduate assistant members are **not** included in any of the following units identified in HRS § 89-6: (1) nonsupervisory employees in blue collar positions; (2) supervisory employees in blue collar positions; (4) supervisory employees in white collar positions; (5) teachers and other personnel of the department of education; (6) educational officers and other personnel of the department of education; (9) registered professional nurses; (10) institutional health and correctional workers; (11) firefighters; (12) police officers; (14) state law enforcement officers; or (15) state and county ocean safety and water safety officers.

No evidence has been provided nor is there any evidence of which the Board is aware which would properly place Petitioner’s members in any of these units as defined by statute or by prior Board orders.

4. Declaratory Order

For the reasons stated above, the Board declares that Petitioner’s graduate assistant members are public employees as defined under HRS § 89-2. The Board further declares that Petitioner’s graduate assistant members are **not** included in any of the following units identified in HRS § 89-6: (1) nonsupervisory employees in blue collar positions; (2) supervisory employees in blue collar positions; (4) supervisory employees in white collar positions; (5) teachers and other personnel of the department of education; (6) educational officers and other personnel of the department of education; (9) registered professional nurses; (10) institutional health and correctional workers; (11) firefighters; (12) police officers; (14) state law enforcement officers; or (15) state and county ocean safety and water safety officers. This case is closed.

DATED: Honolulu, Hawai‘i, _____ January 4, 2024 _____.

HAWAI‘I LABOR RELATIONS BOARD



[Signature]

OSHIRO, Chair


SESNITA A.D. MOEPONO, Member


STACY MONIZ, Member

ACADEMIC LABOR UNITED and UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII; BOARD OF REGENTS,
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII; DAVID LASSNER, PRESIDENT, UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII;
HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION, AFSCME, LOCAL 152, AFL-CIO;
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF STATE, COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES, AFL-
CIO; AND UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII PROFESSIONAL ASSEMBLY
CASE NOS. 23-CE-05-976; 23-CU-05-400; 23-CE-05-978; 23-CU-05-399; 23-CE-05-979; 23-
23-DR-00-120
FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND DECLARATORY ORDER
ORDER NO. 4019

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Fernando R. Colon, Esq.

Wade Zukeran, Esq.

Garret Strain, UAW

¹ HRS § 89-2 defines “employer” or “public employer” as:

“Employer” or “public employer” means the governor in the case of the State, the
respective mayors in the case of the counties, the chief justice of the supreme court in the
case of the judiciary, the board of education in the case of the department of education,
the board of regents in the case of the University of Hawaii, the Hawaii health systems

corporation board in the case of the Hawaii health systems corporation, and any individual who represents one of these employers or acts in their interest in dealing with public employees. In the case of the judiciary, the administrative director of the courts shall be the employer in lieu of the chief justice for purposes which the chief justice determines would be prudent or necessary to avoid conflict.

² HRS § 89-6(a)(7) and (8) define BU 7 and BU 8 as:

(7) Faculty of the University of Hawaii and the community college system;

(8) Personnel of the University of Hawaii and the community college system, other than faculty;

Further, HRS § 89-6(d)(4) defines the employer group for BU 7 and BU 8 as:

For bargaining units (7) and (8), the governor shall have three votes, the board of regents of the University of Hawaii shall have two votes, and the president of the University of Hawaii shall have one vote.

³ HRS § 89-2 defines “exclusive representative” as:

"Exclusive representative" means the employee organization certified by the board under section 89-8 as the collective bargaining agent to represent all employees in an appropriate bargaining unit without discrimination and without regard to employee organization membership.

⁴ These affiliates include HGEA; United Public Workers, AFSCME, Local 646, AFL-CIO; United Nurses Associations of California/Union of Health Care Professionals (UNAC/UHCP); and AFSCME Local 928.

⁵ See, Act 36, Session Laws of Hawai‘i 1973 and its legislative history.



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 Labor and Technology
and

Senate Committee on Higher Education
Thursday, February 8, 2024, at 3:05 p.m.

By

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

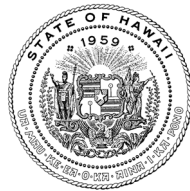
SB 3317 – RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on SB 3317, which establishes a
collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawai'i
and community college system.

The University of Hawai'i (UH) has had ongoing discussions with the graduate students
regarding this issue and UH is deliberately not taking a position on this measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments on this measure.



JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

LUIS P. SALAVERIA
DIRECTOR

SABRINA NASIR
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
Ka 'Oihana Mālama Mo'ohelu a Kālā
P.O. BOX 150
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT DIVISION
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT

WRITTEN ONLY
TESTIMONY BY LUIS P. SALAVERIA
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY
ON
SENATE BILL NO. 3317

February 8, 2024
3:05 p.m.
Room 229 and Videoconference

RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

This measure allows graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i (UH) to collectively bargain by amending Chapter 89-6, HRS, to remove the exemption from collective bargaining (CB) for graduate student assistants employed by UH and to authorize a new Bargaining Unit (BU) 16.

The long-term cost implications of allowing graduate student assistants to collectively bargain is a concern for the State budget. Negotiation of pay increases for graduate students need to be weighed against the foregone revenue from tuition waivers and other fees that graduate students do not pay as part of their assistantships. Further, their work hours and work conditions would all need to be part of CB negotiations that might not fit the flexible schedules that graduate students require to complete their academic program.

The Legislature has created two new BUs in recent years and is considering creating others, in addition to this one, this session. There are concerns with the increasing administrative costs and complexities, negotiating, arbitrating, and managing of contracts for every increasing numbers of BUs.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.



The Committee on Higher Education
February 8, 2024
3:05 PM
Room 229

RE: **SB 3317, Relating to Collective Bargaining**

Attention: Chair Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Michelle Kidani and Members of the
Committee

The University of Hawaii Professional Assembly (UHPA) supports the intent and purpose of SB 3317, establishing collective bargaining unit (16) under HRS, Chapter 89, §89-6, and other enabling statutes under HRS, Chapter 89, for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawaii and community college system.

UHPA supports all public employees' right to organize and to participate in collective bargaining. Taking into account the recent Hawaii Labor Relations Board decision, UHPA believes it is appropriate for this group of public employees to establish their own bargaining unit since they currently do not fit within any of the existing 15 categorical bargaining units. Doing so would allow these public employees to better secure their interests through collective bargaining on the specific issues that graduate assistants are seeking to obtain.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on SB 3317.

Respectfully submitted,

Christian L. Fern
Executive Director
University of Hawaii Professional Assembly

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:46:06 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Haley Burford	Testifying for The University of Hawai'i at Manoa English department	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Haley Burford. I am a graduate student at UHM in the English department; I work in the University's Writing Center. I support SB3317. Thank you.



1201 16th St., N.W. | Washington, DC 20036 | Phone: (202) 833-4000

Rebecca S. Pringle
President

Princess R. Moss
Vice President

Noel Candelaria
Secretary-Treasurer

Kim A. Anderson
Executive Director

Committee on Higher Education
Committee on Labor and Technology
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 South Beretania St
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Mercado Kim, Chair Aquino, Vice Chair Kidani, and Vice Chair Moriwaki,

SUBJECT: SENATE BILL (SB) 3317 RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

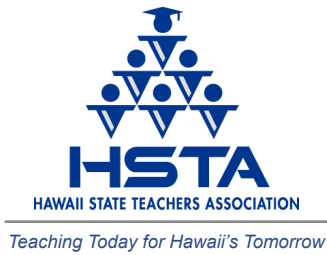
The recognition of graduate workers as public employees by the Hawai'i Supreme Court in 2023 was a significant milestone, affirming that University of Hawai'i graduate workers are entitled to the fundamental right of collective bargaining. The Hawai'i Labor Relations Board's determination that existing bargaining units are not suitable for graduate workers necessitates legislative action. S.B. 3317 aims to establish an appropriate bargaining unit for the University of Hawai'i graduate workers. The National Education Association strongly supports this bill and urges the Committee on Higher Education and the Committee on Labor and Technology, respectively, to do the same.

Graduate teaching and research assistants have been unionizing at public institutions for over 50 years, including graduate workers in California, Connecticut, Michigan, Florida, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Washington, Oregon, New York, and many more. The precedent set by public institutions was further codified in the National Labor Relations Board's [2016 Columbia University decision](#), which unequivocally recognized the right of teaching and research assistants to also collectively bargain at private universities. Indeed, as of 2019, [more than 100,000 graduate workers at over 80 institutions are unionized](#). The number of graduate worker unions [continues to grow](#) in both the public and private sector at an astonishing pace. Similar to Hawai'i, Minnesota has a [statutorily-defined collective bargaining unit for graduate workers](#), mirroring the aims of S.B. 3317.

From a historical perspective, it is notable that we have yet to uncover any instances of graduate employees forming a union and subsequently merging with an already established bargaining unit of non-graduate employees. The only scenario where graduate workers have been part of the same bargaining unit as non-graduate workers is when the unit was originally established as an amalgamated entity from the outset. In light of these established norms and legal precedents, it is imperative to recognize and affirm the right of graduate workers at the University of Hawai'i to collectively bargain. S.B.3317 represents a crucial step towards ensuring fair and equitable labor practices for this essential segment of the academic workforce.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Israel, Senior Director
Center for Organizing and Affiliate Support
National Education Association



1200 Ala Kapuna Street • Honolulu, Hawaii 96819
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Osa Tui, Jr.
President

Logan Okita
Vice President

Lisa Thompson
Secretary-Treasurer

Ann Mahi
Executive Director

TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAII SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY AND COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Item: **SB3317 - Relating to collective bargaining**
Position: **Support**
Hearing: **February 8, 2024, 3:05 p.m., Conference Room 229**
Submitter: **Osa Tui, Jr. – President, Hawai'i State Teachers Association**

Chair Aquino, Chair Kim, Vice Chair Moriwaki, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the committees,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association **supports** SB3317 which establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawai'i and community college system.

In a state like Hawai'i where collective bargaining rights are enshrined in our state constitution, Academic Labor United has been diligently jumping over each obstacle and hurdle put in their way as they fight tooth-and-nail for the recognition and respect they should be afforded for the valuable work they perform as government workers. It shouldn't have to be such a struggle in a collective bargaining state like Hawai'i.

Their plight is like many others throughout history as they organize to push back on being overworked, underpaid, and often exploited.

In January of this year, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board unanimously ruled that the graduate assistants of the University of Hawai'i are public employees. Hawai'i Revised Statutes Chapter 89 gives public employees "the right of self-organization and the right to form, join, or assist any employee organization for the purpose of bargaining collectively through representatives of their own choosing on questions of wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment, and to engage in lawful, concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection, free from interference, restraint, or coercion."

Sweeping arguments that they are not large enough in numbers or that they don't remain in those positions long enough ignore the fact that they are, nonetheless, Hawai'i public employees who should be afforded collective bargaining protections. Similar arguments that they are passionate now, but future generations of ALU might not be as passionate could have been levied at any Hawai'i public sector union

in their infancies. Arguments that this would embolden other public sector employees to seek breaking away from their current bargaining units to pursue their own bargaining units dismisses the fact that ALU doesn't currently have union representation whereas those others do. Finally, arguments that granting ALU a bargaining unit will lead to feelings of entitlement is another way to say that these public employees are not entitled to collective bargaining rights and that their exploitation is acceptable.

Late last year, ALU held a non-binding vote regarding national affiliation and the vote was in favor of joining the National Education Association (of which the Hawai'i State Teachers Association is an affiliate). The NEA and HSTA has been providing a lot of the support that ALU has asked for and will continue to do so. ALU would not be the only graduate assistant union in the country – it most certainly can be done and the NEA works with a number of them.

There have been many struggles along the way and there will continue to be struggles as ALU works with passion and drive to organize and improve their conditions as public workers. Please remove the final obstacle that remains in their path for the University of Hawai'i graduate assistants to become their own bargaining unit with a legitimate seat at the bargaining table to advocate for themselves.

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association asks your committees to **support** this bill.



UNITED PUBLIC WORKERS

AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO

THE SENATE
KA 'AHA KENEKOA
THE THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2024

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY

Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 8, 2024, 3:05 PM
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

Re: Testimony on SB3317 – RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Chairs Kim and Aquino, Vice Chairs Kidani and Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

The United Public Workers, AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO (“UPW”) is the exclusive bargaining representative for approximately 14,000 public employees, which includes blue collar, non-supervisory employees in Bargaining Unit 1 and institutional, health, and correctional employees in Bargaining Unit 10, in the State of Hawaii and various counties.

UPW **supports** SB3317, which establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawaii and community college system.

UPW supports the right of all employees to collectively bargain their wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment, including graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawaii System and its affiliated campuses. The various work-related issues that graduate assistants continue to encounter could fairly be addressed by the collective bargaining process. By eliminating the current exclusion of this group from collective bargaining, as proposed by the language of this bill, and creating a unique bargaining unit, graduate assistants will be provided the ability to resolve differences in contract negotiations with the employer.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kalani Werner", is written over a light blue, wavy background.

Kalani Werner
State Director

HEADQUARTERS

1426 North School Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817-1914
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HAWAII

362 East Lanikaula Street
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MAUI

841 Kolu Street
Wailuku, Hawaii 96793-1436
Phone 808.244.0815

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TESTIMONY FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII
SENATE COMMITTEES ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY and HIGHER EDUCATION
FEBRUARY 8, 2024
SB 3317, RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING
POSITION: SUPPORT

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i **supports** HB 3317, relating to collective bargaining. Pursuant to the “Economic Justice and Labor” section of the official Democratic Party of Hawai'i platform, the party believes “that all workers have the right to form a union to collectively bargain with employers on their behalf. We support the efforts of unions to protect and advocate for workers. We support anti-discrimination protections in the workplace. We support policies that reduce racial, gender, and other disparities in pay.”

There is a power in a union.

Today, political pundits prognosticate about the possible onslaught of austerity facing our nation. Many of these same pundits believe that labor unions are an impediment to economic prosperity, arguing that collective bargaining sets wages above what the free market demands.

They couldn't be more wrong. **Collective bargaining is a human right.** Unionized employees' compensation and work protections, moreover, are essential to creating an upwardly mobile middle class and continually increasing economic prosperity. As economist Paula Voos of Rutgers University School of Management and Labor Relations notes, “It is no accident that the prosperity and consumer boom of the 1950s—a period of unprecedented middle-class expansion,

broad business growth, increased home ownership, rising consumer spending, and the shared expectation that a college education was within the reach of everyone and that the lives of our children would be better than our own—followed the greatest sustained expansion of unionization in American history.”

Unsurprisingly, decreasing American middle-class incomes and the rapidly widening wealth gap in our country parallel a significant decline in union membership. It is imperative, then, that we promote higher productivity by strengthening labor-management relations. Through a union, employees have a means to engage with management about workplace problems, inefficient processes, unfair work conditions, and unsupportive compensation. Unions also reduce employee turnover and increase the retention of highly experienced employees, creating circumstances that favor professional development and mutual trust in the workplace.

Graduate assistants are employees and, thus, guaranteed the right to collectively bargain with university management, a fact that both the Hawai'i Supreme Court and Hawai'i Labor Relations Board have upheld within the last year. In providing instruction to students and research that expands our society's knowledge base, graduate students tirelessly toil on behalf of the university community, often under fear of retaliation because of a lack of organizing power in resisting exploitation. Graduate student assistants are short-term positions. Yet, the duration of graduate positions only heightens the urgency of establishing collective bargaining protections, as temporary employees too often fall prey to employers who exploit the precarious nature of these positions and assume student workers will simply “deal with the pain and move on.”

Appallingly, UH graduate assistants currently earn approximately \$20,000 per year on average, a number that has not significantly increased in almost two decades. At the sunrise of 2019, that amount carried over \$6,000 less purchasing power than it did fourteen years ago *before* adjusting for Hawai'i's high cost of living. **It is not even half of what MIT's living wage calculator calculates as a living wage for a graduate assistant working in the islands.**

Mahalo nui loa,

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

Abby Simmons
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee
(808) 352-6818
abbyalana808@gmail.com



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION
AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

RANDY PERREIRA, Executive Director • Tel: 808.543.0011 • Fax: 808.528.0922

The Thirty-Second Legislature, State of Hawaii
The Senate
Committee on Labor and Technology
Committee on Higher Education

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 8, 2024

S.B. 3317 — RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO wishes to provide comments on the purpose and intent of S.B. 3317 which establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawai'i and community college system.

In-light of the recent Hawaii Labor Relations Board decision, we find it necessary and appropriate for this group of employees to establish **their own** bargaining unit so that they can bargain collectively, just like many other public employee groups.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on S.B. 3317.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director



Cade Watanabe, Financial Secretary-Treasurer

Gemma G. Weinstein, President

Eric W. Gill, Senior Vice-President

February 6, 2024

Senate Committee on Labor and Technology
Senator Aquino, Chair
Senator Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Higher Education
Senator Kim, Chair
Senator Kidani, Vice Chair

Re: **Bill SB 3317 RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

Chairs Aquino and Kim, Vice Chairs Moriwaki and Kidani and Committee members,

UNITE HERE Local 5 represents working people throughout Hawaii's hotel, food service and healthcare industries. We are in SUPPORT of SB 3317. As a Union established in 1938, we are acutely aware of the benefits unionism will have on UH Graduate Student workers' lives.

We believe unions through collective bargaining, provide safer, better working conditions, good wages, affordable healthcare, job security, dignity, respect and many other benefits for its members as well as the community.

Graduate Student workers are a vital part of Hawaii's educational system and they deserve the right to unionize in the way they see fit.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



AMERICANS FOR DEMOCRATIC ACTION

OFFICERS	DIRECTORS			MAILING ADDRESS
John Bickel, President 23404	Melodie Aduja	Jan Lubin	Stephen O'Harrow	P.O. Box
Alan Burdick, Vice President	Juliet Begley	Shannon Matson	Maria Glodilet Rallojay	Honolulu, HI
Dave Nagajji, Treasurer	Stephanie Fitzpatrick	Jenny Nomura	Bill South	96823
Doug Pyle, Secretary	Robert Kinslow			

February 6, 2024

TO: Chairs Aquino and Kim & Members of the LBT/HRE Committees

RE: SB 3317 Relating to Collective Bargaining

Support for hearing on February 8

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 collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawai'i and community college system. We support the right of workers to unionize including graduate students. This should be a basic right.

Thank you for your favorable consideration.

Sincerely,

John Bickel
President



INTERNATIONAL LONGSHORE & WAREHOUSE UNION
LOCAL OFFICE • 451 ATKINSON DRIVE • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96814 • PHONE 949-4161

HAWAII DIVISION: 100 West Lanikaula Street, Hilo, Hawaii 96720 • **OAHU DIVISION:** 451 Atkinson Drive, Honolulu, Hawaii 96814
MAUI COUNTY DIVISION: 896 Lower Main Street, Wailuku, Hawaii 96793 • **KAUAI DIVISION:** 4154 Hardy Street, Lihue, Hawaii 96766
HAWAII LONGSHORE DIVISION: 451 Atkinson Drive, Honolulu, Hawaii 96814

LOCAL 142

February 7, 2024

The Thirty-Second Legislature
Regular Session of 2024

THE SENATE

Committee on Higher Education

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair

Senator Michael N. Kidani, Chair

Committee on Labor and Technology

Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Chair

Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

State Capitol, Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

Thursday, February 8, 2024: 3:05 p.m.

STATEMENT OF THE ILWU LOCAL 142 IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SB3317 RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 142 stands in **Strong Support of SB3317**, relating to collective bargaining. The graduate assistants of the University of Hawai'i provide instructional and research that are vital to university operations.

We are pleased with the Hawai'i State Supreme Court's 2023 ruling, which acknowledged the significant change in the nature of UH Graduate Assistant work over the past 50 years. The Supreme Court determined that the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board must revisit the question of graduate assistants as public employees. The HLRB rightfully ruled this January that graduate assistants are public employees, and therefore entitled by the State Constitution to collective bargaining. The ILWU Local 142 has long supported the unionization of graduate assistants and we are pleased with the Supreme Court and HLRB decisions. We believe strongly in the right of graduate assistants to collective bargaining.

Because the Board did not place the graduate assistants into an existing collective bargaining unit, it is appropriate to create one that fits their unique status as workers. SB3317 does so by creating a new bargaining unit for the UH graduate assistants with no further hinderance.

The ILWU believes that every worker has the right to unionize. With the recent HLRB ruling, we look forward to the support of lawmakers in facilitating a close to this chapter by establishing a bargaining unit for graduate assistants. The ILWU Local 142 urges you to support SB3317 without amendment.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB3317.

Christian West
President, ILWU Local 142



TESTIMONY FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAI'I LABOR CAUCUS
SENATE COMMITTEES ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY and HIGHER EDUCATION
FEBRUARY 8, 2024

SB 3317, RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Labor Caucus **supports** SB 3317, which establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawai'i and community college system.

There is a power in a union.

Today, political pundits prognosticate about the possible onslaught of austerity facing our nation. Many of these same pundits believe that labor unions are an impediment to economic prosperity, arguing that collective bargaining sets wages above what the free market demands.

They couldn't be more wrong. **Collective bargaining is a human right.** Unionized employees' compensation and work protections, moreover, are essential to creating an upwardly mobile middle class and continually increasing economic prosperity. As economist Paula Voos of Rutgers University School of Management and Labor Relations notes, "It is no accident that the prosperity and consumer boom of the 1950s—a period of unprecedented middle-class expansion, broad business growth, increased home ownership, rising consumer spending, and the shared expectation that a college education was within the reach of everyone and that the lives of our children would be better than our own—followed the greatest sustained expansion of unionization in American history."

Unsurprisingly, decreasing American middle-class incomes and the rapidly widening wealth gap in our country parallel a significant decline in union membership. It is imperative, then, that we promote higher productivity by strengthening labor-management relations. Through a union, employees have a means to engage with management about workplace problems, inefficient processes, unfair work conditions, and unsupportive compensation. Unions also reduce employee turnover and increase the retention of highly experienced employees, creating circumstances that favor professional development and mutual trust in the workplace.

Graduate assistants are employees and, thus, guaranteed the right to collectively bargain with university management, a fact that both the Hawai'i Supreme Court and Hawai'i Labor Relations Board have upheld within the last year. In providing instruction to students and research that expands our society's knowledge base, graduate students tirelessly toil on behalf of the university community, often under fear of retaliation because of a lack of organizing power in resisting exploitation. Graduate student assistants are short-term positions. Yet, the duration of graduate positions only heightens the urgency of establishing collective bargaining protections, as temporary employees too often fall prey to employers who exploit the precarious nature of these positions and assume student workers will simply "deal with the pain and move on."

Appallingly, UH graduate assistants currently earn approximately \$20,000 per year on average, a number that has not significantly increased in almost two decades. At the sunrise of 2019, that amount carried over \$6,000 less purchasing power than it did fourteen years ago *before* adjusting for Hawai'i's high cost of living. **It is not even half of what MIT's living wage calculator calculates as a living wage for a graduate assistant working in the islands.**

SB-3317

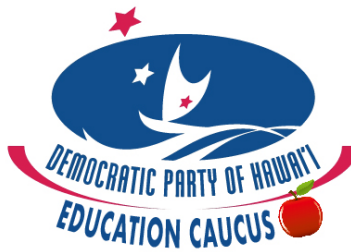
Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:26:10 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Yen Tzu LIEW	Testifying for Academic Labour Union	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB3317!!!!



SENATE BILL 3317, RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

FEBRUARY 8, 2024 · LBT/HRE HEARING

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** SB 3317, relating to collective bargaining, which establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawai'i and community college system.

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



Academic Labor United

Testimony from Academic Labor United (ALU)

Attention: Senate Committee on Labor and Technology (LBT)
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Chair (LBT)
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair (LBT)
Senate Committee on Higher Education (HE)
Senator Donna Kim Mercado, Chair (HE)
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair (HE)

Re: Strong Support of SB 3317 Relating to Collective Bargaining

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Academic Labor United (ALU) stands in strong support of this bill. ALU is working to improve the lives of the 1400 plus Graduate Assistants employed at the University of Hawai‘i (UH) and gain recognition for our labor. ALU represents both a stopgap measure to advocate for our union rights until we can legally exercise them and as a robust infrastructure already addressing the problems we as graduate students face.

Honorable senators, before you, is a chance for Hawai‘i to catch up to the rest of the states and correct decades-long denial of rights ([University of Hawaii at Mānoa Graduate Division](#), [University of Hawaii at Hilo](#)). SB 3317 will amend HRS 89-6 to create bargaining unit 16 for Graduate Assistants and provide a conflict resolution mechanism for said bargaining unit that is consistent with other units representing workers employed at the University of Hawai‘i and in education in Hawai‘i. This will enable Graduate Assistants to organize for the purposes of collective bargaining. **As such, the bill does not seek or require any additional appropriations; it offers public employees the opportunity to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement.**

Graduate Assistants manage diverse roles in the university. They constitute a committed learning community, conduct important research, and perform a substantial proportion of teaching and administrative duties. Graduate Teaching Assistants provide education to undergraduates by teaching our own classes and leading discussion sections, lectures, and labs. We also meet with undergraduate students during office hours to offer guidance and tutoring that greatly benefits students with an instructor’s personal attention. We do all the grading and lecturing, design syllabi, manage the classroom, and often teach more classes than the faculty of our departments. Graduate Research Assistants often manage multiple independent projects, and perform the cutting-edge research that has recently seen UH named in the top 1% of research institutions worldwide. Graduate Research Assistants are responsible for the groundbreaking research done by the UH Cancer Research Center. Our research brings in millions of dollars in grants for the university, money and recognition these workers rarely receive. Other Graduate Assistants work in administrative offices and run key facilities, including the Athletics department, Deans’ offices, and student support services such as Native Hawaiian Student



Academic Labor United

Services and the Center on Disability Studies. These services make our university more accessible and better serve our community. Without the 1400 plus Graduate Assistants at the University of Hawai‘i at both Mānoa and Hilo campuses, the university could not open its doors, could not teach the next generation of leaders in Hawai‘i, nor could it do anything.

With all of this labor in mind, I must emphasize that graduate workers are not just laborers, we are also future public employees, engineers, scientists, professors, teachers, and so much more. Many of us are already heavily involved in these fields as part of our research, school work, second jobs, or third jobs. We are students at the university, training and preparing for our careers, even as we have already begun these careers. Many of the undergraduates we teach will become graduate students themselves. The ability for graduate students to succeed is the ability for Hawai‘i to succeed.

Article 13 Section 2 of the Hawaii State Constitution states “Persons in public employment shall have the right to organize for the purpose of collective bargaining as provided by law” (Hawaii. Const. art XIII, sec. 2). We have come a long way to fight for our status as public employees and the right to unionize. Since the 1970s, graduate students in Hawai‘i have sought to collectively bargain, which was one of the founding missions of UH’s Graduate Student Organization (GSO), following the 60s-70s wave of graduate workers bargaining units and unions on the continent. Graduate Assistants from UH have been working to pass this specific bill for almost a decade. In 2015, the bill arrived at the governor’s desk, but was vetoed. Exhausting all possible venues, graduate workers, including some members from GSO, founded ALU in 2017, with a focus of gaining legal recognition.

In April 2023, the Supreme Court decision (*Academic Labor United v. Board of Regents of the University of Hawai‘i*) requested declaratory judgment from the Hawai‘i Labor Relations Board (HLRB) to determine UH Graduate Assistants’ status. After ALU filed a declaratory petition in July 2023, on January 4, 2024, HLRB determined that Graduate Assistants are public employees with the right to collectively bargain (see attached letter at the end of this document for more context). These recent decisions in the past years put graduate workers at a different place from the last legislative session. We are closer than ever to getting our own union. And we are excited to join our fellow graduate student unions— a collective of workers that have existed for over 50 years— on the continent.

To effectively move forward and unionize, graduate student workers need our own bargaining unit. Our unique position as students and workers makes us vulnerable in the face of the university and our supervisors. While the recent HLRB decision ruled out the possibility of putting graduate students into any existing bargaining unit except for Units 7, 8, or 13, these three CBUs do not fit graduate workers’ needs and working conditions. Unit 7 would create conflict of interest and put us in the position of belonging to the same unit as our direct supervisors, the UH faculty, some of whom graduate student workers would have grievances against. Unit 8 similarly includes UH staff who directly process our employment papers. Unit 13



Academic Labor United

does not cover teaching positions in any capacity. We also have markedly different working conditions from all 3 units, including specified working hours and retirement and pension plan benefits. Since these conditions differ or do not apply to graduate workers, negotiating contracts together would create conflicts. Such a process would not address graduate student workers' unique needs and positions and would be costly and inconvenient for existing bargaining units. As stated above, Graduate Assistant unions have existed for 50 years across the United States. Over 100,000 graduate workers in the United States belong to graduate unions at over 80 public and private institutions in states such as California, Oregon, Washington, New York, Illinois, Montana, Massachusetts, Iowa, and many more. Just last year, in 2023, graduate workers from the University of Minnesota and Rutgers University voted to unionize; Private universities—including Duke, Cornell, Northeastern, Yale, UChicago, Dartmouth, Stanford, and Johns Hopkins—won union elections. We are not seeking to depart from the norm. Collective bargaining for Graduate Assistants has become the norm.

In our experience talking to other GAs, more GAs are employed in support offices that attend to an increasingly diverse array of duties. While our labor is increasingly indispensable to the university, as graduate workers, we face particular challenges and disadvantages and lack recourse when faced with administrative decisions that jeopardize our well-being and safety in the workplace. Graduate Assistants have no formal protection guaranteeing their right to free inquiry and expression. Unions can successfully resolve these dire issues. The combination of stagnant wages well below the minimum cost of living, zero job security, and the absence of basic benefits like sick, medical, and parental puts UH at a disadvantage when recruiting and retaining graduate students. This has led to an ongoing TA crisis, which sees the university canceling classes due to a dearth of Graduate Assistants who can lead the courses. As individuals, we stand little chance of success in demanding better treatment and compensation and addressing issues such as sexual harassment and workplace discrimination. The long history of failed attempts at improvements proves this to be true. We cannot rely on our employers to act in good faith nor in our best interest; they must be contractually obligated to do so. Our best hope for improving our own situations is to come together and collectively bargain for better working conditions and, more importantly, for a better university. In turn, we can make the university a more attractive workplace for prospective workers and increase the amount of filled positions needed by the university.

Our union is ready to finally receive recognition and we are prepared to manage our own bargaining unit. Members of ALU have fought tirelessly over the past few decades to unionize. ALU is a structured, organized, and flexible union with its own by-laws as well as active Finance, Communications, Political Education, International Students, Gender Equity, and General Grievance Committees. This year, we also formed a Constitutional Revision Coalition to update our by-laws that were last revised in 2017. Our Organizing Committee has a structure similar to a typical union and liaison roles resembling the stewards in different colleges and departments, including the College of Arts, Languages & Letters, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, School of Engineering, School of Ocean & Earth Science & Technology, and more.



Academic Labor United

Together, we have been able to put pressure on the university, gain salary increases and continually work to address issues such as sexual harassment and international student concerns.

In 2020, when COVID-19 reached Hawai‘i, ALU started a hardship fund before UH, organizing a campaign for a sick leave policy; later that year, ALU established the ShaveICE coalition to push back against ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) and government policies regarding international students. Most recently, in 2022, we successfully mobilized hundreds of GAs to demand a 3-year annual step pay raise after not receiving one since 2016 and paid sick leave policy with the support from GSO. Even without legal recognition, we have been organizing graduate student workers and fighting for better living and working conditions. Currently, ALU membership is at ~50% of ~1,400 Graduate Assistants of UH Mānoa, and we are continually working to increase this percentage and to organize other UH campuses such as UH Hilo. In November 2023, our membership voted on union affiliation to better support our ongoing effort to unionize and collectively bargain. After meeting with different unions, 70% of the voters voted for the National Education Association (NEA), thus establishing a non-legally-binding yet committed affiliation. With NEA’s expertise in higher education and network of graduate worker unions, we have established substantial support and experience to run our own graduate union. In the past few decades, many local Hawai‘i unions have also nurtured and mentored our union. With our commitment and other unions’ support, Graduate Assistants are ready and are in urgent need of unionization and our own bargaining unit. We strongly urge that SB 3317 be passed. The time is now.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alexander Prosi,
Communications Chair
Academic Labor United

LAW OFFICE OF
LANCE D COLLINS

A LAW CORPORATION

Post Office Box 782, Makawao, Hawai'i 96768
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January 30, 2024

Academic Labor United
<alu@aluhawaii.org>

Dear Academic Labor United,

You requested that I provide background on the circuit court lawsuit, the Supreme Court decision, the HLRB decision as well as whether the legislature has the power to deprive graduate assistants of their constitutional right to organize for purposes of collective bargaining.

I

Graduate assistants have been excluded from collective bargaining in Hawai'i based upon two 1972 Hawai'i Public Employment Relations Board decisions, Decision No. 21 and Decision No. 25. Decision No. 21 excluded graduate assistants from Unit 7. Decision No. 25 excluded graduate assistants from Unit 8 by determining that they were not public employees as defined by Chapter 89, HRS.

Under Hawai'i Labor Relations Board's former administrative rules and caselaw, there was no available procedure by which to challenge those 1972 decisions.

Academic Labor United filed suit in the First Circuit Court alleging three claims. The first claim sought to obtain a judicial declaration that graduate assistants are persons in public employment within the meaning of Article XIII, Section 2 of the Hawai'i State Constitution, have a right to organize for the purposes of collective bargaining and that neither state law nor agency interpretations of state law may abrogate altogether that right.

The second claim sought a judicial declaration that graduate assistants are "public employees" within the meaning of HRS 89-2 and to the extent that they are excluded from that definition, that exclusion unlawfully abrogates their right to organize for purposes of collective bargaining.

The third claim sought a judicial declaration that the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board's former administrative rules violate the right of persons in public employment to organize for purposes of collective bargaining insofar as previous decisions are binding on public employees but they have no administrative process to review or seek relief from those decisions.

The Circuit Court dismissed the complaint on the ground that jurisdiction under the declaratory judgment statute had not been met. ALU appealed

II

On April 5, 2023, the Hawai'i Supreme Court held that the 1972 decisions "are not a binding, final adjudication that graduate assistants are not 'employees' within the meaning of HRS 89-2" and distinguishing caselaw to the contrary, ALU could petition the HLRB for a declaratory order.

III

On July 28, 2023, ALU petitioned the HLRB for a declaratory ruling seeking a determination, among other things, that graduate assistants are persons in public employment and "public employees" within the meaning of HRS 89-2 and that they were not appropriately placed in

Units 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14 or 15.

On January 4, 2024, the HLRB issued declaratory orders ruling that graduate assistants are public employees within the meaning of HRS 89-2 and that they are appropriately placed in Units 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14 or 15.

IV

The Hawai'i Supreme Court ruled in 2002 in United Public Workers v. Yogi, 101 Hawai'i 46, 62 P.3d 189 (2002) that the phrase "as provided by law" in Article XIII, Section 2 of the Hawai'i Constitution was intended to confer on the legislature the power to regulate the scope of collective bargaining not to confer on the legislature the power to grant and deny the right of public employees to organize for the purpose of collective bargaining.

In United Public Worker v. Yogi, the Hawai'i Supreme Court unanimously agreed in the three opinions of the Court: "[w]hile the legislature is given broad discretion pursuant to article XIII, section 2, the language 'as provided by law' does not give the legislature unfettered discretion to infringe upon the core principles of collective bargaining." Yogi, 101 Hawai'i at 54, 62 P.3d at 198 (Nakayama, J, concurring majority opinion). "The legislature did not have the constitutional authority to enact a law that in effect completely abrogated the right granted under article XIII, section 2 of the Hawai'i Constitution." *Id.*, 101 Hawai'i at 55, 62 P.3d at 199 (Nakayama, J., "concurring" majority opinion).

Yogi reiterated this constitutional interpretation throughout the opinions. "[T]he core of Article XIII, Section 2 of the Hawai'i Constitution, inasmuch as relevant history confirms that the right to organize and bargain collectively was to remain inviolate[.]" *Id.*, 101 Hawai'i at 55, 62 P.3d at 199 (Acoba, J., concurring). "[T]he framers were not in favor of granting the legislature the ultimate power to deny the right to organize for the purpose of collectively bargaining[.]" *Id.*, 101 Hawai'i at 51, 62 P.3d at 195 (Ramil, J., decision of the court). "[T]he framers did not intend to grant the legislature absolute discretion to take away the right to collectively bargain altogether[.]" *Id.* (Ramil, J.). "Granting the lawmakers absolute discretion to define the scope of collective bargaining would also produce the absurd result of nullifying the 'right to organize for the purpose of collective bargaining.'" *Id.*, 101 Hawai'i at 52, 62 P.3d at 196 (Ramil, J.) "[T]he intent and object of the framers who adopted article XII, section 2 was to extend to public employees similar rights to collective bargaining previously adopted for private employees under article XII, section 1." *Id.*, 101 Hawai'i at 53, 62 P.3d at 197 (Ramil, J.). As stated in all opinions of the Yogi court, the legislature lacks the power to completely abrogate the right granted under Article XIII, § 2 whether it does it to all public employees or only certain classes.

In short, the legislature cannot deprive graduate assistants of their constitutional right to organize for purposes of collective bargaining.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me should you have any other questions.

Very truly yours,
LAW OFFICE OF LANCE D COLLINS



LANCE D COLLINS

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 3:01:18 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ia Maranon	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I am Ia Marañon, and I am a PhD student and GA in the Sociology department. I strongly support SB 3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:13:42 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Udani Ranasinghe	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

My name is Udani Ranasinghe, I'm a graduate student worker, and I support SB 3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 4:39:46 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hannah Rozendo	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

To the Senate Labor & Technology and Higher Education Committees:

My name is Hannah Rozendo. I live in Kurtistown, Puna, on Hawai'i island and I'm represented in the House by Representative Jeanne Kapela, and in the Senate, Senator. Joy A. San Buenaventura. This testimony is in support of SB 3317, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system. I'm a Masters candidate in Tropical Conservation Biology at UH Hilo and a Graduate Teaching Assistant.

Currently, Graduate Assistants (GAs) at UH Hilo are capped at a pay level (Step 10, \$20,472/yr), which is below the lowest UH Mānoa GA salaries in related fields. I get to teach introductory Oceanography at UH Hilo, which is the highest paid group of GAs at UH Mānoa. Almost every UH Mānoa Oceanography GA receives an excess of \$15,000/yr *more* than my annual salary at UH Hilo. The *lowest* paid Oceanography GA at UH Mānoa still receives about \$6,000/yr. more than my salary.

An even greater inequity exists for Research Assistants (RAs). RAs at UH Mānoa receive a tuition waiver, enabling them to focus on their research to benefit the community, but UH Hilo RAs **do not receive any tuition waiver**. UH Hilo RAs' tuition comes from out of pocket or a grant if they are fortunate. If their PI (lead researcher) is able to acquire a grant that covers tuition also, paying tuition subtracts from available research funding. A UH Hilo PI shared with me this week that most granting agencies are reluctant to pay UH Hilo tuition as a part of the grant because it is almost always covered by the university, and the granting agency wants their funding to go to research. RAs that also manage their tuition through a fellowship or grant funding also have to include these details in their reporting which takes even more time away from their research.

A collective bargaining unit for UH GAs and RAs is the first step to equal compensation for the work that GAs and RAs provide UH and the greater community. This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like myself and those who come afterwards to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions.

On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this

opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully, Hannah Rozendo

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 7:56:49 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dianne Deauna	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

To Chair Sen Henry Aquino and Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki of the Senate Labor and Technology Committee, as well as Chair Sen Donna Mercado Kim and Vice Chair Michelle Kidani of the Higher Education Committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of SB 3317.

My name is Dianne Deauna, a PhD candidate in Oceanography. I live in Mānoa Valley, and I'm represented in the House by Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, and Sen. Carol Fukunaga in the Senate. I'm writing in support of SB 3317, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

This Spring, I'm a Teaching Assistant for the online course Sustainability in a Changing World, where I review and grade multiple assignments for 150 students each week. I also hold two recitation hours per week, where students come and we do a deeper dive into concepts discussed in class. Last Fall semester, I offered introductory calculus and chemistry tutoring to over 200 students, holding 10 hours of one on one instruction and 4 hours of group tutoring classes per week. I also hosted the undergraduate club, organizing events such as beach clean-ups and t-shirt dyeing sessions.

These teaching assistantships paid for 20 hrs of work per week, but occasionally I will work beyond those set hours and yet I'm ineligible for any type of overtime pay. To fulfill my degree requirements (which is why I'm only paid for 20 hours per week, as I'm also a student), I'm working on my research which is focused on the effects of climate change on the North Pacific Ocean. My work provides crucial context in determining how we can adapt to these changes, and what is necessary for us to do now to avoid the worst outcomes. Despite all my hard work and the labor that I provide the University both in teaching and research, I often find it difficult to manage living in Hawai'i on the salary provided by UH, where I spend 65% of my monthly salary just on rent. As an international student, I'm only allowed to work 20 hours per week in a position funded by the University to keep my student visa status valid. This means that the only avenue by which I can legally support myself is through my teaching assistant salary, which is \$17,000 below the annual recommended living wage in Hawai'i for a single person with no dependents.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January

4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 8:58:16 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aree Worawongwasu	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou,

My name is Aree Worawongwasu. I am International Students Committee Co-Chair and Constitutional Revision Committee Co-Chair of Academic Labor United, and I also serve on the Gender Justice Committee, Communications Committee, and Political Education Committee of our union. **I am testifying in strong support of SB 3317.** For the past three years, I have worked as a Graduate Assistant in the American Studies department of the University of Hawai‘i, where I am pursuing my PhD. I work hard, I enjoy teaching, and I have even been nominated for the prestigious Frances Davis Award for Undergraduate Teaching. I have taught 40 students in two class sections in almost every semester I have worked at the University of Hawai‘i, including a writing-intensive course I designed entirely by myself as the Instructor Of Record last Spring. As much as I love teaching and research, UH simply does not pay us a living wage in order for us to sustain the work that keeps this university running.

Here are just a few excerpts of what students have shared about my teaching over the past three years:

“Ms. Worawongwasu was and continues to be one of the most influential people in my life. I truly believe that Ms. Worawongwasu and her teachings have changed my life and career path for the better. Her class opened my eyes to a world of work in Indigenous rights and sovereignty movements, which I am looking to enter as I continue on my academic journey. It was during my time as her student that I realized the importance of and my passion for Indigenous rights and sovereignty. Her class pushed me to further investigate the relationships between America and all groups of Indigenous peoples and to think critically about what I have learned about America and Indigenous peoples prior to the class. Ms. Worawongwasu’s teachings were so influential that my education since that class has been centered around the topics introduced to me by her.

The fervor in which she taught created such an engaging learning environment. I learned something new each and every class. Ms. Worawongwasu also cultivated a learning environment in which each person could feel comfortable asking any questions that they had or to share opinions safely. In class, she made it a point to make sure that every student felt valued and that their voice mattered, no matter what background they came from.

Ms. Worawongwasu’s public and vocal support as an ally for the Kānaka ‘Ōiwi community has made me feel that much more comfortable as a student of hers. Being of Hawaiian descent, I

always felt supported and never spoken over by her or other classmates because of her allyship and the nurturing environment she created within the classroom.

Even after finishing my course with Mr. Worangwongwasu, she continues to be a very supportive and trustworthy figure in my life. Whenever I needed a Letter of Recommendation, wanted to discuss American Studies material, or just wanted to chat about life, she made time for me. Before I officially declared American Studies as my minor, she met with me multiple times so that she could answer all my questions and so that I felt clear about what I was getting myself into. She has also met with me on multiple occasions just to talk about various topics that I am passionate about, like blood quantum and Indigenous education, so that I could learn more and sort through the thoughts that I had. I have never felt more supported by an educator before.”

“Aree served as my section’s Graduate Teaching Assistant for Kumu Brandy Nālani McDougall’s Intro to Indigenous Studies course in Fall 2021. Of the many instructors I’ve come across in the UH system, from undergraduate to tenured, Aree is at the very top of my list. First and foremost, Aree is a living embodiment of conscious engagement with indigenous lands, waters, and communities. She is perfectly suited as a role-model for undergraduate students learning to ethically engage with the world around them. As an indigenous woman myself, I know very few people who dedicate their daily lives to decolonization and social justice more resolutely than Aree. From her fervent activism through Women’s Voices Women Speak and the O‘ahu Water Protectors, to her monthly commitment to mālama ‘āina through Ka Papa Lo‘i O Kānewai, to the full-time pursuit of her Ph.D. in American Studies with a Graduate Assistantship - to name a few of her involvements known to me - I am often left astonished at the way Ms. Worawongwasu still moves through the world with such tenacity and grace.

As an instructor, Aree critically engages students in the examination of their privileges and positionalities, while extending compassion and holding a safe space for this exploration. In what appeared to be an inexplicably difficult semester for many, I watched as Aree managed to facilitate meaningful discourse with at times minimal student engagement. On a practical level, between all her commitments, Aree is incredibly prompt in responding to any course-related questions or concerns. She has given the most impactful academic feedback of any instructor I’ve worked with. When our class met for optional mālama ‘āina workdays in relation to our final project, Aree always found the time to be present. Beyond the course material, Aree’s expansive knowledge of worldwide indigenous issues was evident in her frequent “plugging” of organizations and movements for students to support. I was once surprised and heartened to see Aree share the information for Prutehi Litekyan, an organization of land and water protectors on my home island of Guåhan. Her capacity for global social awareness is incredible to witness and something I aspire to.”

“Aree is amazing! She always led thought provoking discussions and allowed students to share and work through their thoughts in a supportive way.”

“I truly appreciate our GA, Aree. She did a lot of the grading and accepting papers as well as leading discussions. Most of the time, I enjoy emailing her with questions because it felt more comfortable to do so due to her welcoming presence. She is also understanding of technical difficulties that may prevent us from submitting assignments online.”

“Aree was very kind, endlessly patient, and always helpful. She was a great leader for the discussion sections.”

“Very helpful! She was able to look over my essays and give me feedback so I could get a better grade. Facilitated classroom discussions well, making them engaging and relevant to the lecture.”

“I always felt like I could express my thoughts and opinions in our class section. Our discussions were super insightful and fun. I appreciate you being so understanding and flexible with our work and readings. It was SUPER helpful and I appreciate it.”

As you can see from these evaluations and letters of support, Graduate Assistants such as myself make a profound impact on our students and to the future of higher education in Hawai‘i.

For all my work and stellar reviews from my students — some of whom have gone on to become graduate students at the University of Hawai‘i themselves with my guidance — the poverty wages, poor working conditions, labor violations, and lack of effective grievance processes, have left me little choice but to go on a medical leave of absence for this Academic Year in order to recover from the mental and physical toll these exploitative working conditions have put on me. This leave of absence has slowed down my degree progress, and while I am able to recover my health in Thailand, where we have universal healthcare, the same cannot be said for the many domestic and international students who also faced health issues due to our poor working conditions. While I am choosing to return to the University of Hawai‘i this Fall and become a Graduate Assistant again, it is with the conviction and hope that I will return as part of a new collective bargaining unit which addresses the unique labor challenges that Graduate Assistants at the University of Hawai‘i face.

I will be giving my oral testimony on how our own collective bargaining unit and recognized union would create safer processes of transformative justice for survivors of gendered harassment, abuse, and violence within the university.

I strongly urge you to pass SB 3317, for the future of higher education in Hawai‘i and beyond.

Mahalo,

Aree Worawongwasu, International Students Committee Co-Chair and Constitutional Revision Co-Chair of Academic Labor United.

Aloha and terveh. My name is Sara Maaria Saastamoinen, and my pronouns are she and they. I am a Ph.D. student in Political Science in my third year as a student and graduate worker at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I live here in town in Ala Moana, and I am the constituent of Senator Sharon Moriwaki in the Senate and Representative Scott Saiki in the House. As a graduate student worker, I **fully support Senate Bill 3317** for our right as workers to collectively bargain in accordance with the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board determination last month. I urge you to join me with your unequivocal support.

I wanted to start by expressing my passion and appreciation for the representatives who brought forth this bill, the lawyers who have worked with Academic Labor Union organizers for years, and of course, my fellow graduate students who are all working to secure our right to a union that can support graduate student workers — who are here today to speak with you, taking time away from the many responsibilities we carry as students, scholars, teachers, researchers, parents, friends, caregivers, and citizens to ask you to listen.

For years now, graduate students have been denied our right to collectively bargain our contracts. This impacts not only us graduate students but also the future leaders we educate, so supporting graduate workers should be one of the most crucial issues for this legislature. This academic year alone, I am teaching more than 45 undergraduate students who will be the leaders of Hawai'i. For the past four semesters, as the sole instructor who entirely devises her own curriculum, I work for the state by selecting thought-provoking readings and creating accessible and engaging assignments, by solely grading all students' in-class and written assignments and providing robust written feedback, by devising lectures and in-class activities to help students both digest and weave connections between selected course materials and the real-world issues we face in Hawai'i and globally, and by fulfilling numerous other responsibilities expected of faculty, such as participating in surveys to secure funding for UHM through grants, writing reference letters for students to study abroad programs, graduate school and other degree programs, jobs during and after college, and more.

Here are some snippets of my students have to say about my teaching:

- I believe Sara did a good job furthering and challenging students' thinking and from what I have heard other students say, this class has changed the way we think about water and our relationality. I felt like Sara cared more about what the students wanted out of the class and how we learn best than what I have experienced from other instructors.
- To Sara: The passion you have for this class was inspiring. You made this class something I wanted to attend and also to succeed in. You taught me more than water politics. You taught me to think about more than the living things.
- Sara is incredible, literally one of the best if not the best teacher I have ever encountered. I cried to my mom after going to office hours one day because of how incredible she is.

- Excellent mind-opening course that had me grow so much academically and in my general thinking of the world. As an added positive note Sara is the best professor I have had in the whole past two years I have been in college! She had very extensive knowledge about the topics covered in the class as well any other topic brought up. She was very good at giving detailed feedback and really seemed as if she was there to help all the students succeed and grow!
- To Sara: I want you to know that you are the most caring and intelligent teacher I have ever encountered. You are why I go to school. It is teachers like you who change lives.

For all of this work and even with rave reviews from students, the state pays me poverty wages. The state is not even paying me half of what a living wage is for Honolulu County. As the instructor of your children, your future leaders, I make \$22,000 a year: to pay rent, to cover utilities, to feed myself, not to mention healthcare, clothing, or any paid time off to get to rest.

So, I work other jobs — on top of teaching and being a student myself — to make ends meet. And, even without being paid a living wage by the university, I work to support it financially. Over the last three semesters alone, I brought in thousands of dollars of funding for my department's programming, specifically to put on talks with distinguished academics, political leaders, and organizers from around the world.

We should be supporting those who are cultivating our brightest minds, instead of leaving teachers to struggle every month to make ends meet. As public employees, we deserve to form a union to collectively bargain for working conditions that are fair, equitably, safe, healthy, and which serve the future of Hawai'i—not its underpaid and overworked past.

Without us, the University of Hawai'i would not have the world-class teaching and research that it is known for; without us, the State of Hawai'i would not have a Research One institution to call its own. I ask you to **pass SB 3317 urgently** and to listen to the voices of Graduate Assistants who have been fighting for years to secure our right to unionize. Mahalo nui and passibo.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 10:02:46 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noah Paoa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Noah Paoa. I am a graduate student from the Earth Science Department at University of Hawai'i at Manoa. I support SB 3317 in its current form because graduate students are the base on the academic system of UH is built. Without the work of graduate students essays and tests wouldn't be reviewed and feedback wouldn't be returned. The work that we do is enourmous on top of the work that we must do to get our degree, but the salary of graduate students do not reflect it.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 9:23:22 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daniela Escontrela	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm Daniela Escontrela, a graduate student in the School of Life Sciences, and I support SB 3317 in its current form

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 9:39:34 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hiroko Saito	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm Hiroko Saito, a graduate student / GA from the American Studies department of University of Hawaii at Manoa, and I support SB 3317 in its current form.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 10:55:02 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jack McKee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Jack McKee, I'm a research assistant at the mathematics department at the University of Hawai'i writing in support of SB3317.

I live on Dole street, less than a block from the university. Like many of my peers, I live in substandard housing that is not up to building codes, with roommates. Before my girlfriend moved in, even my small hotbox of a room was eating up almost half of my monthly pay. Many of us are on food stamps. I manage food costs by making big pots of stew for the week.

Especially when adjusted for cost of living, UH has some of the worst pay for graduate assistants in the country, and there is almost no uniformity in the amount of work -- usually grading, teaching, programming, and other tasks unrelated to our studies -- that different assistants do. We are supposed to all do 20 hours per week but many people put in nights and weekends to get their work done. This is work that brings grant money and high reputation to the university and benefits the people of Hawai'i at large through education. I, for instance, have done much of the programming work on PISALE for the past few years, a project that has attracted thousands of dollars in grant funding. This is all on top of being a PhD student, which is practically a full-time job in itself and is extremely stressful.

I came to grad school because I want to do something with my life. I want to contribute somehow to society as a scientist and as an educator. I moved here with the intent of staying and using my expertise locally. When we are paid like this, and can't meaningfully negotiate with the university to change it, we are basically being told that this dream is not valuable. I support this bill because it would give us a chance to change that.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 11:55:25 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Maggie Bradley	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm Maggie Bradley, a graduate student from U.H. Manoa in SOEST, and I support SB 3317 in its current form

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 10:55:02 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jack McKee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Jack McKee, I'm a research assistant at the mathematics department at the University of Hawai'i writing in support of SB3317.

I live on Dole street, less than a block from the university. Like many of my peers, I live in substandard housing that is not up to building codes, with roommates. Before my girlfriend moved in, even my small hotbox of a room was eating up almost half of my monthly pay. Many of us are on food stamps. I manage food costs by making big pots of stew for the week.

Especially when adjusted for cost of living, UH has some of the worst pay for graduate assistants in the country, and there is almost no uniformity in the amount of work -- usually grading, teaching, programming, and other tasks unrelated to our studies -- that different assistants do. We are supposed to all do 20 hours per week but many people put in nights and weekends to get their work done. This is work that brings grant money and high reputation to the university and benefits the people of Hawai'i at large through education. I, for instance, have done much of the programming work on PISALE for the past few years, a project that has attracted thousands of dollars in grant funding. This is all on top of being a PhD student, which is practically a full-time job in itself and is extremely stressful.

I came to grad school because I want to do something with my life. I want to contribute somehow to society as a scientist and as an educator. I moved here with the intent of staying and using my expertise locally. When we are paid like this, and can't meaningfully negotiate with the university to change it, we are basically being told that this dream is not valuable. I support this bill because it would give us a chance to change that.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 11:56:00 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anamica Bedi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm Anamica Bedi de Silva, a graduate student GA from the UH Manoa Department of Oceanograph, and I support SB 3317 in its current form.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 11:56:00 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anamica Bedi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm Anamica Bedi de Silva, a graduate student GA from the UH Manoa Department of Oceanograph, and I support SB 3317 in its current form.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 12:00:13 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Blake Stoner-Osborne	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Blake Stoner-Osborne, I live in Palolo valley, my representatives are Ihara Jr. and Sayama, and I am a third year graduate assistant (GA) at UH Manoa pursuing my PhD through the Oceanography department. My role as a GA is how I am able to financially support my education. I make roughly \$35,000 a year and I am paid to conduct 20+ hours of research under a faculty member at UH studying deep-sea food webs. Not only does this GAship allow me to get the research experience necessary for me to earn my PhD and to be qualified for employment after graduate school, it also allows me to take graduate coursework through the university. Although my contract is for 20+ hours a week, I spend upwards of 40+ hours a week in the lab conducting research as a GA. I also spend my time outside of the lab visiting local elementary, middle, and high schools (55+ hours of outreach to 30+ schools in the last 3 years) to teach about Hawaii's local deep-sea ecology and to show some of our preserved animal specimens and the crazy adaptations they have for surviving in the deep-sea. I have also led a series of free professional development workshops for undergraduate students from backgrounds historically underrepresented in STEM (50+ attendees) to help them navigate the graduate school application process with the main goal of helping local and underrepresented students to have successful careers in STEM both on island and around the world.

As exemplified above, I work almost double the hours that my GAship supports financially and I am struggling to pay rent/utilities, buy groceries, and afford necessities like gas, clothes, medical visits, medications, etc. 55% of my paycheck goes to rent/utilities alone. As a member of the UH community and the Honolulu community at large, my goal is to help our keiki connect with the oceans that surround them; to learn about the kai that sustains us and our kuleana to understand and protect it. Unfortunately, on the current salary that graduate students are paid, that may not be possible for much longer. I consider myself lucky because my department is paid at a higher pay scale than other GAs in different departments, many of which make \$30,000 or less. Regardless of our departments, we are all overworked, underpaid, and deserve to have a bargaining unit for our salaries so we can bargain with our employers, the State of Hawaii, and the Board of Regents for liveable wages and a fair salary that reflects the amount of time we put in and is equivalent to entry level positions in non-academic sectors (usually upwards of \$45,000). On January 4th, the Hawaii Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees with the right to collectively bargain. Myself and many of my colleagues and peers desire to take ownership of our contract negotiations to continue doing what we love. We want to make sure that we (and all future graduate students and leaders in STEM after us) are compensated fairly

for the hard work we do in research, teaching, and outreach so that we may keep supporting our island community, conducting research that will protect the future of humanity, and supporting the next generations of students as they pursue their careers wherever and whatever they may be. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights. Thank you so much for your consideration, and I hope you come to visit us at the Deep-Sea Ecology Lab at UH Manoa so we can talk story about graduate student life and show you some of the magnificent deep-sea animals that live all around our islands, across the Pacific, and around the world!

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 12:08:13 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dianne Shen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the House Higher Education Committee,

My name is Dianne Shen, a PhD student in American Studies. I live in Kaka‘ako and I’m represented in the House by Representative Speaker Scott K. Saiki and Senator Sharon Y. Morikaki. **I’m writing in support of SB3317.**

I am a Graduate Assistant for the A Semester in Hawai‘i Program, a program that facilitates visiting undergraduate students from the continental U.S. to study in Hawai‘i for an academic semester. From housing to classes, I make sure that students have a safe, healthy, and positive experience during their time at UH Mānoa.

These graduate assistantship (GAships) are paid for 20 hrs of work per week, but many students regularly work well beyond these set hours. Students are ineligible for any type of overtime pay. Despite this labor for the University both in teaching, research, and facilitating student affairs, students cannot live in Hawai‘i on the salary provided by UH. On average, students report spending well beyond 50% of their monthly salary on rent. As students, we are only allowed to work 20 hours per week in a position funded by the University. This means that the only avenue by which students can legally support themselves is through my teaching assistant salary, which is \$17,000 below the annual recommended living wage in Hawai‘i for a single person with no dependents.

We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dianne Shen

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 12:00:13 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Blake Stoner-Osborne	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Blake Stoner-Osborne, I live in Palolo valley, my representatives are Ihara Jr. and Sayama, and I am a third year graduate assistant (GA) at UH Manoa pursuing my PhD through the Oceanography department. My role as a GA is how I am able to financially support my education. I make roughly \$35,000 a year and I am paid to conduct 20+ hours of research under a faculty member at UH studying deep-sea food webs. Not only does this GAship allow me to get the research experience necessary for me to earn my PhD and to be qualified for employment after graduate school, it also allows me to take graduate coursework through the university. Although my contract is for 20+ hours a week, I spend upwards of 40+ hours a week in the lab conducting research as a GA. I also spend my time outside of the lab visiting local elementary, middle, and high schools (55+ hours of outreach to 30+ schools in the last 3 years) to teach about Hawaii's local deep-sea ecology and to show some of our preserved animal specimens and the crazy adaptations they have for surviving in the deep-sea. I have also led a series of free professional development workshops for undergraduate students from backgrounds historically underrepresented in STEM (50+ attendees) to help them navigate the graduate school application process with the main goal of helping local and underrepresented students to have successful careers in STEM both on island and around the world.

As exemplified above, I work almost double the hours that my GAship supports financially and I am struggling to pay rent/utilities, buy groceries, and afford necessities like gas, clothes, medical visits, medications, etc. 55% of my paycheck goes to rent/utilities alone. As a member of the UH community and the Honolulu community at large, my goal is to help our keiki connect with the oceans that surround them; to learn about the kai that sustains us and our kuleana to understand and protect it. Unfortunately, on the current salary that graduate students are paid, that may not be possible for much longer. I consider myself lucky because my department is paid at a higher pay scale than other GAs in different departments, many of which make \$30,000 or less. Regardless of our departments, we are all overworked, underpaid, and deserve to have a bargaining unit for our salaries so we can bargain with our employers, the State of Hawaii, and the Board of Regents for liveable wages and a fair salary that reflects the amount of time we put in and is equivalent to entry level positions in non-academic sectors (usually upwards of \$45,000). On January 4th, the Hawaii Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees with the right to collectively bargain. Myself and many of my colleagues and peers desire to take ownership of our contract negotiations to continue doing what we love. We want to make sure that we (and all future graduate students and leaders in STEM after us) are compensated fairly

for the hard work we do in research, teaching, and outreach so that we may keep supporting our island community, conducting research that will protect the future of humanity, and supporting the next generations of students as they pursue their careers wherever and whatever they may be. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights. Thank you so much for your consideration, and I hope you come to visit us at the Deep-Sea Ecology Lab at UH Manoa so we can talk story about graduate student life and show you some of the magnificent deep-sea animals that live all around our islands, across the Pacific, and around the world!

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 12:26:03 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cardenas Pintor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou,

Mahalo nui to all the legislators for hearing SB3317. My name is Cardenas Pintor. I am testifying in support of this bill.

As students in the School of Social Work at UH Mānoa, we are taught we are the agents of change. One of the ways we cultivate change is through advocacy. Today, I am here to advocate for my fellow students and myself. Some of these graduate assistants are my instructors or teacher aides. While they perform research for work, attend classes, and grade papers, they often find themselves worrying about rent, food, medical, and more. Of the three (internships, practicums, and graduate assistants), being a graduate assistant includes monetary compensation while the student gains practical experience in their field. Unfortunately, due to the meager wage, many students find themselves still having to pay at least \$7,800 for one semester as a resident, full-time student, or more if they are a non-resident or here on a student visa.

The Hawai'i Labor Board unanimously agreed UH graduate assistants are public employees, indicating they are essential to our public workforce. This is important to note as we look at the precarious staffing shortages in many of our state agencies and departments. Adding graduate assistants to the collective bargaining unit helps students advocate for better working conditions, a livable wage, and a grievance procedure to improve performance between graduate assistants and their students, who can retain job positions. With that said, I want to provide my support for SB3317 and humbly ask for you all to consider supporting this bill as well.

Mahalo nui again for hearing this bill,

Cardenas Pintor

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 12:36:40 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dorian Daimer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the Labor and Technology Committee and the Higher Education Committee:

My name is Dorian Daimer, a PhD candidate in Physics. I live in Kaimuki, and I'm represented in the House by Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, and Sen. Les Ihara in the Senate. I'm writing in support of SB 3317, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

This Spring, I'm a Research Assistant, working on the physics of information processing and attempting to reformulate our understanding of quantum physics. Last Fall semester, I worked as a Teaching Assistant for the introductory physics labs, teaching two classes of 20 students about electricity and magnetism in a lab setting. Both teaching and research assistantship pay for 20 hrs of work per week, but regularly I will work beyond those set hours and yet I'm ineligible for any type of overtime pay. To fulfill my degree requirements (which is why I'm only paid for 20 hours per week, as I'm also a student), I'm working on my research which is focused on the fundamental costs of performing quantum operations. This work is crucial for estimating and lowering the energetic costs of information processing in years to come. Despite all my hard work and the labor that I provide the University both in teaching and research, I often find it difficult to manage living in Hawai'i on the salary provided by UH, where I spend 60% of my monthly salary just on rent. As an international student, I'm only allowed to work 20 hours per week in a position funded by the University to keep my student visa status valid. This means that the only avenue by which I can legally support myself is through my graduate assistant salary, which is \$15,000 below the annual recommended living wage in Hawai'i for a single person with no dependents.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 12:26:03 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cardenas Pintor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou,

Mahalo nui to all the legislators for hearing SB3317. My name is Cardenas Pintor. I am testifying in support of this bill.

As students in the School of Social Work at UH Mānoa, we are taught we are the agents of change. One of the ways we cultivate change is through advocacy. Today, I am here to advocate for my fellow students and myself. Some of these graduate assistants are my instructors or teacher aides. While they perform research for work, attend classes, and grade papers, they often find themselves worrying about rent, food, medical, and more. Of the three (internships, practicums, and graduate assistants), being a graduate assistant includes monetary compensation while the student gains practical experience in their field. Unfortunately, due to the meager wage, many students find themselves still having to pay at least \$7,800 for one semester as a resident, full-time student, or more if they are a non-resident or here on a student visa.

The Hawai'i Labor Board unanimously agreed UH graduate assistants are public employees, indicating they are essential to our public workforce. This is important to note as we look at the precarious staffing shortages in many of our state agencies and departments. Adding graduate assistants to the collective bargaining unit helps students advocate for better working conditions, a livable wage, and a grievance procedure to improve performance between graduate assistants and their students, who can retain job positions. With that said, I want to provide my support for SB3317 and humbly ask for you all to consider supporting this bill as well.

Mahalo nui again for hearing this bill,

Cardenas Pintor

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 12:42:54 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kimberly Serratos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am Kimberly Serratos, a graduate student in the Department of Philosophy and a Graduate Teaching Assistant in the Human Development and Family Studies Program in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences , and I support SB 3317 in its current form. Thank you!

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 12:42:54 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kimberly Serratos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am Kimberly Serratos, a graduate student in the Department of Philosophy and a Graduate Teaching Assistant in the Human Development and Family Studies Program in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences , and I support SB 3317 in its current form. Thank you!

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 1:08:58 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

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

Comments:

My name is Lehua Matsumoto, I am a graduate student worker in the Department of American Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and I support SB 3317.

I am a second year graduate student, and I have led undergraduate discussion sections for two different classes, coming up with entertaining ways for students to engage with the material and ensuring that they are learning something from our coursework. In the last year, I have worked with our department as an Editorial Assistant for American Quarterly, ensuring that our department maintains its exemplary status within the field of American Studies.

I support SB 3317 because I know that the stress of graduate school should not be compounded by the stress of unforgiving labor practices and expectations, including an overwhelming workload, insufficient pay, and employment uncertainty. This bill will allow grad students like myself to address these concerns and communicate directly with our employers, the State of Hawaii and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions.

I hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain our rights, similar to how other graduate student organizations on the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years.

Thank you for your consideration.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 1:20:03 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
teri skillman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Acquino and Mercado, Vice Chair Moriwaki and Kidani, and LBT & HRE Committee Members,

My name is Teri Skillman and I am writing as a private citizen. I stand in full support of SB 3317.

I received my M.A. and Ph.D. from UHM. During both degrees, I worked as a teaching assistant for MUS 107 and MUS 253, and in other capacities such as managing the Ethnomusicology Collection and Ethnomusicology Archives, covering for a faculty member who managed facilities and Orvis Auditorium while on sabbatical, developing PR for the department programs and events, and assisting with grant writing.

I write in full SUPPORT of SB 3317 for ALU's efforts to unionize graduate students employed at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. The salaries are 50% FTE and are low in comparison to other universities as the cost of living in Hawai'i is higher than in the continent. A fair living wage is an issue for all State employees. GA salaries are paid with STATE funds and receive health insurance through the EUTF which in my mind means that they are state employees. When I was a GA, I was also a single parent, raising my daughter on my own, taking graduate-level classes, and either teaching a course on my own or assisting the professor as a teaching assistant.

Graduate Assistants need their own bargaining unit to avoid conflicts of interest. APTs in BU8 and Faculty in BU7 supervise graduate assistants. For this reason, graduate assistants cannot be in the same bargaining units as Administrative, Professional, and Technical hires [BU8] nor do they fit in BU7 with faculty. GAs also do not fit in other BUs because of the educational content that they are required to know in order to work with undergraduate students. As I detailed above, GAs' contribution to teaching at the University is substantial and enables faculty to do the research they are required to do to apply for tenure.

Please pass SB3317. I stand in full support.

Mahalo nui,
Teri Skillman

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 1:08:58 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

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

Comments:

My name is Lehua Matsumoto, I am a graduate student worker in the Department of American Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and I support SB 3317.

I am a second year graduate student, and I have led undergraduate discussion sections for two different classes, coming up with entertaining ways for students to engage with the material and ensuring that they are learning something from our coursework. In the last year, I have worked with our department as an Editorial Assistant for American Quarterly, ensuring that our department maintains its exemplary status within the field of American Studies.

I support SB 3317 because I know that the stress of graduate school should not be compounded by the stress of unforgiving labor practices and expectations, including an overwhelming workload, insufficient pay, and employment uncertainty. This bill will allow grad students like myself to address these concerns and communicate directly with our employers, the State of Hawaii and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions.

I hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain our rights, similar to how other graduate student organizations on the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years.

Thank you for your consideration.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 11:51:49 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ariel Mota Alves	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Ariel, and I am writing to offer my testimony in strong support of SB 3317, which seeks to establish a collective bargaining unit for Graduate Assistants at UH Mānoa. As an international graduate student, I believe that the passage of this bill is crucial in safeguarding the rights and interests of graduate assistants, including international students like myself.

Graduate Assistants, regardless of their nationality, often face precarious working conditions such as inadequate compensation, lack of paid time off, and minimal job security. For international students, who may already be navigating complex visa regulations and financial constraints, these challenges are particularly daunting. A pathway to unionization created by this Bill would provide us with a collective voice to advocate for fair treatment, ensuring that our contributions to the University are valued and respected.

Moreover, Graduate Assistants constitute the backbone of the University of Hawaii. We play integral roles in teaching, research, and administrative tasks that are essential to the functioning of academic departments. Despite our significant contributions, many graduate assistants struggle to make ends meet due to low wages and insufficient benefits. By unionizing, Graduate Assistants can negotiate for fair wages, improved benefits, and better working conditions, thereby enhancing our overall academic experience and strengthening the University community as a whole.

Thank you for considering my testimony, and I hope that you will stand with us in this important endeavor.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 11:51:49 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ariel Mota Alves	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Ariel, and I am writing to offer my testimony in strong support of SB 3317, which seeks to establish a collective bargaining unit for Graduate Assistants at UH Mānoa. As an international graduate student, I believe that the passage of this bill is crucial in safeguarding the rights and interests of graduate assistants, including international students like myself.

Graduate Assistants, regardless of their nationality, often face precarious working conditions such as inadequate compensation, lack of paid time off, and minimal job security. For international students, who may already be navigating complex visa regulations and financial constraints, these challenges are particularly daunting. A pathway to unionization created by this Bill would provide us with a collective voice to advocate for fair treatment, ensuring that our contributions to the University are valued and respected.

Moreover, Graduate Assistants constitute the backbone of the University of Hawaii. We play integral roles in teaching, research, and administrative tasks that are essential to the functioning of academic departments. Despite our significant contributions, many graduate assistants struggle to make ends meet due to low wages and insufficient benefits. By unionizing, Graduate Assistants can negotiate for fair wages, improved benefits, and better working conditions, thereby enhancing our overall academic experience and strengthening the University community as a whole.

Thank you for considering my testimony, and I hope that you will stand with us in this important endeavor.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 1:40:19 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jocelyn Brody	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Jocelyn Brody, I'm a PhD student in American Studies, and I'm a Teaching Assistant for a class called American Studies 220, Intro to Indigenous Studies.

I live in Kapahulu right near the Leonard's and my senator is Les Ihara, Jr. and my House Representative is Bertrand Kobayashi. I am writing in support of SB 3317.

I am a first year PhD student and working hard to start publishing, to go to my classes, to apply to conferences, and to work as a teaching assistant. I worry that because of how little I make as a teaching assistant I will have to take on another job to make ends meet which would mean slowing my progress towards my degree. I currently have 37 students that I'm working to grade, instruct, and support, last semester I had 40. This means that I'm working really hard for the University but not making enough money to support myself. This is why I support SB3317, because I believe that collective bargaining would allow me to do my job better and would support me in my academic goals.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 2:06:28 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou, my name is Shannon Pōmaikaʻi Hennessey, and I am a Kanaka Maoli, first-year PhD student at UH Mānoa born and raised in Niu Valley, Oʻahu, represented by Rep. Mark J. Hashem in the House, and Rep. Stanley Chang in the Senate. Alongside studying and working in the Political Science department, I also serve as the Grievances Committee co-chair for the Academic Labor United. I am writing in strong support of SB 3317, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

Last September, less than a month into my new graduate program, I was quickly recruited as an Organizing Co-Chair of the College of Social Sciences. In the midst of so much of what has put ALU in a stronger position than ever before—an upcoming union affiliation vote and awaiting HLRB rulings and legislative hearings—any new ALU member might feel overwhelmed. For me, the overwhelm was present, but it was always supplanted by incredible support from other Executive Committee (EC) members, especially more senior members who have been involved in this present iteration of this struggle for nearly a decade. These fellow EC members, as well as rank-and-file members, clarified our efforts as a union, articulated my role, and empowered me to organize our college—particularly new members—to sign union cards, vote for our affiliation, and show up to events and actions like these. It is because of them that over 700 graduate students, 50% of total grad students, are active in ALU.

It is because of us, and our painstaking commitment to both our union and to caring for each other well, that we have created a space that not only recruits new members and officers like myself, but produces a sustainable legacy. After a semester as Organizing Co-Chair, I am now taking on the role of the Grievances Committee co-chair, under the great mentorship of the present co-chair, as she plans to graduate soon. As graduate students, we eventually do graduate and move on from ALU—meaning our situation is distinct from other bargaining units. The inherently transitory nature of a graduate worker union, then, requires the vigilance in sustaining our organization that we have already demonstrated, and also affords us fresh vitality and energy that I have personally experienced in the past semester.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address our concerns regarding livable and fair wages, access to healthcare, and ability to address grievances by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawaiʻi and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawaiʻi Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to

collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years.

The graduate student workers of ALU are ready to unionize, we have been ready to unionize. We implore you to support us in this effort to make it so—not just for us, but for all future graduate student workers of Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your time.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 11:55:51 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hannah Hyman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Hannah Hyman and I am PhD student and Graduate Assistant in the Political Science department. I strongly support SB 3317 and urge the Senate to pass it.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 2:11:25 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Olivia Jarvis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the Members of the Committee on Labor and Technology and Committee on Higher Education,

My name is Olivia Jarvis, a graduate student at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo. I live in Hilo and am represented in the House by Rep. Richard Onishi and Sen. Lorraine Inouye in the Senate. I’m writing in support of SB 3317 in its current form, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

I’ve been a student at UH for the past six years and in my second year of the Tropical Conservation Biology and Environmental Science (TCBES) Graduate Program. To support myself through graduate school, I’m also working as a graduate teaching assistant for the Geography and Environmental Science Department. I assist two courses in geographic information systems by holding office hours for students, grading assignments, and maintaining the student computer lab by updating and licensing the softwares. Some of my hours are also dedicated to supporting the TCBES program by promoting seminar series talks, managing department vehicle rentals, writing the semesterly newsletter, editing the program website, and maintaining the program email. This position allows me to work 20 hours a week, but sometimes I work beyond these hours to keep up with the work that needs to be completed. To fulfill my degree requirements, I am taking courses and working on my thesis project that is focused on detecting invasive species in aerial imagery using machine learning. My work is helping biocontrol efforts to reduce the spread of invaders and protect native ecosystems. Despite all this hard work in and out of the classroom, other graduate assistants and myself often find it difficult to manage living in Hawai‘i on our current UH salaries.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai‘i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai‘i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 11:47:49 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zain Jabbar	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 2:40:13 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

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

Comments:

I'm Peter VanNostrand, a graduate student worker at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts and a member of the WPI Graduate Workers Union (UAW Local 2322). I'm writing in support of HB 2720 in its current form. As a graduate worker I perform critical research and instructional services that contribute to the profile of my university, bring in grant funding, and provide quality mentoring and education to its students. Unfortunately, our university has historically not adequately recognized these contributions and regularly underpaid and overworked graduate workers. By treating us alternately as students and as workers WPI regularly denied us basic working rights such as days off and access to affordable healthcare. Since WPI unionized our contract has won us a guarantee of a living wage, a fully funded high quality healthcare plan, strong harassment and discrimination protections, and a fair amount of time off to rest. This has been transformative to my life and allowed me to handle the rising cost of living, stay in my apartment, access critical healthcare resources, and afford the time off and expense to travel to see family for the holidays. Graduate workers in Hawaii deserve these same opportunities and the state must act to make that possible by passing this bill. Giving graduate workers a democratic say in their workplace through a union will immensely improve the lives of graduate workers in your state, make Hawaii a more attractive market for highly skilled learners and educators and ultimately improve the quality of work and services that these critical workers provide to your community.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 2:44:09 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Korey Wetherell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Korey Wetherell and I am a GA at the University of Hawaii at Manoa in the Department of Geography and the Environment and I am writing to express my full support for SB3317. It is essential to allow for Graduate Assistants the ability to secure their own contracts through the creation of a new CBU; as essential members of the UH system and state employees, we deserve the right to collectively bargain as outlined within the State Consitution and affirmed by both the Hawai'i Supreme Count and HLRB.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 11:33:38 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ryan Vande Linde	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support sb3317. As a former graduate student, I understand the immense stress that todays graduate students are under. It's important and vital to their success that they are able to collectively bargain. Doing so will only help.
Thank you.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 2:53:27 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lorraine Waianuhea	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha kākou,

I am a graduate student worker at UH Mānoa, and I am submitting testimony in strong support of SB3317.

Graduate students have the right to collectively bargain, and we do not belong in any of the existing bargaining units.

The UH system runs on graduate student labor through teaching and research, yet our living and working conditions are suboptimal (inadequate pay, food insecurity, lack of medical leave, delayed payments for international students and workplace abuse).

Exercising our right to collectively bargain would help alleviate our concerns. Graduate student workers have represented themselves at the bargaining table for 50 years, and support is increasing especially among youth.

Please pass HB2720!

Mahalo for this opportunity to provide testimony,

Lorraine Waianuhea

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 11:30:49 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kawena?ulaokala Kapahua	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am testifying in the Strongest support of HB2720 relating to collective bargaining. As the former Chair of Academic Labor United, the union of the Graduate Assistants (GAs) of the University of Hawai‘i I can say with the utmost certainty that the GAs need this bill to be passed. Hawai‘i State Constitution mandates that public employees are guaranteed the right to collectively bargain. As the Hawaii Labor Relations Board affirmed this January, graduate assistants are indeed public workers and are therefore entitled to this right. Currently, as the Board did not place the GAs into an existing collective bargaining unit for public employees due to their unique class of workers, the constitutional right of collective bargaining is being denied to these workers. This is wholly unacceptable and this committee has the opportunity to rectify this.

This committee has the rare opportunity to restore the rights of 1500 workers, to ensure that the rights of 1500 people are respected and a grave injustice, nearly 50 years old is finally corrected. I urge the committee to do so. I would point out that the Hawaii Labor Relations Board was not the only state entity to agree with the Graduate Assistants, in April of 2023 the Hawaii Supreme Court made it very clear where it stood on the issue. These facts, plus the Hawaii State Constitution make it clear, that should this committee fail to pass this bill, it will be opening up the state to a lawsuit for denying the rights of these workers as given to them in our constitution. I urge you to save the taxpayers time and money by doing the right thing now.

If you know anyone who has ever attended the University of Hawai‘i, you know someone who has been educated by Graduate Assistants. If you have attended, you have directly benefitted from our labor. In my time as a graduate assistant, I have taught faculty themselves at the university as part of my job duties. If I am qualified to instruct Ph.D. holding professors, who are themselves unionized, then clearly I am qualified to collectively bargain as I am no mere student help, nor are any other of my union brothers and sisters at the university. Do the right thing, pass this bill. Mahalo Kawena‘ulaokalā Kapahua

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 2:57:21 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
AJ Vincelli	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello again, I am AJ Vincelli, and I'm the co-founder and co-organizer of the Graduate Student Union at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. I support SB3317 in its current form, allowing graduate student employees at the University of Hawai'i to exercise their right to organize and improve their working conditions, perform stronger research, win more grants, and increase the prestige of the university. Grad worker unionization is a clear win-win for both employee and employer! Please PASS SB3317 in its current form. Thank you.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 2:59:35 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
GRIFFIN BRYCE WERNER	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm Griffin Werner, a Graduate Assistant (GA) with the Uehiro Academy at UHM, and I support SB3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 11:27:26 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zachary Nachod	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Zachary Nachod and I am a PhD student in the Oceanography Department at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UH). I live in Liliha and am represented in the house by Representative Daniel Holt and in the senate by Senator Karl Rhoads. **I am writing in support of SB 3317**, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system. I am in graduate school to be able to create my own climate consulting company when I graduate to help alleviate the impacts and the observation/quantification of climate change. I am nearing the end of my second year at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa and have encountered some difficulties in my time here. I find it hard to support myself on our current stipend as Hawai‘i, more specifically around Honolulu, is on record one of the highest cost of living areas in the country. Our peers on the mainland have a lower cost of living and have a higher stipend than us. This financial struggle affects my research and activities at UH, where I have to worry about how to supplement my income to make ends meet while working at least 40 hours at UH. This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai‘i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai‘i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 11:23:46 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tim Kinzler	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB3317

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 3:48:12 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jason Mark Alexander	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Jason Mark Alexander. I have served as a Graduate Assistant for 2.5 years and am a PhD candidate at the University of Hawai‘i. I strongly support SB3317 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain. As a 6th year PhD student in Sociology and a worker, I am specializing in conflict transformation and ways state administrators should care about their constituents.

This bill integrates Graduate Assistants as a category of legitimate Public Employee into the existing systems of collective bargaining and negotiations to which we are entitled. Once this adjustment is made, with Bargaining Unit 16 specifically for the unique interests of research, clerical, and teaching work GAs perform at all hours of the day across the UH system, we can proceed as working adults in equal conversation with our employers, entitled to legal protections in negotiating workplace issues as we are living in and contributing to this state.

All of work in graduate school is done by people in their 20s, 30s, and older, with routine needs to support dependents and their own wellbeing while confronting the range of inequities of citizenship, race, gender, physical abilities, and generational situation. The decades-long denial of union rights is a shameful injustice by which UH can ignore the workers' situations. I have heard too many accounts from colleagues whose supervisors essentially interpret the bare-bones GA contract freely, with no oversight from department and college level administration because the short-term work demands override the welfare of the graduate assistants doing the work. I am attaching an anonymized version of my own GA contract; it is vague in oversight of supervisor decisions, contains no benefits, and was not updated and reissued when sick leave and salary adjustments were instituted in August 2022, so I have no contracted guarantee of these changes for my specific position, and has been a source of anxiety. Can you imagine having to work 60 hours per week, even though the contract sets a limit of 20, with no overtime pay? This is what happens at UH for many workers. There is a spiritual drain that comes from seeing your supervisor monopolize your time, forcing you to stretch your academic degree progress by years. Conditions vary depending on the supervisor, but the issue of workers having no systematically ensured influence on conditions, while the number of open positions in one's area of expertise is limited, encourages the trend of exploitation to go unchecked. It feels coercive, and there's not even job security throughout an academic career under the current system of single-year contracts that do not automatically renew.

The University has not taken meaningful initiatives to understand workers' voices or incorporate our standpoints as both workers and students into the institutional priorities. In the new UH

System Strategic Plan 2023-2029, approved on November 17 2022 by the Board of Regents, one of the four imperatives is to Meet Hawai'i Workforce Needs of Today and Tomorrow. The Goal is to "Eliminate workforce shortages in Hawai'i while preparing students for a future different than the present," with primary metrics being the number of shortages and of number of students learning career skills. Nowhere in this framing is a consideration of the positionality of the thousands of students enrolled at UH who are also employees of UH during that period, nor the health and motivation of these workers even if they find a job, which is a crucial determinant of the very shortages the state is facing as people leave in disgust over employers' humiliating contract conditions. In town hall forums on the strategic plan, I raised this issue of excluding university laborers from the workforce of the state, including the urgent need for collective bargaining rights to help the university community as a whole meet all its constituents labor goals holistically. Disappointingly, as I see the exclusion of this consideration from the plan's structure and President Lassner's empty promises, it is crystal clear that UH administration is not going to seriously consider contract negotiations until this legislature passes this bill I testify on now. There won't be any meaningful workplace reform or pathways of discussion over issues until we establish them with everyone at the table.

I routinely feel obligated to warn enthusiastic professionals, potential arrivals to the UH system, that they can easily be placed at high risk of being exploited with no recourse to protect their health other than leaving the UH system itself. And they already know that, because so many other universities are more attractive to work at with established non-faculty unions giving people living wages and senses of safety in work environments. The conspicuous lack of a union, not just for graduate assistant workers but also for lecturers and undergraduate students, is causing a brain drain of people currently enrolled as living costs and workplace stresses increase. It particularly blocks out people without financial and social wealth and safety nets, as well as international students from all over the globe as visa conditions further limit what workers can do to survive the slippages between the unilaterally imposed contracts and reality.

As workers for a public employer, all GAs deserve the right to collectively negotiate their contracted working conditions to determine the quality of their lives, their health, and the well-being of their communities in Hawai'i. I urge you to listen to the voices of GA workers struggling with poverty wages, supervisor abuse, and other grievances. Please pass SB3317 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 3:50:01 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Austin Davis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the Senate,

My name is Austin Jay Alika Keaupuni Davis, an MA Sociology candidate at the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM). I am 28 years old, from Wailuku, Maui, and I am represented by Senator Angus L.K. McKelvey and Representative Troy N. Hashimoto. I'm writing in support of SB 3317, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

Since the Fall of 2022 to today, I currently worked as a Teaching Assistant for various sociology courses and most of the time it would be for a methodology course. My role is very important as I assist the professors in the course through grading and reviewing assignments, allocating time for students to meet (at least designating 4 hours a day), proctoring exams, consulting with the professor on student progress and lesson planning, and the role I have to commit when I am assigned a methodology course is teaching the lab course, which I don't get paid as a lecturer though I prepare my courses with lesson plans, give consultation hours both on and off the clock, and teach the subject like a lecturer or professor would. The lab courses I teach are SOC 476L Social Statistics Lab and SOC 605L Regression Analysis Lab. These courses, also accompanied by the general SOC 476 and SOC 605, are the most difficult courses in my department, especially when SOC 605 and SOC 605L are a requirement for PhD sociology students to graduate. That course typically holds 10 to 20 students. In other semesters I would be placed in two courses to assist, which typically range from 35 to 40 students each course. I would oversee 70 to 80 students. One semester I had 190 students because one course had 150 students. I'm also assisting the SOC 475 Analysis in Survey Research this semester, another methodology course. An undergraduate sociology student is required to take one 400-level methodology course, which there are only 3 courses students can choose from (SOC 475, SOC 476/L, SOC 478). It is more likely that in 2 of those 3 courses, I will be the designated Teaching Assistant, and in one of those courses I will be more likely to lecture. I get paid for the required 20 hours, but because I have a lot of assignments and exams to grade and I meet with my students off my work hours, especially the difficult courses, I would exceed my hours and be ineligible for overtime pay. I refuse to turn away a student and I grade every assignment and exam carefully because these courses I oversee are required for the students to get their sociology degree and it is difficult content to master; I need to make sure students understand the content and to be able to apply it.

Besides my work as a Teaching Assistant, I'm also overwhelmed with side work as an on-call lecturer and program consultant for the UHM CSS International Cooperation Program as my job doesn't pay enough for me to go school on Oahu, my participation in community engagement and service as it relates to my academic research, leading an indigenous/pacific islander student organization as Pacific Island students like me need a voice at UHM, a graduate student having commitments to my research and to attend my courses, and a son who lives close to home and travel when there are family emergencies. I feel so overwhelmed as I have to work constantly just to live here as about 80% of my Teaching Assistant income goes to living expenses (rent, utility bills, food, etc.). It becomes so difficult to put in the time for my research as a graduate student, especially when my research reflects on addressing food issues here in Hawaii covering the high cost of living, food imports, destruction of the ecosystem, food sovereignty, and other related topics. These are important topics that could help Hawaii. If I'm not succeeding because of zero ability to voice work concerns, then Hawaii is not succeeding its people, especially Hawaiians like me who already have a much more difficult success rate in obtaining a higher education degree.

This bill opens a pathway for working graduate students, like me, to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawaii, and the Board of Regents. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. I come from a family of carpenters, especially my father who has benefited from his union (The Hawaii Carpenters Union Local 745). I know and experience the importance of having a bargaining unit at the table to negotiate one's livelihood. I want to have the ability to alleviate the concerns I have as a Teaching Assistant. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts on the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 11:20:25 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diliaur Tellei	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I wholeheartedly support SB3317. Graduate student workers (like all workers) deserve the protection a labor union provides. These positions are some of the most vulnerable and tenuous in the whole academic employment landscape and yet the university would not run without them. Some of us are no longer graduate student workers, but we are here, watching, urging the legal reasoning to be actualized by the formation of a collective bargaining unit.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 4:01:45 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Heather White	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm Heather White, a unionized graduate student worker from Northwestern University, and I support SB3317 in its current form.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 11:15:57 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sophia Somerscales	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Sophia Somerscales, I'm a graduate student worker, and I support SB3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 5:03:06 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lucie Knor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Lucie Knor and I have been a Graduate Assistant (GA) at the University of Hawai'i with the Department of Oceanography since 2016. During my time at UH I have seen many of my brilliant colleagues struggle through and sometimes even fail at their studies because of the completely unregulated and therefore often abusive and exploitative working conditions they have faced as Graduate Assistants.

Graduate Assistants teach large classes, keep laboratories and complicated machinery running, design curricula, mentor students, manage toxic waste, and more. In my time as a research assistant I have led and participated in ship-based fieldwork to deploy, recover and maintain a total of 7 600lb moorings with 1500 lb anchors that measure carbon dioxide in the water and air, contributing crucial data for research on ocean acidification and climate change impacts on coral reefs. This work is by no means part of my studies or training.

On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified graduate assistants as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. Finally, with this recognition, there is a path forward for graduate assistant unionization.

With union representation, my colleagues and I will no longer be unsure of how many hours a week we can be expected to work as a GA. In the beginning of my studies, I was told that "it says 20 hours, but it's really way more", and the expectation is that GAs work well over 40 hours in most cases. This is particularly harmful for international students on F-1 visas like myself, whose immigration status is directly tied to our employment as a GA. In many cases, our supervisors are thus our employers, mentors for our studies, and in charge of our immigration status in the United States. This extreme power differential leaves GAs vulnerable to exploitation and harassment, with few options for recourse if we feel our rights have been violated. I have witnessed a colleague of mine get blacklisted from teaching in our department by her thesis supervisor, just because she decided to pursue her degree with a different professor, leaving her scrambling for financial security. I've seen multiple colleagues who have been sexually harassed by their superiors stop coming to campus to avoid running into their harasser, while there were no consequences for the perpetrator. These behaviors are already illegal and classified as transgressions based on current university policy, but the truth is that it is very hard for GAs to protect ourselves from retaliation in these cases if we speak up.

Union representation through grievance processes and a contract that explicitly states our responsibilities and rights are the only remedy for this dire situation, and the whole time I've spent at the University of Hawai'i, GAs have organized relentlessly as Academic Labor United to gain recognition as public employees, and to build our own union from the ground up. We have already negotiated with UH administration to implement the first sick leave policy for

Graduate Assistants, as well as pay raises. During the first few months of COVID-19, we organized a hardship fund for students that was up and running months before the official University fund. Last fall, we organized an affiliation campaign with the largest union in the United States, the National Education Assocation (NEA), who are now a great ally and resource for us. We already have a constitution, and are working on revisions of that constitution with member participation. I believe that our organization is ready to take on the task of contract bargaining for our membership, and that the rulings by the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board and the Supreme Court have shown that our status as public workers is out of the question. Please stand with us at this historic moment that graduate students have worked for since the 1970s, and pass SB3317 in its current form.

Mahalo

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 5:08:38 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ani Kawada	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha! My name is Ani Kawada and I am a 2nd year Master's Student in the American Studies and Library and Information Science Program. I live in 'Ewa Beach, O'ahu. I am represented by House of Rep. Rose Martinez and Sen. Kurt Fevella in the Senate. I am writing to **support** bill SB 3317, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

For the past three semesters and this current semester, I have/been a Teaching Assistant for a course called AMST 150 (America and the World). Part of my job includes reviewing and grading students' assignments, papers, and exams, holding two recitation sections, and more. I am in charge of about 40 students each semester. These teaching assistantships pay for 20 hrs of work a week, but there are and have been times when I would spend work beyond those hours, yet I am ineligible to get any type of overtime pay. In addition to this, the salary that we are given is very difficult to manage living in Hawai'i. I fortunately live with my 'ohana, but my father doesn't make as much money since he has lost his job multiple times due to changes made during or after covid. I try to support my parents as much as possible, so I have gotten a second job on top of my GAship, in hopes of being able to help provide for my 'ohana. Balancing two jobs and being a full-time student can be a lot but sometimes it is what needs to be done to survive in Hawai'i.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers to create a bargaining unit for us, so that we can bargain with our employers to improve our living and working conditions. I hope that the legislature will grant us this opportunity. Mahalo nui loa.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 6:00:05 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lauryn Pisciotto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support bill SB3317

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 6:14:20 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zheng Zou	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm Zheng Zou, a GA from Art HIST department, and I support SB 3317

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 11:12:07 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Lewis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB3317 because I believe graduate students deserve to be paid fairly for the work that they do. I know several stories of grad students having to work multiple jobs to make ends meet, especially because of the high cost of living in Hawaii. I don't think graduate students should have to sacrifice their mental health or education to be able to make a living. We do the work, we should get paid for it.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 6:21:36 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ihilani Lasconia	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Chair Sen Henry Aquino and Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki of the Senate Labor and Technology Committee, as well as Chair Sen Donna Mercado Kim and Vice Chair Michelle Kidani of the Higher Education Committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of SB 3317.

I am ‘Ihilani Lasconia from Waimānalo O‘ahu. Lisa Marten is the representative for my district. I am writing in strong support of SB 3317. As a PhD student in Political Science at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa who is also a graduate assistant, I see the importance of GAs having their own collective bargaining unit. This unit would give graduate assistants a fighting chance at earning a living wage and having safe and healthy working conditions; two things that we desperately need to continue our educational careers and occupations at the University.

As an instructor, I teach Hawai‘i Politics and Native Hawaiian Politics; two subjects that focus heavily on the history of labor in Hawai‘i. From the plantation era up until this very day, it is evident that unions were the very infrastructure that kept Hawai‘is working families safe from exploitation. In many ways, unions have also served as a strong social, political, and economic basis for Hawai‘i’s people.

As graduate assistants, we are responsible for educating a considerable portion of students in the university system. For me, being an instructor is one of the greatest joys I have ever known. I also know that the quality of education we can provide as graduate assistants is interdependent with the protections and benefits we are to receive if granted a bargaining unit.

I am not in a PhD program to merely earn credentials. I made this decision so that I can become the best teacher and researcher for my community. Supporting SB3317 would allow myself and others like me to spend more time investing in Hawai‘i and its students. Not just for the sake of our institution, but the world that our students will inherit.

Once again my name is ‘Ihilani Lasconia and I strongly support SB3317. Thank you for your time.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 6:33:38 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Meyer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Andrew Meyer, I am a PhD Candidate in Physics at UH Manoa. I'm writing in support of SB 3317 in its current form to give graduate student workers of the UH System a collective bargaining unit.

Graduate students have struggled for decades with being paid at a level far too low to be able to afford living in Hawai'i while having little to no recourse for dealing with poor and abusive working conditions. With HLRB recognizing us as public employees, we now need to be granted our own collective bargaining unit so that we may redress these concerns, as our graduate counterparts on the mainland have been doing for around 50 years.

Thank you for your consideration.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 11:06:18 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Krisna Suryanata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Graduate student assistants work to develop and enhance students' learning at the University of Hawai'i. They are entitled to the right of collective bargaining. I support SB 3317.

Respectfully submitted, Krisna Suryanata

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 6:36:02 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Hoe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Chair Sen Henry Aquino and Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki of the Senate Labor and Technology Committee, as well as Chair Sen Donna Mercado Kim and Vice Chair Michelle Kidani of the Higher Education Committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of SB 3317.

My name is Andrew Hoe, a PhD student in English Studies. I live in Mānoa Valley, and I'm represented in the House by Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, and Sen. Carol Fukunaga in the Senate. I'm writing in support of SB 3317, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

This Spring 2024, I am a first year PhD student at UH Mānoa. I plan to do my dissertation research on social justice, inclusion, diversity, and equity in marginalized literature. I currently teach one course of first year writing and have taught one semester in fall of last year. This qualifies as 20 hours of work, which gives me a small stipend that I'm grateful for, but is extremely tight. I have applied and receive EBT snap benefits (food stamps) and feed myself through that; I also get food by visiting a monthly food drive on campus.

SB 3317 opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. I'm told that this current legislative decision has been the result of long-sustained efforts, and would love to have it pass. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

Andrew Hoe

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 11:04:21 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ian Strieter	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm a PhD student and GA, and I strongly support SB 3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 6:57:07 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jonah Dirks	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB 3317

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 11:00:31 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anamalia Su'esu'e	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB 3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 7:30:32 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support SB 3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 7:31:57 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Madi Davis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:58:39 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephanie Dossett	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Stephanie Dossett, I'm a graduate student worker and I support SB 3317 in its current form. The creation of a bargaining unit dedicated to graduate student workers will allow our unique position as both students and employees of the university and community college systems to be properly addressed in contract negotiation. We hope you will support us in our efforts to further the rights of student workers across the state.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 7:41:40 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Charles Izuma Addey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am Charles Addey, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Oceanography, and I stand in strong support of SB 3317 in its current form. As an international student, the scope of my livelihood is tied to my role as a Graduate Research Assistant, which is capped at 20 hours per week due to visa restrictions.

My research is centered on the critical issue of climate change effects in the North Pacific Ocean. The outcome of my work is crucial, providing essential insights into oceanic changes that significantly affect fisheries, particularly in regions like Hawaii. The aim is to refine climate models and strategize on mitigating the most severe consequences of climate change.

Despite my contributions and the rigorous labor I invest in my research at the University of Hawai'i, the financial remuneration is barely sufficient to cover living expenses. Given the restrictions imposed by my student visa, my graduate assistant salary remains the sole legal means of sustenance. Passing this bill will mean negotiating a better living wage, an improved working condition, and better health benefits.

By endorsing SB 3317, you champion the core principles of democracy, labor rights, and workers' welfare. Your support not only acknowledges the value of international student workers like me but also reinforces the ethical obligation to ensure equitable working conditions for all.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:58:01 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hannah Freiin von Hammerstein	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB 3317

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 7:56:13 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jayne Pisciotto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB3317 and believe that graduate students should be allowed to unionize.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 7:56:14 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ariel Patterson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Ariel Patterson, a Graduate Assistant at University of Hawaii at Hilo and I support SB3317 in its current form.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 8:24:03 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support SB 3317

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 8:41:22 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Allison Benz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB3317!!

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:56:47 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Luke Shinsato	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:53:07 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristen Sanfilippo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB 3317

Chair Henry Aquino
Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki

Senate Committee on Labor & Technology

Chair Donna Kim
Vice Chair Michelle Kidani

Senate Committee on Higher Education

Thursday, February 8th, 2024
3:05 PM

**TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 3317 RELATING TO
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

Aloha Chair(s) Aquino & Kim, Vice Chair(s) Moriwaki & Kidani, Member(s) of the Senate Committee on Labor & Technology and Senate Committee on Higher Education,

My name is Jun Shin. I am a labor and social justice activist, testifying as an individual in **STRONG SUPPORT** of **SB3317**, Relating to Collective Bargaining. During my time at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa as an Ethnic Studies and American Studies double major, I had several classes where a graduate assistant was either the primary instructor or taught alongside the professor. I found them to be passionate and dedicated, which makes sense given that they were working towards completing higher education in subjects related to those classes. They were willing to help me when I was struggling with class or had questions. I also found them to be very understanding and empathetic, given that they were also students and/or were closer to us in life experience.

Graduate student workers are some of the best instructors I ever had, but they are not only instructors. They labor for the university and community colleges as tutors, researchers, administrative assistants, even unofficial counselors and so much more. They are the backbone of UH and should be treated as such. Like all working people, they deserve respect on the job and should not be scraping by and struggling to barely survive while working and studying. Graduate student workers have been organizing on and off for years now and need your support to officially form their own collective bargaining unit as public workers.

A union will allow graduate student workers to have a vehicle to fight for higher wages and better benefits. It will allow graduate assistants to be able to have a protected voice in how their workplace, the University of Hawai'i is being run. It would create an avenue for graduate student

workers to address critical issues in the workplace like equal pay, sexual harassment, abuse of authority, and discrimination in its many forms.

I also support the establishment of a separate collective bargaining unit, Unit 16 for graduate student workers for these reasons:

1. Graduate student workers cannot be categorized into either just instructional (Unit 7) or just administrative, professional, technical (Unit 8). Their jobs have some crossover between these two specifications.
2. Unique among the University of Hawai'i and community college workplace, the composition of the graduate student workforce will consistently change. Graduate student workers are not just public workers, but also students.
3. In the case that graduate student workers are placed under Unit 7, they would be in the same bargaining unit as their supervisors.

Please **PASS Senate Bill 3317** out of your committees and support the effort of graduate student workers organizing to enter into workplace negotiations in equal footing with their employers.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Jun Shin,
State House District 23 | State Senate District 12
Cell: 808-255-6663
Email: junshinbusiness729@gmail.com

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 9:40:33 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Josiah Murphy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a current member of the UH Manoa community, I strongly urge you to vote in support of SB33117!

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:53:00 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anna Duerr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a graduate student and I support SB3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 9:48:49 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ryan Roden	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Ryan Ahn Roden, a PhD Student in the Political Science department, and recently hired GA with the School of Pacific and Asian Studies. I am writing in with strong support for SB 3317!

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 10:04:54 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Miles Drazkowski	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

I count myself fortunate to stand with my peers as a graduate student worker. As such, there are a multitude of reasons why I think this bill deserves your support and attention.

Whether it is simply that as public employees it is our right to collectively bargain, or whether it is the fact that our contributions are invaluable to not only the university, but academia, the intellectual future of our given fields, and our wider communities, or whether it is the direct effects that we will have on the lives of our students and colleagues, not to mention the lives of everyone that calls these islands home; we deserve better.

We have been asked, why make the choice to be a graduate student worker?

In my field of engineering, employment that would simultaneously offer me the flexibility and financial resources that could allow me to pursue a graduate degree, doesn't exist. Hence, I've sought employment as a Teaching Assistant.

In Fall 2023, out of the 1,536 graduate student workers, 579 were Teaching Assistants. If TAs average 20 students, that means around 11,600 undergraduates have been directly affected by our labor. The UH Manoa undergraduate population is approximately 14,500, that's almost 80% of the undergraduate population attending TA led classes. And that is only considering one class. In most cases, undergrads take multiple classes that are taught by TAs.

The students that we teach, the students that **I personally** teach, will wind up as the engineers in your Department of Transportation, your Board of Water Supply, your Clean Water Branch.

The benefits that [students and society reap](#) are, in large part, due to our labor. And yet, the compensation and working conditions offered to TAs has led to hiring shortages for example those in the Physics Department and School of Life Sciences. As a result, sections of required classes are canceled, student progress delayed.

And even still, I'm more privileged than most. I'm able to take on overload positions to augment my income despite which remains crucially and distressingly below a Honolulu living wage (MIT's published [living wage for Hawai'i](#) is currently at \$47,000)

I think that I have a pretty good imagination and yet, even I, can't imagine any valid argument that would preclude graduate workers from forming our own collective bargaining unit.

It is the moral imperative of any equitable society that workers be able to form a union and bargain for their collective welfare.

Any doubt of our ability to organize and to handle the challenge of unionization is unfounded as we have demonstrated time and time again our willingness and ability to organize. After all, we may be students but we are also working professionals. We make meaningful contributions to our respective fields and even prior to attending our graduate course of study, the majority of us have spent years employed in our fields.

Being able to collectively bargain in our own unit, will allow graduate workers to improve our living and working conditions. Inevitably, this will result in hiring from a more diverse and typically underrepresented background, bringing not only monetary value but intellectual and cultural contributions to the university and Hawai'i as a whole.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:50:44 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anna Ezzy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Kim and Aquino, Vice Chairs Kidani and Moriwaki and honorable members of the Committees,

My name is Anna Ezzy, and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo in Tropical Conservation Biology and Environmental Science. I’m writing in support of SB3317, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

As a graduate worker at UH Hilo, I see firsthand how my colleagues who are research assistants struggle to find funding and scholarships to cover the cost of their tuition while research assistants at UH Mānoa automatically have the cost of tuition covered through tuition waivers. Even though my UH Hilo colleagues’ work provides crucial insights into Hawai‘i’s ecology, to protect endangered native species, as well as prepare our islands for a changing climate, their funding remains precarious despite working for the same University system as folks at Mānoa. This inequity is one of many compelling reasons why graduate student workers across the UH system require a bargaining unit.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address our concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai‘i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai‘i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years.

Mahalo for your consideration, please pass SB3317 favorably out of committee.

Sincerely,

Anna Ezzy

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 10:52:14 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kevin Faccenda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB3317 creating a new collective bargaining unit for Graduate Assistants (GAs) at the University of Hawai'i system (UH). Now that the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board has declared the GAs are UH are public employees under Chapter 89 of HRS, we must be placed in a collective bargaining unit. Unfortunately, none of the existing collective bargaining units meet the needs of GAs. For example we do not want our paycheck to go towards retirement, nor do our grievances with UH have much overlap with other existing units.

I am a GA at UH where I have been working for the past 4 years. This position is far more work than it is to study and we would do best to negotiate with UH directly, without the needs of other bargaining units interfering.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kevin Faccenda

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:04:16 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tatsuki Kohatsu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Tatsuki Kohatsu. I am a graduate student from Department of Geography and Environment at UH Manoa, and I support SB3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:45:14 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joan Pan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB 3317. Thank you.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:03:55 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcus Peng	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose SB 3317

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:42:07 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
grant goin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm Grant Thomas Ryo Ka'ehukai Goin, and I support SB 3317 in its current form.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:40:53 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ayah Abdo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am an undergraduate student at UH Manoa and would not be able to complete my work or education without the help of the TAs and graduate students. They come up with amazing lesson plans and are always available for extra help. It is extremely detrimental to all the students here at UH Manoa for the TAs to have unfair treatment and pay as they are a staple of our education.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:16:24 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeremy Silva	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Chair Sen Henry Aquino and Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki of the Senate Labor and Technology Committee, as well as Chair Sen Donna Mercado Kim and Vice Chair Michelle Kidani of the Higher Education Committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of SB 3317.

My name is Jeremy Silva, I am a PhD student and TA in the University of Hawaii at Manoa Department of Sociology. I'm a 20 year resident of Waipahu where I am represented in the House by Rep. Rachele F. Lamosao and in the Senate by Sen. Henry J. Aquino. I'm writing in strong support of SB 3317, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the University of Hawaii system.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 5:28:37 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

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

Comments:

Graduate student assistants do much of the labor of academia, and yet live precariously. They deserve the right of collective bargaining like all workers. I urge your strong support of this bill.
Thank you,

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 7:10:05 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alex Narrajos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Alex Narrajos and I am a MA student in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning and a GA in the College of Education at University of Hawai'i at Manoa. I strongly support SB 3317.

-Alex Narrajos

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:23:32 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sam Walker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a Graduate Research Assistant at the University of Hawaii, and I support this bill in the strongest possible terms. GAs like myself are often struggling to make ends meet, having to find alternative means to support ourselves because the University of Hawaii does not pay us in a manner commensurate with the work that we do to keep the university functioning. The needs of graduate assistants are unique among state employees, and it is therefore only right that we be allowed to collectively bargain in a manner uniquely determined by ourselves, to ensure that we can fight as one student body for more equitable pay and working conditions. Alone we beg, united we bargain. Thank you for your time.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 7:41:03 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nadia Levine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:07:57 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carissa Chew	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Carissa Chew, I am a third year PhD student in the History Department at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, where I am currently employed as a Graduate Assistant. Living in Manoa Valley, my House Representative is Andrew Takuya Garrett and my Senate Representative is Carol Fukunaga. I am writing in support of SB3317, as I believe graduate workers like me should be provided with an essential collective bargaining unit. As an international student on an F-1 visa, I have been a graduate worker at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa for three consecutive years now. Taking up a graduate assistantship is the only way I've been able to legally support myself through my PhD whilst meeting my visa requirements. I teach three sections of 20 students per semester (60 students) for World History classes, and my responsibilities include preparing and leading lab sessions, grading coursework and exams, and holding office hours. I am paid for 20 hours of work a week, but often work beyond these hours during mid-term and finals weeks. On my current contract, I'm ineligible for any type of overtime pay, yet I earn below the living wage in Hawai'i for a single person. This makes it very difficult to afford rent, food, and medical expenses despite spending most of my time studying and working. My PhD research explores mixed-race identity in colonial East Africa in the period 1940-1980, making an essential contribution to mixed-race studies in a transnational and decolonial context whilst bringing African history into perspective within Hawai'i's academic circles. I therefore urge you to pass SB3317 and allow UH graduate workers to take ownership of their contract negotiations and bargain directly with the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents to improve their working and living conditions. We deserve the same rights as other graduate student unions in the US continent.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 7:41:25 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Malie Grace	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB3317

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 7:41:36 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gabriel Lorence Ildfonso	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB3317

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 7:41:44 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kailah Vergara	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am supporting this bill

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 7:42:47 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kylie Trang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:01:58 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alia Jeraj	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha kākou,

Mahalo nui fo heaing this bill. As a Graduate Student Worker, I am writing in strong support of SB 3317. The University of Hawai'i runs on graduate student workers—the majority of undergraduate students have us as instructors, and we support our departments in tangible ways. As a GA I work to keep my department's social media and website active—my contributions are directly tied to new student enrollment at UH, both as undergraduate and graduate students.

Graduate Student Workers deserve the be recognized fo our contributions to the university.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and dedication to higher education in the state of Hawai'i,

Alia Jeraj

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 7:48:16 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support SB331. I understand what a lot of graduate students go through daily. They spend a lot of time on undergrad classes and school projects with too little pay to survive in Hawai'i.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 7:50:19 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Mark Villanueva	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

He is very approachable which fosters a comfortable learning atmosphere both in our lectures and labs. He is able to encourage students to get help and clarification without hesitation, whether through in-person, email, or his office hours. He has excellent communication skills as well and gave us access to many helpful educational resources related to our class. He also has the mastery of the subject matter and he delivers information in class that are helpful in our topics. He also engages students both in the class and lab.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:01:03 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marina Karides	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I have witnessed the organizational efforts of our graduate students, the kindness and care they show to each other, and for Hawaii. The benefits this bill will provide is an advantage to all who live in Hawaii. Graduate students, who bear a large work load at the University of Hawaii and campuses across the US, should have the ability to represent their concerns and needs so that they can execute the labor required of their position, including the education of our youth, in a sastified and fruitful manner.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 10:00:55 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victoria Assad	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Victoria Assad, I live in Palolo Valley and am a Ph.D. candidate in Oceanography at University of Hawai'i at Manoa. I'm writing in support of SB 3317, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

For the past four years I have been a Graduate Assistant at UH, first as a Research Assistant and as of Fall 2023 am a Teaching Assistant for OCN 201 "Science of the Sea". As a TA I run a 3hour lab every week. During which I prepare a short lecture, demonstrate the lab activities, assist students through the lab itself, and then grade lab workbooks as well as weekly quizzes. Additionally, I lead discussion sections for the lecture course, this includes grading pre- and post-discussion assignments, and a short lecture at the beginning of class. I am also often the point of contact between the students and the lecturers. My TA position is paid for 20 hours of work per week, but I often work beyond these set hours, and yet I am ineligible for any overtime pay. I love my students, and I love my job, but it does not support a stable life on the island.

To fulfill my degree requirements I am working on research that is focused on establishing a community baseline in an area that is currently allocated for deep-sea mining in the Eastern Tropical Pacific ocean. My work provides crucial community information that will influence regulations on the international level as it is the first study of its kind and regulations regarding deep-sea mining have yet to be completed.

Despite all my hard work and labor that I provide the University as both a TA and researcher, I often find it difficult to manage living in Hawai'i on the salary provided by UH, where I spend ~60% of my monthly salary on bills alone, and after gas and grocery expenses, often have less than 10% leftover at the end of the month. This is impossible to live on if any emergencies come up. Between 2021-2022 I had three ER visits that amounted to thousands of dollars worth of medical bills, if not for the hospital's financial relief application, I would have been unable to pay those bills off of my current salary.

Additionally, in summer 2022 my father passed away, as my younger sister was only 12 days away from graduating college, my older sister estranged from him, and my parents divorced, I was responsible for the majority of memorial and burial expenses. I had to navigate healthcare

changes, phone bill changes, etc. and support my younger sister with that along the way. My research assistant salary at the time did not support me enough to pay any of these bills.

This experience cost a large portion of my savings, and has left me with little left to support myself in case of other emergencies, as my current TA salary does not allow me to put much of anything away for a 'rainy day'. This should not continue happening. No person, graduate student or not, should have to drain their savings to bury their parent, especially when working 40+ hours a week. I have found myself having to sign up to pet-sit as a way to make ends meet, however as this is a 'gig' job it is not consistent and due to my degree and teaching commitments, I can only take so many jobs a month. For reference, my TA salary is \$17,000 below the annual recommended living wage in Hawai'i for a single person with no dependents.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

Victoria Assad

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 9:57:37 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Nightingale	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB 3317

Dear Senators and Representatives,

I am a faculty member at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa living in Pauoa Valley, represented by Jenna Takenouchi in the House and Karl Rhoads in the senate. I am writing to support SB 3317 which will allow graduate students to form a union.

I have been a faculty member at UHM since 1985 and for almost 40 years I have worked side-by-side with many, many graduate students who do a great deal of the work of the university. They teach classes, conduct review sessions, tutor students in writing and in their subject matter, oversee student clubs and projects, share in academic advising, and serve as role models for undergraduate students. They also serve as researchers and help run departments and offices. This is all in addition to their own demanding school work.

I have enormous respect for my graduate students and fully support their goal of unionizing. They are in many ways my colleagues, yet they are subject to faculty and administrative authority that can be abused and against which they have little recourse. They need a union.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:07:16 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cynthia Franklin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Cynthia Franklin and I am testifying in full support of SB 3317. I am a professor of English at the University of Hawai'i. I have worked with graduate students since coming to UH in 1994, and with ALU members since its formation in 2017. As has been evident today, their organizing has been principled, impressive, and inspiring. It is imperative that they have a union of their own that allows them collective bargaining rights.

When in the PhD program at UC Berkeley, I was part of graduate students' efforts to unionize. I did so because it was almost impossible to make ends meet under our poor labor conditions. Health care, sick leave, semi-fair pay: these were all things we needed and deserved as workers, and so we could succeed as graduate students, too.

Decades later, conditions for graduate student workers have worsened, and they are particularly bad here. Everyone who goes grocery shopping knows this. Everyone who pays rent or utilities or has bought a house or condo knows this. Imagine trying to live on just over \$20,000 a year! In addition to the right and need to be able to bargain for fair pay, graduate student workers need protection from workplace abuses.

Graduate student workers are essential to UH, and all the more so with the erosion of faculty in tenure track positions. They need and deserve a union of their own. This bill specifies the creation of a new BU and this is critical: for student workers to be part of Unit 7 or 8 poses a direct conflict of interest. It would put students in the position of belonging to the same unit as their direct supervisors, the UH faculty, some of whom graduate student workers might have grievances against. UH admin are not part of the faculty union and by the same logic, graduate student workers should not be part of the same unit as UH faculty or staff who are in positions of power over them. Unit 13 does not cover teaching positions. All three of these units also have very different working conditions.

Graduate student workers need and deserve a union of their own. As a faculty member, I have the utmost respect for these workers, and know that faculty and students depend upon the crucial labor that they perform and the excellence they bring to the UH system. Passing SB 3317 is the fair and right thing to do.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 9:53:32 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Corwynn Madrone	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB 3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 9:44:20 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ashley Clark	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm a grad student at UH Mānoa and I support SB3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 9:37:19 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Olivia Meyer	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

To Chair Sen Henry Aquino and Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki of the Senate Labor and Technology Committee, as well as Chair Sen Donna Mercado Kim and Vice Chair Michelle Kidani of the Higher Education Committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of SB 3317.

My name is Olivia Meyer, and I am a graduate worker. I study and work in the UH Department of Geography and Environment and live in Manoa Valley. I am writing to support SB 3317, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for UH graduate workers.

I came to graduate school to pursue a career in research and teaching on pressing environmental issues. I have been at UH since 2021 and received several large grants, including a fellowship of \$35,000 that raised UH's status and recognition nationally. Beyond metrics officially recognized by the university, I have worked hard to build community within my department, in my international and Southeast Asian studies community, and beyond the university by getting involved with local and global environmental justice and labor issues.

While I love my research, professors and mentors, student mentees, and classmates, I also want UH to be a better place for all of them. During my studies at UH, I have witnessed students experience extreme workplace abuse and injustice. My friend experienced repeated verbal abuse from her supervisor, but her entire funding position relies on maintaining the relationship. During a crisis, one of my friends had to drop out of school entirely due to a lack of paid time off. Many friends work multiple jobs to afford even the necessities of living in Hawai'i. Numerous friends have been unable to seek justice through the Title IX process and remain disempowered by university procedures. I have talked to many Graduate Assistants who consistently work double the hours of their contractual obligations. Our entire community suffers when we are not able to support one another. A harm for one is a harm for all.

At my master's institution in Kentucky, Teaching Assistants in my department make roughly the same amount of money as they do at UH. While neither is remotely sufficient, the difference is the cost of living. They live in one of the most affordable states, while Hawaii ranks in the top-most expensive (US News & World Report). Graduate Assistants completing a Ph.D. (which typically takes five years or more) received a guarantee of at least three years of funding, whereas here, students receive no such guarantee. Ph.D. students are often offered a single-year contract while others arrive with no funding but with the supposed promise of abundant GA-ships that can take months or multiple semesters to materialize. These experiences have shown me that we do not need to accept the conditions at UH.

As a former graduate union organizer in Kentucky, I also have seen the willingness of graduate students to pay dues even in a right-to-work state. Academic Labor United is equipped and ready to receive recognition and go to the bargaining table. Upon receiving recognition, we are ready to collect dues. A collective bargaining unit would allow us to negotiate the terms of our employment and reduce the precarity produced by single-year contracts and lack of representation. SB 3317 would create a pathway for graduate student workers to address the concerns across the university schools and colleges. It would create a bargaining unit that allows us to bargain directly with our employers. Doing so would enable us to improve our living and working conditions, improving our capacity as educators, mentors, and engaged community members.

Graduate Assistants are public employees, as classified by the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board. We deserve the right to collectively bargain and to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature will grant us this opportunity to do what many other unionized graduate assistants across the US have been doing for the past 50 years. I appreciate your consideration.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:09:46 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Louise Economy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Louise Economy, support SB3317 in its current form.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 9:37:03 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gabrielle Stedman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Gabrielle Stedman. I am a Graduate Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i and live in Makiki. I support SB3317 to secure the right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

Graduate workers in the UH system have been taken advantage of as cheap labor for far too long, while access to our rightful resources as contributing members of this state institution has been continuously gatekept from us. We, graduate workers at UH, perform fundamental services to this state university including: executing administrative tasks, teaching, mentoring, contributing intellectual property, and publishing research. In return, we are exceptionally poorly compensated and lack protections from abuse.

UH has some of the lowest-paid graduate assistantships relative to the cost of living in the nation, with some departments, until recently, offering salary below the poverty line. Too many of us can tell you a story directly affecting us or our colleagues regarding harassment, workplace violence, and unsafe or hazardous working conditions. To complicate this further, there is a power structure affecting graduate workers and retaliation is common in these abusive situations. We are dependent on our bosses for not just salary, but also for our data, publishing our intellectual property, writing letters of recommendation, and granting of degrees. UH system has avoided any responsibility for this longstanding abuse for decades, typically covering up cases, or attempting to mitigate abuse on a case-by-case basis.

We are here to learn and to give back to education. And quite frankly the University is standing in our way. I urge you to listen to the stories of UH’s Graduate workers — stories of abuse, poor working conditions, unfair compensation, and other grievances. Education, ideas, dreams, worth, and safety should never be compromised by a need to navigate around institutional abuse. As public employees, all Graduate workers deserve the right to collectively negotiate. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai‘i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. Please pass SB3317 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolution to the issues we universally face — not just at some convenient time, or for some departments. But now, for all, into the future.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:07:52 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
jaeho kook	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Chair Sen Henry Aquino and Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki of the Senate Labor and Technology Committee, as well as Chair Sen Donna Mercado Kim and Vice Chair Michelle Kidani of the Higher Education Committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of SB 3317.

Hi, I am Jaeho Kook, a PhD student in the sociology department and a graduate assistant working in the psychology department. I'm writing in support of SB 3317, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

I am working on several projects that the social determinant lab of the UHM proceeded in the last three years. Those projects have aimed to solve the social problems of Hawaii and improve the well-being of the people in Hawaii. I am proud of myself for working for the people living in our communities and endeavoring to make better society. However, the rewards that I have got make me feel that my social commitment has betrayed me; the more social work I have done, the more I feel that I am not in the beneficiary of those social work. The payment is not enough to serve myself alone, considering the extraordinarily expensive living cost of Hawaii. I even have a newborn last year and my and my family's quality of living has been more deteriorated. Within the limited budget, we cannot afford for daycare for our baby; consequently, I am in full charge of taking care of my baby, and it really affects the baby's growth and my work and study. We are even starting to talk about the possibility of continuing our living here.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 9:28:02 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jamaica Osorio	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Dr. Jamaica H. Osorio. I am an associate professor of indigenous and native hawaiian politics at the university of Hawai'i at mānoa and **i strongly support SB 3317.**

The univeristy would not survive without graduate student labor. Across our campus graduate students offer core curriculum, support faculty research initiatives, and coordinate/manage critically important programs to serve students. Graduate student labor is critical in maintaining the quality of eductaional offerings we offer on our campus.

Furthermore, following the 2024 Hawai'i supreme court ruling that estblished our graduate student employees are in fact public workers, the state is legally bound to not impeded their right to collectively bargain. In this case, the right thing and the legally required thing are fully aligned and therefore the legistalture should act swiftly to support this measure by passing SB3317 and any partnered bills on the house side.

Mahalo,

Jamaica Osorio

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:32:23 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Wiwik Dharmiasih	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB 3317

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:08:38 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mari Yoshihara	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a Professor American Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, where I have been working since 1997 as a member of UHPA. During my twenty-six years at UHM, I have taught and mentored dozens of graduate students, and I am currently serving as the Graduate Chair of American Studies for the third time. Both from my standpoint as a faculty member working with graduate students and my personal experience as once a graduate student, I firmly support SB3317 which would create a collective bargaining unit for graduate students.

As is the case with most graduate students in U.S. higher education, graduate students at UH are--and should be--simultaneously students training for their academic/professional careers and workers serving critical functions in the university as instructors, research assistants, and/or administrative support staff. Fulfilling both of these roles during their time at UH is not only important to their academic and professional training but also for the advancing the educational and research mission of the university. Both from my former experience as a graduate student at a private university on the U.S. continent and from my knowledge of current graduate education landscape nationally, I know that the working conditions of graduate students at UHM are far from favorable compared to those of peer institutions. This makes it difficult not only for our graduate students to progress toward degree in a timely fashion as they often have to juggle their academic work with multiple jobs to make a living, but also for UHM to recruit strong graduate students and to maintain high quality education and research activities. In order to maintain and elevate the level of graduate training and the overall educational and scholarly mission of UHM, it is crucial that graduate students have the rights, privileges, and protection as essential workers in the state. Passing of HB3317 is a right first step toward this goal. I hope you all agree.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 9:21:08 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support SB 3317. As a former graduate assistant from 2018-2023 and now a faculty member at UH Manoa, I understand the value of a bargaining unit to advocate for improved working and living conditions. Graduate student workers are public employees, making daily university operations possible and co-leading deliverables on competitive private and public grants. We, as a university, collectively benefit from graduate student work, and they are entitled to collective bargaining opportunities provided to other public employees.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:46:59 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Meagan Harden	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Written Testimony for HB2720

Meagan Harden, PhD Candidate in Geography at UH Manoa

Aloha, and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 27203317 which would establish a collective bargaining unit for graduate students employed by UH.

During my first two years as a PhD student at UH Manoa, I worked as a Teaching Assistant. For four semesters, I provided TA support to a total of 400 students in World Regional Geography, 140 students in Geography of Japan, and 140 students in Geography of Hawaii. In this role, I was responsible for creating and evaluating assignments, providing personalized feedback and remediation plans, and even delivering lectures and creating course content to the nearly 700 undergraduates enrolled in these classes. These tasks are typical of the kind of work that graduate assistants provide at the University of Hawaii.

When my grandmother passed away from covid in 2020, I relied on the goodwill of my supervisor to attend her funeral. I was lucky to have a kind supervisor, but not everyone does; I could have missed my only opportunity to say goodbye to my grandma alongside my family. A collective bargaining unit will make sure that situations like these, where TAs are dealing with very real and very personal problems, are navigated fairly and equitably.

When I changed health insurance coverage last year, it took three months for my employee health insurance paperwork to be properly processed. For three months, I had to put pressing health concerns on the backburner while I waited for reassurance that addressing my health wouldn't put me even further into debt. Again, a collective bargaining unit will help ensure that employees have avenues for support in situations like these.

I now work as a lecturer, which means that I have a TA assigned to me for support in my World Regional Geography class. As her supervisor, it's completely up to me to make sure that her work environment isn't hostile, unsupportive, or unsafe. My TA should have an entity that is not her supervisor looking out for her, and that avenue should be permitted and supported by the state that employs her.

It is already an exceptional privilege to pursue graduate studies, and the lack of basic worker's rights are making grad school even more financially exclusive. When my former students ask me to write them letters of recommendation for grad school applications, I feel obligated to warn them that it's precarious to be a graduate student at UH, and that I strongly recommend looking outside of Hawaii for graduate studies. The state of Hawai'i needs to support TAs, so that we can continue to support our students. Thank you.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 9:09:37 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Benjamin West	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Benjamin West, I am a Graduate Assistant at UH Manoa's Art & Art History Department and I strongly support SB 3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 9:05:22 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aaron Donaldson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am Aaron Donaldson, I am a Veteran, a PhD student, and Graduate research assistant in the Political Science department at UH Mānoa. As a student veteran, academic professional, community youth mentor, husband, and father, I strongly support SB 3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 9:00:28 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ivy Wappler	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a graduate assistant at UH Manoa, I wholeheartedly support SB 3317.

Ivy Wappler

MA Student

Geography and Environment

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:57:17 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Karen Lee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:56:44 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Foley Pfalzgraf	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Chairs Aquino and Kim and Vice Chairs Moriwaki and Kidani, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

My name is Foley Pfalzgraf and I am represented by Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi and Sen. Stanley Chung. I am a Faculty Specialist at the University of Hawai'i where I help to manage and implement a \$2 million federal grant focused on expanding educational resources and opportunities for learning about the Pacific Islands and Pacific languages. I find this work to be deeply fulfilling as well as high-impact. During my graduate studies at the same institution I was a graduate assistant for two years. While I held that role, I had previously earned two master's degrees and was approaching ABD status for my doctoral degree. I was responsible for outreach and recruitment for students interested in AmeriCorps opportunities. While I served as graduate student worker, I was unable to afford the high living costs of Honolulu and consistently worked several jobs to make ends meet or to obtain health insurance, which was not included in my particular role. Despite having at least 4 years of prior work experience, my annual salary was around \$20,000. At times it felt like drowning, I was pursuing higher education to obtain a well paying job and stable post graduate career, and yet every month my savings dwindled and my loan balances increased. Despite the stress, I cannot overstate how grateful I am for the opportunity to pursue a doctoral degree, I have learned perhaps greater than a lifetime's worth of knowledge and found joy in the texts I studied, the students I taught, and even the grants I wrote for the university. To be a student or a teacher can be a joy, if one can afford to buy lunch.

Please take this testimony as my ardent support for graduate student collective bargaining as described in HB 2720 / SB 3317.

Mahalo,

Foley Pfalzgraf

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:50:24 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Reece Jones	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB3317. I am a professor at UH and the chair of the Department of Geography and Environment, but I am submitting this testimony in my personal capacity. Graduate student teaching assistants are important workers at the university and they should be represented collectively by a union. This is an important and necessary bill that creates a bargaining unit for them.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:51:09 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pua'ena Ahn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Pua'ena Ahn and I support the establishment of a collective bargaining unit for UH system graduate assistants, who are, as determined by the HLRB public employees. Graduate assistants are a critical component of the University of Hawai'i's laborforce and infrastructure, and have been and will continue to be done a disservice in the absence of an established and recognized collective bargaining unit. This bill is an attempt to remedy that, and thus warrants passage and enactment. Mahalo.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:13:34 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dorilyn Toledo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm Dorilyn Toledo, a graduate student at UH in American Studies, and I support HB 2720 and SB 3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:21:53 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Orhon Myadar	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I wholeheartedly support SB3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:23:49 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaiqing Su	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair Sen Henry Aquino and Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki of the Senate Labor and Technology Committee, as well as Chair Sen Donna Mercado Kim and Vice Chair Michelle Kidani of the Higher Education Committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to submit testimony.

My name is Kaiqing Su. I am a Graduate Assistant at the Political Science Department at UH Mānoa, and a first-year student studying the politics of infrastructure in the Pacific. I am also an international student coming from Guangzhou, China. And I feel extremely grateful for the opportunity to pursue my passion and study in Hawai'i. I am writing to show my strong support for SB 3317 to create bargaining unit 16 for graduate workers in Hawai'i.

International workers like me often face unique challenges. In my first year at UH as an MA student, I had the opportunity to get a GAship outside of my department in Political Science. Because of the limited venue of income (i.e. this is the only job we can take, and any other jobs will be illegal under our student visa status), I especially cherish this GAship. Since this was my first GAship, I didn't know what to expect, how to negotiate, and how to keep my boundaries. My eagerness to do my job well and the fear of losing it also made me vulnerable when my supervisor made requests such as working after hours, even after midnight. Sometimes I was handed tasks that I am capable of doing but weren't listed in the job descriptions, such as TAing a class that was outside of the College of Social Sciences (i.e. outside my own expertise). I lost control of my time and got extremely anxious whenever a task was assigned to me. I wasn't able to do well in my school work and was always near the edge of an emotional breakdown. I couldn't address this directly to my supervisor because I sincerely respect them and support their work as a student, but I didn't know how to confront them as an employee. It wasn't until my friend who was also a GA noticed how unwell I was doing that I realized I shouldn't be taking all the blame, and I have the right to say no to unreasonable asks. I realized how important it is to have a community of workers together, to share our stories, to heal, to support each other, and to see the blind spots that are unacknowledged because we were immersed in unhealthy relationships and feeling utterly alone. I also wish I had learned how to negotiate my job expectations and communicate my needs instead of relying on the mercy of individual supervisors.

In 2023, when I was deciding between two PhD programs--one at the University of Minnesota, the other here, at UH Mānoa--I almost chose the former, because the University of Minnesota has a guaranteed funding of 5 years (instead of having to apply for GAship and be sacred of job

instability every year), and their graduate students were just freshly unionized. But I decided to stay. Not only because I appreciate intellectual discussion, the educational environment, community in Hawai'i, but because I am committed to building a union for fellow UH GAs, and in the future, hopefully, lecturers and post-docs. All of us made the economically unwise decision to be here because we are passionate. After all, we care. After all, we want to foster something beautiful together. We are not alone, and we are determined to get our union together. Please make our decisions worth it.

In the past few months actively participating in Academic Labor United as part of the Executive Committee, I felt both challenged by the vision of unionization and nourished by my fellow workers who are fighting together. We all believe that only by having a union and our own bargaining unit that our studies can really excel and our potential to contribute to the university can be maximized. We greatly appreciate the opportunity for this hearing, and we urge you to give GAs an opportunity to collectively build a better future. Mahalo nui loa.

Respectfully,

Kaiqing Su

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:29:20 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Harold Carlson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB 3317!!!

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:31:52 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dylan Alvarenga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I can't stress enough how important this bill is to us. It does more than give us a voice, it gives the opportunity to make mine and future graduate students the ability to actually focus on what's important during grad school and that's your education. I fully support SB3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:35:18 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ming Li Yong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am Ming Li Yong, a Research Fellow at the East-West Center. I am writing in support of HB2720 that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of UH and the community college system. I work closely with and play a mentoring role to University of Hawai'i's graduate students. Graduate student workers play a critical role in keeping various academic operations and events on campus running and organized. In a summer field school program in Southeast Asia that I ran with the Department of Geography and Environment, our graduate student worker played a leading role in designing curriculum, logistical arrangements, and providing on-the-ground support for the program. As an educator and former graduate student myself, I know that universities can only be successful because of the labor put in by graduate student workers who play a key role in teaching and grading for university courses. Having worked closely with UH graduate student workers, especially those who part of our center's education program, I have heard first-hand about the struggles they face in securing funding to support the entire course of their graduate programs, and their struggles in coping with the high costs of living in Honolulu. The circumstances for international graduate students are even more precarious as funding options are limited, and their working hours are also limited by their visa conditions. When faced with a raise in housing rates, many students fell into food insecurity and had to be provided with additional food donations. I strongly believe that student workers should be able to collectively and directly bargain with their employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents to improve their working conditions and to take ownership of their contract negotiations. I hope that the legislature will grant them the opportunity to bargain for their rights, which their counterparts in the mainland have been doing for decades. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Ming Li Yong, Ph.D.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:44:32 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Benjamin Wiseman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Legislatures,

I am a Graduate Research Assistant at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa, a PhD student in Tropical Plant Pathology, and an alumna of the Tropical Plant and Soil Science Master of Science program at UH Manoa. I am writing to support SB 3317 Relating to Collective Bargaining.

During my master’s research, I studied how to improve the postharvest shelf-life of breadfruit (‘ulu) to help increase its marketability in Hawai‘i. The research was funded by the United States Department of Agriculture through a grant to the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa and helped solve marketing challenges faced by breadfruit growers and processors in Hawai‘i. My PhD research is also funded by the United States Department of Agriculture through UH Manoa and I am researching organic pest management for sweet potatoes. During my time at UH, I have been first author on two extension articles and one peer-reviewed journal article and contributed to two additional articles. I expect to double my publications in the next two years as I complete my PhD. I have also helped lead farmer training events through the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Research. Last semester I wrote a proposal to bring in \$35,000 of external money to my department to support continued research on sweet potato pest management. I am able to do this work for the university and the state due to my compensation as a graduate research assistant.

Working as a graduate assistant is a vulnerable position because our academic advisors are often also our work supervisors. This vulnerable dynamic is acknowledged by the university in training materials on workers rights, but there are few practical options available to students facing harmful work conditions. There is need for graduate assistants to have better protection as workers to protect us in our role as workers at the university.

In considering if graduate assistants deserve the same bargaining rights as other employees of the university, it is important to consider that graduate assistants are in many cases doing the same jobs that were once assigned to full time employees of the university. I am a student in the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Research (CTAHR). Years ago, CTAHR had a large staff to manage research facilities like greenhouses and research farms. Over the years, CTAHR staff positions have been cut, and in many cases the tasks previously assigned to full-time staff have been assigned to graduate assistants. Graduate assistants work in various roles for CTAHR from completing maintenance like cleaning greenhouses to leadership roles like managing lab

activities. The university has transitioned jobs previously assigned to full time employees to graduate assistants, so graduate assistants certainly deserve the same bargaining rights that the staff they replace once had.

SB 3317 opens a pathway for graduate assistants like me to improve our living and working conditions at the University of Hawai'i. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. I believe that the best path forward is for graduate assistants to take ownership of our contract negotiations. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ben Wiseman

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:45:17 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeffrey Drazen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Graduate students are state workers and are unevenly paid across campus without the ability to address this serious inequity. Thus I fully support this bill.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:51:27 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ken Reyes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou,

My name is Ken Reyes, a PhD candidate in Political Science at UH. I live in Makiki, which is represented by Sen. Carol Fukunaga and Rep. Della Au Bellati. I'm writing in full support of SB 3317, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system.

I intend on getting a graduate assistantship in the fall and I am worried that the pay will not be enough to provide for myself and my family that I support. During these last several semesters, I witnessed my colleagues working tirelessly while still producing excellent scholarship for coursework, conferences, and other academic endeavors. But sometimes, this comes at the expense of their health — many are overworked by their supervisors, many are supplementing their inadequate university income by working other jobs, and many are skipping meals and struggling to make ends meet.

As an R1 university, UH relies on the labor of GAs to acquire new grants, produce groundbreaking research, and practice innovative teaching — this labor is simply essential to keep our university's standing among institutions that rank highly in research and scholarship. The university thrives because of graduate workers' commitment and dedication to our good work. However, producing this is unsustainable if we are hungry, tired, sick, and overwhelmed.

Negotiating with UH will not become possible without our own union, which would allow us to raise our concerns, advocate for each other, and continue to thrive as essential members of this university and community.

Mahalo nui for allowing us to be heard. We hope that you will support this bill and allow us to unionize. It's good for us and our families, it's good for the university, and it's good for the community.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:51:36 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alan Tong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Hawaii State Legislature,

My name is Alan Tong, a graduate Student at Univerisity of Hawai'i Manoa writing in support of HB2720. I grew up in Makaha, went to high school in Pearl City, and now rent a home in Manoa with 3 other graduate students. I am represented in the House by Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett and in the Senate by Sen. Carol Fukunaga. I am born and raised here, from legal immigrants of Vietnam working low class labour.

As a mathematics PhD student, I have worked both as a teaching assistant and as a research assistant. Almost every student getting a degree in the UH system must have a mathematics credit, either by taking a course or by taking a placement exam. Regardless, teaching assistants run both. As a researcher, I help to solve problems in Hawai'i with COVID19 modeling and now sustainability. For the work, we get paid our tuition and a yearly stipend of about \$20,000. Compared to the MIT's living wage estimation for Hawai'i of \$47,341, which accounts for the costs of living, the discrepency is what a statician would call "significant".

After my monthly bills, I take home \$150, still yet to be spend on food or gasoline. I live on SNAP and spite. I support SB3317 because it will change my life dramatically. A bargaining unit will certainly give me better living conditions by allowing me to collectively bargain alongside the other educators and researchers experiencing the same hardships I do. I made a promise to myself that as a youth of Hawai'i, I would not abandon it and move to California like my friends have; instead, I would stay and help to improve the issues of Hawai'i. SB3317 is part of that improvement. Thank you for considering my letter.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 12:52:50 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dakota Hafalia	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB3317

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:10:08 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ella Malie Turner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm Ella Mālie Turner, a student at UH Mānoa, and I believe a graduate student union is a necessity at our campus. Therefore, I support SB 3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:13:10 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacob B Shearer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Jacob Shearer, I am a graduate student at UH, and I hope to becoming a graduate student worker in the coming year. I want to be able to collectively bargain alongside my coworkers in the future. I support this bill.

Mahalo,

Jacob Shearer

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:13:28 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shree Deshpande	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Shree Deshpande and I am a PhD canddiate and graduate assistant in the Political Science department at UH-Mānoa. I support SB3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:14:36 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kenji Cataldo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB3317. As a graduate student worker, I feel creating our own bargaining unit 16 is the best way for our voices and interests to be represented.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:17:40 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Abigail Hawkins	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Abigail Hawkins, I am a graduate student worker, and I support SB3317. I believe that scholars today deserve to get compensated appropriately as well as treated justly for the numerous invaluable contributions they make both to the academy and to society at large.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:24:23 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Camilo Mora	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB 3317 as a UH faculty member.

To Chair Henry Aquino and Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki of the Labor and Technology Committee as well as Chair Donna Kim and Vice Chair Michelle Kidani of the Higher Education Committee thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of SB 3317.

My name is Gabriella Contratto, an MA student in English. I live in Waikiki, and I'm represented in the Senate by Sen. Sharon Moriwaka and the house by Rep. Adrian Tam. I'm writing in support of SB 3317, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of UH and the CC system.

Currently I work in the Writing Center as a Tutor, helping students from all departments with any writing they need assistance with. This ranges from Freshman struggling with grammar in ENG 100 classes, to seniors brainstorming their thesis, all the way up to PHD students preparing a presentation so they can apply for grants. I also am one of the workshop coordinators for the center and help to create/revise workshops we deliver in class to any teacher who requests them. These include lessons in how to cite in MLA and APA as well as basic writing skills like grammar and thesis construction. Last semester I had 35 appointments in addition to the workshops I delivered. The feedback I received included thanks from a student working on their thesis as well as a student for whom English was not a first language.

As an MA as opposed to a PHD Student I am only allowed to work 10 hours a week and my tuition is not fully covered. MA students only get half a tuition break, and the money we earn from our jobs barely covers the rest of the tuition, leaving me with only a few hundred dollars extra at the end of the year. This leaves no money leftover for food or rent. I survived last semester by the savings I had accumulated before attending UH but am actively looking for a second job to support myself. I would love the opportunity to work more hours, as I believe I provide an important resource for students on campus. Unfortunately, without a union, I have no representation to argue for more hours or even a pathway to opening that conversation.

This bill will create an opportunity for graduate students to address this issue. The ruling on January 4th by the labor board classified us as public employees with the right to collectively bargain to improve our living and working conditions. I hope the committee and legislature gives us the opportunity to bargain for our rights. Thank you for your consideration.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:35:23 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lentina Villa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Lentina Villa. I'm not a graduate student worker but I support SB3317! I support SB3317 as an individual citizen whose child may one day choose to pursue higher education and seek employment as a graduate student worker. I want better rights and working conditions for all graduate student workers.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:35:40 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lilly Fisher	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Sen Henry Aquino and Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki of the Senate Labor and Technology Committee, as well as Chair Sen Donna Mercado Kim and Vice Chair Michelle Kidani of the Higher Education Committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 3317, relating to the creation of a collective bargaining unit for Graduate employees.

My name is Lilly Fisher I live in Saint Louis Heights and am represented in the House by Representative Jackson D. Sayama and in the senate by Senator Les Ihara, Jr. (D); and I am a PhD student and graduate assistant in the American Studies Department at UH Manoa.

Besides attending classes at UH, I serve as managing editor of American Quarterly, the leading academic journal in the field of American Studies. In my capacity as managing editor, I've processed hundreds of manuscript submissions and produced several journal issues that represent some of the best work in my field. During the time I've been at UH I've taken on multiple other forms of part-time employment to make ends meet, as over 60% of my income goes to pay my rent, and I consider myself lucky to be able to do this, since I do not have child care obligations and am not barred from seeking other employment because of a visa.

Still at times, I have felt so overwhelmed by the amount of work I need to do and the time I have to do it in, that I've been uncertain about my ability to earn a degree and pursue a career I'm extremely passionate about. I have friends and colleagues who are enthusiastic about their research and teaching and fully capable of completing their degree, but have had to leave or take indefinite hiatuses from their programs to seek financial stability for themselves and their families. I love my field, I love my job, and I love teaching; and I know that the work that my colleagues and I do is valuable to the UH as an institution, to UH students, and to the larger community. It breaks my heart to know that many talented and eager scholars, teachers, and researchers are unable to pursue higher education because of the financial and emotional strain that can arise from the precarious and unprotected position we are put in as workers.

We cannot continue to address issues of fairness, protection, and accessibility on a case-by-case basis, nor can we rely on individual whistleblowers to address what are *systemic* problems. We deserve a chance stand as collective of workers and to negotiate with our administration for the fair working conditions our community needs, and we have proven that we are capable of doing so. I have been working with ALU for the last two years, and in this time I have

felt confused, frustrated, and disheartened that we have had to fight so hard to get basic forms of support from the state and our employers. In greater measure, however, I have been inspired by the work that has preceded me, by the brilliant, creative, and tenacious graduate student workers that compose ALU's membership, and by the support of so many members of our community who stand in solidarity because they know it will improve the operations of the university and the conditions of workers state-wide. This fight has been going on for years now, and in spite of numerous roadblocks, and our own heavy work and courseloads; we have only gotten more organized, better resourced, and more committed to one another. We will continue to work tirelessly for the rights that we know we deserve, because we genuinely care about keeping each other safe, making higher education accessible for everyone, and know a graduate student union will benefit not only UH but workers in Hawai'i more broadly. We are ready to stand as a collective and represent our own interests - we have been doing it already, for years.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:41:23 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alexus Cazares	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

support SB 3317

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:44:53 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Casey Brinkman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, and thank you very much for the opportunity to submit testimony! My name is Casey Brinkman and I am a 6th year Ph.D Candidate in Astronomy at the University of Hawai'i. I am a graduate assistant and I support SB3317.

In my time as a Ph.D candidate, I have been both a Teaching and Research assistant. I have been the solo instructor for laboratory classes, and I have published numerous papers/recieved awards that have brough attention to my Department's research. My fellow graduate students and myself are who keeps the University running. The University of Hawai'i loves to claim and celebrate their graduate students for the prestige we are able to bestow upon the University, but will not claim us when it comes time to recognizing what we do as labor. We are employees of the University who deserve the right to collectively bargain, just the same as any other state employee, as recognized by the HLRB on January 4th 2024.

The University often claims that we are only half-time employees and therefore our hourly rates are well above minimum wage--however our contracts state that we are forbidden from having a second job, meaning our graduate assistantship is our only source of income. Most of my peers in the Astronomy Department are struggling to get by financially, including myself. We qualify for SNAP benefits and need that assistance in order to feed ourselves. We are severely rent burdened, spending 60% of our income in rent on average (with extremely few options to do otherwise). So much of my mental energy is spent worrying if I'll be able to pay off my credit card this month, if I'll need to move again if my rent goes up, or if I can afford to buy lunch today--mental energy that I should be spending thinking about Exoplanets and writing my dissertation. The worst part of my story is that I belong to one of the highest paid departments at the Univeristy of Hawai'i, and the vast majority of my peers are struggling more than I am.

Passing this bill and allowing the graduate students to be able to collectively bargain for our contracts would give us the ability to improve these conditions. We are not asking for a perfect contract to be handed to us, but meerly for the opportunity to advocate for ourselves and to be able to achieve these goals through hard work. There is precident for this: roughly 120,000 graduate student workers were represented by unions last year across the country, and fourteen schools established graduate student unions in 2023 including Cornell, Stanford, and University of Chicago. I urge the Senate to vote yes on SB3317 to allow the University of Hawai'i to follow suit.

Mahalo for your consideration!

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:49:40 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Randizia Crisostomo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB 3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:49:44 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Davis Rehuher	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Davis Rehuher. I am a PhD student and GA in the Office of Public Health Studies, Thompson School of Social Work and Public Health.

I strongly support SB 3317.

Having a bargaining unit allows graduate assistants/students to have a say in addressing a variety of issues that directly affect their health, wellbeing, and academic standing (e.g., food insecurity, pay equity, unreasonable demands from principal investigators/professors, limited funding for professional development activities such as funding for research and conference expenses, and promotion/recruitment of Indigenous students post graduate staff or faculty positions to reflect student body population, among others).

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:51:40 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Angela Amantite	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm a grad student at University of Hawaii and I support SB3317, please consider the voices of the students and this generation in being able to unionize for better standards of living. I am currently living in poverty as a graduate student.

Mahalo for your consideration

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:52:54 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zac Bailey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a GA at the University of Hawai'i and I support SB3317

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:53:41 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jack Runburg	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Graduate assistants are increasingly important to the functioning of the university. Over the past few years, UHM has come to depend on graduate assistants for teaching, research, and administration at the university. These positions are meant to support graduate assistants as they complete their advanced degrees with no expectation of having another source of income. However, the university has continually failed to provide competitive compensation for these positions. UH GAs have one of the highest if not the highest discrepancies between cost of living and salary when compared to peer and benchmark institutions. Additionally, GAs face high rates of mistreatment from advisors that stems from lack of clear contractual obligations and imbalanced power dynamics.

A bargaining unit and union for the GAs is the only way to address the current issues facing them. I support this bill passing unamended.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:54:36 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ikenna Nometa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Ikenna Nometa, and I'm a graduate student worker. I support SB 3317.

LATE

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 4:19:13 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Yoko Uyehara	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB 3317.

LATE

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 3:59:49 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amiti Maloy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB3317.

LATE

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 3:52:21 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Mostafanezhad	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB 3317!

LATE

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 3:14:16 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jie Lin Chia	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am an MA student at UH Manoa and strongly support SB 3317.

LATE

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 3:13:41 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aron Boettcher	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my wholehearted support for Senate Bill No. SB 3317, "A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING," introduced in the Thirty-Second Legislature, 2024, State of Hawaii. This legislation represents a significant and positive step towards recognizing and solidifying the rights of graduate assistants at the University of Hawaii to engage in collective bargaining.

As someone who fervently believes in the fundamental human right of employees to organize and advocate for their welfare, I see this bill as a crucial advancement. The legislature's acknowledgment of graduate assistants as public employees deserving of representation and collective bargaining rights is not only commendable but essential in ensuring fair labor practices and equitable working conditions in our educational institutions.

The Hawaii Labor Relations Board's determination that graduate assistants are public employees underlines the need for this legislation. By establishing a specific bargaining unit for these individuals, the bill addresses a long-standing gap in labor representation and rights within our higher education system. This move not only aligns with principles of fairness and equity but also with the global understanding that the right to organize is a cornerstone of a just workplace.

Graduate assistants play a pivotal role in the functioning of our universities, contributing significantly to research, teaching, and other academic activities. Despite their contributions, they have often found themselves in a gray area concerning labor rights and protections. The passage of SB 3317 would not only correct this oversight but also serve as a model for how educational institutions and states can recognize and uphold the rights of all employees.

I urge you to support SB 3317 and advocate for its swift passage through the legislative process. In doing so, we affirm our commitment to the rights of workers to organize, negotiate collectively, and contribute to our educational institutions under fair and just conditions.

Thank you for considering my views on this important matter. I look forward to your support for this landmark legislation.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 3:02:10 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lu Biltucci	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Lu Rose Biltucci, and I am a graduate worker at Rutgers University, and member of the Rutgers AAUP-AFT Executive Council, and I support SB3317, as it opens a pathway for graduate student workers to create their own bargaining unit at University of Hawai'i, so they can directly bargain with their employers: the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve their living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified graduate workers at U of H as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. I believe that the best path forward is for graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. At University of Hawai'i, the working conditions of employees are student's learning conditions, and directly impact the quality of education that U of H can provide as a public university. Thank you for your consideration.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:10:05 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cameron Ahia	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Cameron Mahealani Ahia and I support SB 3317.

I have been a member of ALU since its formation in 2017. As a graduate worker, I've been instructor of record for over 15 courses in English Department and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Departments. Graduate students teach a majority of undergraduate general requirement courses. While a GA in English, we taught 60-80% of 100 and 200 level classes. The English department could never afford to pay tenured professors for all of those classes, and the department would literally shut down without the essential teaching labor of graduate students. And when budget cuts reduce the number of GAs funded across campus, the few that remain must pick up the slack. Additionally, English is one of the few departments that still requires graduate students to teach 3 classes a year, as opposed to 2 like all the other departments, for the same amount of money. Now, I love the English department and I'm grateful for the extensive teaching experience, but compensation for the load is not fair. I have held GA-ships in multiple departments over the last few years, and I have seen how the campus standards differ drastically. If we want to attract the best and brightest grad students to UHM, we need to have attractive packages to entice them to come here. To catch up to the times and be a competitive research one university, we need our grad union. We need our own collective bargaining unit that understands our particular needs.

I serve as ALU Grievance Chair. In this role, I hear untold stories of grief, from our workers who are fighting for our right to create our own bargaining union where we can guide the process in which our students find justice. As a Kanaka 'Ōiwi, I center Native Hawaiian values of pilina /relationality and kuleana/responsibilities. In social justice speak, that is care culture and accountability.

As someone from Maui, I have witnessed the grief of my co-workers who worry about losing their jobs traveling back and forth to care for 'ohana, their health care, a fair workload. As it is, we do not have adequate protections. My own dissertation research on Lāhaina's sacred site Moku'ula and its revitalization and Kihawahine - the kia'i of our water ways - shows the integrity and autonomy of our 'āina and our bodies.

As ALU Grievance Chair, a large number of general grievances address gendered and sexual violence. Yes, we have Title IX but justice is often not fulfilled. Having our own collective bargaining unit would allow us to transform the process and campus would be safer for all students. By centering at the piko those voices most harmed, most marginalized, silenced or forgotten, we can collectively work for whole worker well-being. We are already doing this collectively together as ALU. When UH GA's thrive and enact our visions, the university and broader community can all be transformed to a state of pono.

Mahalo!

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:11:34 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lucie Duffy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Lucie Duffy and I am currently completing my MA in Asian Studies at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa. I am a Graduate Assistant for the Asian Studies Department at UH, and I work as both a Teaching Assistant and Conference Organizer in this role. I live in the Ala Moana area of Honolulu, and my representatives are Scott K. Saiki and Sharon Y. Moriwaki. I am writing in support of SB 3317.

This spring, I am a Teaching Assistant for the online course Asia Past and Present: Korea, where I review and grade multiple assignments for 40 students twice a week. I also hold one office hour per week, where students come and ask me for help related to the course. Additionally, I set up the zoom classroom for the Professor every week, and the online classroom portal in its entirety (if you’ve ever tried to use the UH online system, you know this is not an easy task). Last semester (Fall 23), I was a TA for the class Introduction to Asian Studies: South and Southeast Asia, where I graded weekly assignments for over 100 students. In addition to my role as a TA, my Graduate Assistantship also requires me to organize the 2024 School of Pacific and Asian Studies Graduate Student Conference. This is an annual conference held at UHM that features stellar graduate student research from students here, as well as those who come from the mainland USA and internationally overseas. It is the key event in the Asian Studies Department’s yearly calendar, and it is entirely organized by Graduate Assistants.

My Graduate Assistantship pays for 20 hours of work a week, but, every week without fail, I regularly work upwards of these set hours and yet I am ineligible for any type of overtime pay. In addition to working as a Graduate Assistant, I am also a full-time student researching the historical visual media of colonial-era Korea (1910-45). My work expands on the field of research in this time period in an original and nuanced manner, exploring how histories of empire can affect our present. Despite all of my hard work and the labor that I provide the University, which I am very passionate about, in research, conference organizing, and teaching, I struggle immensely to live in Hawai‘i on the salary provided by UH, where the cost of living is extraordinarily high compared to many places on the mainland US. As an international student from the United Kingdom, I am legally only allowed to work 20 hours per week in a position funded by the University to keep my student visa status valid. This means I rely entirely on my Graduate Assistant salary to legally support myself, which is \$17,000 below the annual recommended living wage in Hawai‘i for a single person with no dependants. However, I am from a low-income background and without my position as a Graduate Assistant, I would not be able to afford

to attend UH nor continue my academic studies at all, so this position is central to my livelihood here.

The bill I am writing in support of, SB 3317, would allow graduate student workers like me to address their concerns in the workplace by creating a bargaining unit for us. This means we would be able to directly bargain with our employers, just like any other unionized worker, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4th, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees with the right to collectively bargain. The best path forward for us as graduate student workers is to take ownership of our contract negotiations. The legislature should value the time, labor, and effort we put into supporting the education of Hawai'i's next generation at the University level, as our roles within the UHM system are vital to supporting undergraduate students in their studies and facilitating their learning opportunities. At UHM at least, Graduate Students are the backbone of almost all classroom and learning logistics. We hope the legislature grants us the opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the mainland USA have been doing so for the past 50 years.

Thank you for your consideration.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:13:50 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

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

Comments:

As an previous undergraduate student and current graduate student at UH Mānoa it is absolutely impossible to not recognize the impact graduate asisstants have on our campuses. I know at least half of what I know from University because graduate assistants have not only instructe my courses, but carried our departments, our community organizing movements and more on their backs! They deserve this win! As a future graduate assistant, please vote yes on SB 3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:17:15 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Donavan Albano	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Donovan Kamakani Albano. I am the Co-Chair of the Gender Equity Committee of Academic Labor United, a PhD student in Political Science, and a graduate student worker at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. I am also a Kanaka ‘Ōiwi from Kalihi, O‘ahu. I am writing to submit testimony IN STRONG SUPPORT of SB3317: Relating to Collective Bargaining that establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawai‘i and community college system.

As a māhū Native Hawaiian person, I deserve the opportunity to be able to afford to live comfortably in my native homeland. I deserve to be able to find a place to live on my own and to pursue my doctorate education without concerns of instability. I deserve to be able to see my fellow Indigenous peoples pursue higher education without concerns of instability. I deserve to be able to see fellow LGBTQIA+ and MVPFAFF+ graduate student workers & students not have to face oppression and violence in their workplaces, especially cisheteropatriarchy. We have the opportunity to change that with this bill. If you care deeply about Kānaka ‘Ōiwi communities, whose Native lands you make decisions about and upon, then supporting this bill is critical.

As UH graduate student workers, we have the right to collectively bargain. As a GA myself, I recognize that we are severely underpaid, need to be afforded the opportunity to fight for better working conditions and access to resources, and we make the university run. UH runs on graduate student labor, and yet our living and working conditions are suboptimal. We teach courses, work in labs, conduct research for important departments and offices, and allow for movement to happen within the university. And yet, we are paid below the poverty line, live paycheck to paycheck, can barely afford rent and food, lack medical leave, international students receive delayed payments, workplace abuse, and other things that we should not be subjected to, considering the amount of labor we provide for the university. The University of Hawai‘i could not run without its graduate student workers. We deserve the right to collectively bargain, and exercising that right would help alleviate our concerns. We deserve the opportunity to do so.

We also do not belong in any existing bargaining units that are an option for us. We are being supported by various labor unions throughout Hawai‘i, who recognize the importance for UH graduate student workers to be in our own collective bargaining unit. Graduate student workers have represented themselves at the bargaining table for 50 years to great success, and union

support is increasing, especially among youth. As one of over 1,500 graduate student workers at UH Mānoa, I ask you to support this bill. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:59:40 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brandy McDougall	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in full support of this bill as a UHM associate professor and former graduate assistant at UH. Graduate student employees should have a means for collective bargaining to support fair pay and benefit for the immense labor they do.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:18:48 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Colwill	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. As a faculty member and chair of the American Studies Department at UHM, I write to express my support for SB3317. Graduate student workers in our department --and indeed throughout the university--perform essential labor for the university, teaching discussion sections in large lecture classes, conducting research, and often teaching independently lower-division classes that are essential to the delivery of undergraduate education at UHM. These graduate students are intelligent, skilled, responsible, and devoted to the students in their classrooms, working long hours for low pay as they balance the demands of a challenging educational program with the demands of their labor as graduate assistants. I would add that many of our graduate students are deeply involved with Kānaka Maoli and local communities in Hawai‘i, often remaining on the islands after completing their degrees to play essential roles in teaching, government, non-profits, social services, museum curation, and other professions.

Although graduate assistants' labor is vitally important to the education of Hawai‘i's undergraduates, their pay is woefully inadequate. It is not competitive with peer institutions in the U.S., with the result that many students struggle to buy food at the end of the month or to make rent in a prohibitively expensive housing market, despite the multiple jobs that many take on.

But the right to collective bargaining, as others have stated so eloquently, concerns more than pay alone. It is matter of safety, respect, and dignity. Like other workers in the public sector, these graduate student workers deserve the right to representation and collective bargaining.

As a professor at UHM for the last twelve years, it's clear to me that the collective bargaining process is essential to begin to address the many inequities that graduate student workers encounter and, more broadly, to support the quality of public education in Hawai‘i. I'm proud to support these talented, dedicated graduate students and organizers. Thank you in advance for supporting public education in Hawai‘i through your support for this bill.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Colwill

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:19:12 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ha'ani San Nicolas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am Ha'ani Lucia Falo San Nicolas, I am a PhD/MA student/GA in the Political Science department at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I strongly support SB 3317.

Mahalo!

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 4:53:59 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dalilah Haji Laidin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am Dalilah Haji Laidin, a graduate student from Department of Geography and Environment, and I support SB3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:56:35 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Yu B	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB3317

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:21:16 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kira M Webster	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hi, my name is Kira Webster and I am a PhD candidate in Geography & Environment. My Senator is Carol Fukunaga and my House Representative is Della Au Belatti. I am writing you in support of SB 3317. I have been at UH for 10 years now, five of which have been graduate school. I have taught for the entire time I have been in graduate school, now continuing to teach in addition to my 20-hour-per-week graduate assistantship that I hold as my main source of employment. In addition to these two jobs, I am also the department representative for two separate organizations, I am the treasurer of Graduate Women in Science Hawai'i, and belong to another university organization, all unpaid labor. I regularly pick up jobs petsitting just to try to scrape together enough money to live on. As a single person living alone in Hawai'i (but with demands to be on campus everyday, leaving little room for housing location flexibility) it continues to prove difficult to keep my head above water financially. This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like myself to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:21:45 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Guillaume Huber	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm Guillaume Huber, a graduate assistant from the astronomy departement, and I support SB 3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 4:55:22 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sara Loh	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Sara Loh, an international graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa support the SB3317 bill. It is so important for us as graduate students to be able to have a collective bargaining unit that can amplify our collective voices, struggles, priorities and goals. Instead being one individual in negotiation with an employer or a large institution such as UH, again and again.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:55:58 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aaron Judah	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB3317

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:51:34 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amanda Laughlin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Amanda Laughlin, am a GA from the Oceanography Department at UH Manoa, and I support SB3317 in its current form.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:46:59 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rachel Hong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello,

My name is Rachel Hong, and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa in the American Studies department. I have worked as a graduate student since 2019. During this time, I have taught over 400 undergraduate students as a teaching assistant. I have helped students explore crucial historical and contemporary events, and deepen their ability to use their voice in response to major social issues. I love what I study, and I love having the opportunity to teach, but I am constantly having to balance being able to research and prepare for my duties as a GA on one hand, and having to look for other jobs and stress about making ends meet on the other.

At my current contract rate, I am having to spend over 50% of my monthly income on rent alone. With the high cost of living on Oahu, and the amount of unpaid labor required to teach students, prepare lessons, grade, and attempt to complete my own graduate course requirements, it has been extremely challenging to finish my degree or pay basic bills like utilities, wifi, and buying course required materials. This has had consequences not only to my academic success, but to the quality of my life and ability to meet basic financial needs as well.

SB3317 would help me to voice my concerns as a graduate student by enabling graduate assistants like myself to collectively bargain. I write in strong support of SB3317,

Thank you.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:46:08 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anna Yu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Anna Yu, and I am an MA candidate in Asian Studies. I am writing in support of SB3317, a bill that creates a new bargaining unit for graduate student workers at UH and the community college system.

On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labour Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collective bargaining. I therefore believe it simply makes sense for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We provide so much labor in the operation of the university, from being teaching assistants, researchers, and also as administrative workers in various departments. I myself work for UH's Program Fee Board, which is in charge of distributing fund to various UH organizations - not just student clubs, but even other academic departments. Being able to collectively bargain for ourselves is therefore crucial for us to be able to address the concerns that arise as part of our essential labor for the university. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity, similar to how our counterparts on the continent have been doing for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration!

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:44:23 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Grey Murphree	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Grey Murphree, and I am a third year PhD candidate in astronomy at UH Mānoa. I am writing in support of SB3317, a bill that will create a new collective bargaining unit for graduate student workers of the UH and community college system. As a graduate student, I have taught three semesters of astronomy labs alongside taking my own required classes and doing research for my PhD. As a Teaching Assistant during my first 2 years, I was paid for 20 hrs of work per week, but I would often work beyond those set hours despite being ineligible for any type of overtime pay. Despite all my hard work and the labor that I provide the University both in teaching and research, I often find it difficult to manage living in Hawai'i on the salary provided by UH, where I spend 65% of my monthly salary just on rent. This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:42:32 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Camille Adkison	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Camille Adkison, and I am a PhD student in Oceanography. I live in Kaimuki, and I'm represented in the House by Rep. Jackson D. Sayama, and Sen. Les Ihara Jr. in the Senate. I'm writing in support of HB 2720. I have been in graduate school at UH for three years. I research how nutrients move through the North Pacific Subtropical Gyre, the largest habitat in the world. This site is a downwelling zone, which means water and carbon from the surface are sent to deeper depths. Therefore, my work is closely related to climate change, and I hope my results will aid in climate mitigation efforts. I have participated in several research cruises exploring the gyre, specifically to Station ALOHA, a site 100 kilometers north of Oahu. I also serve as a Teaching Assistant for the introductory oceanography course, OCN201 Science of the Sea. I teach a 13-student lab every week. For my lab, I prepare and give a weekly lecture, set-up scientific equipment, lead demonstrations, and grade weekly quizzes and weekly labs. I am also required to lead a biweekly discussion section. This semester I am leading one section of 28 students. In previous semesters I have been required to lead two sections with twenty students in each section. I am responsible for lecturing during each section and grading pre and post discussion assignments for all of my discussion students in addition to my lab duties. This is my second semester serving as Lead TA, which means I oversee the other TAs and work closely with the instructors to make sure the course runs smoothly. My teaching assistantship pays me for 20 hours of work each week, but to fulfill all these requirements I regularly work beyond those hours. When I originally accepted the position, I was told I would receive overtime pay to compensate me for this time. I do not. I already found it difficult to manage living in Hawai'i when I budgeted expecting to receive overtime. Now, I find it impossible. I spend 64% of my monthly income on rent alone. Still, I consider myself one of the lucky ones as many of my peers move multiple times a year due to rent increases, and I have moved only twice in three years. In addition to teaching, I am expected to take graduate courses, for which I must receive at least a B average or be expelled from the graduate school and make consistent progress in my research. Before starting grad school, I worked as both an elementary school teacher and cybersecurity consultant. Being a teaching assistant and graduate student is by far the most demanding and challenging role I have ever been in, yet I am also in the most financially precarious position I have ever been in. Again, I feel lucky to still be here. During my first week of graduate school, I was hospitalized due to an unexpected illness. It took roughly a month for me to recover, but I was expected to and continued to work as soon as I was out of the hospital. When I expressed concerns for my health, I was encouraged to quit. I will also say that my work as a Teaching Assistant grants me valuable insight into the differences between how services and organizations serve undergraduate and graduate students. In my experiences, graduate students do not receive the same access to services and organizations like Title IX and disability accommodations. Even

advisors and faculty in our own departments face significant confusion and difficulty when interacting with Title IX and the disability office. Graduate student assistants are both students and employees, but we are often told we fall into the operational category that gives us the least support and/or protections. This bill provides a way for graduate student workers like me to address our concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. Being a graduate student is a unique experience, and we believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights. Thank you for considering my testimony.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:42:25 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rajan Sawhney	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a PhD student and GA in the Computer Science department. I strongly support SB 3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:42:12 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tara Sutton	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB 3317, grad students deserve to get paid fairly for the work we do

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:24:34 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Annie Chien	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Annie Chien and I am an MSc. student in the Earth and Planetary Sciences department. I **strongly support** SB 3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:24:18 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nikhil Khurana	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello All,

I am a employee of the City and County of Honolulu. Every few years, my fellow employees and I fight with the State and the City for a new contract to give us a livable wage for our labor. Even that is a struggle with our employers always looking to slash our benefits and retirement packages. But we have earned the right to that fight through the building of our union.

I am 25 years old and I have many friends who are graduate students. Some of them younger than me, most of them older. Some have kids, some have elders to care for. All of them work harder than I do, they work more hours than I do. And they make less than half what I do. They are not even recognized for the work that they do. If I can only barely pay my bills and save a little money as a single, 25 year old, how will these folks survive? They are creators of knowledge, they run the labs and experiments, they teach students, they are the direct contributors of everything produced by the University. Without them there is no University of Hawai'i.

They must be recognized for that work. They must be paid to be able to survive in this city. they must be treated with the dignity and respect of any other worker in this state.

Sincerely,
Nikhil

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:23:58 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carl Moog	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB3317.

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 2:23:52 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rena Lee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I'm Rena Lee, a 2nd year PhD student and National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellow at the Institute for Astronomy at the University of Hawaii, and I support HB 2720.

In my time as a Ph.D candidate, I have been a research assistant. I have published numerous papers/recieved awards that have brough attention to my Department's research. My fellow graduate students and myself are who keep the University running. The University of Hawai'i loves to claim and celebrate their graduate students for the prestige we are able to bestow upon the University, but will not claim us when it comes time to recognizing what we do as labor. We are employees of the University who deserve the right to collectively bargain, just the same as any other state employee, as recognized by the HLRB on January 4th 2024.

The University often claims that we are only half-time employees and therefore our hourly rates are well above minimum wage--however our contracts state that we are forbidden from having a second job, meaning our graduate assistantship is our only source of income. Most of my peers in the Astronomy Department are struggling to get by financially, including myself. We qualify for SNAP benefits and need that assistance in order to feed ourselves. We are severely rent burdened, spending 60% of our income in rent on average (with extremely few options to do otherwise). So much of my mental energy is spent worrying if I'll be able to pay off my credit card this month, if I'll need to move again if my rent goes up, or if I can afford to buy lunch today--mental energy that I should be spending thinking about Exoplanets and writing my dissertation. The worst part of my story is that I belong to one of the highest paid departments at the Univeristy of Hawai'i, and the vast majority of my peers in other departments are struggling even more than I am.

Passing this bill and allowing the graduate students to be able to collectively bargain for our contracts would give us the ability to improve these conditions. We are not asking for a perfect contract to be handed to us, but meerly for the opportunity to advocate for ourselves and to be able to achieve these goals through hard work. There is precident for this: roughly 120,000 graduate student workers were represented by unions last year across the country, and fourteen schools established graduate student unions in 2023 including Cornell, Stanford, and University of Chicago. I urge the Senate to vote yes on HB 2720 to allow the University of Hawai'i to follow suit.

Mahalo for your consideration!



HAWAII WORKERS CENTER

Defending and Respecting the workers of
Hawaii'i

LATE

(503) WORKERS ☎
(503) 967- 5377 ☎

hawaiiworkerscenter@gmail.com ✉

Mail: 2252 Puna St., Honolulu, HI 96817 ✉

hawaiiworkerscenter.org 🌐

February 7, 2024

Hawaii'i State Senate
Committee on Higher Education
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

**Executive Board
Committee**

Rev. Sam Domingo
Board Chair

Committee on Labor and Technology
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Chair

Mary Ochs
Vice Chair

Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Dr. Arcelita Imasa
Secretary

RE: SUPPORT for S.B. 3317 RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING.

John Witeck
Treasurer

Dear Chairs Sen. Mercado Kim and Sen. Aquino, Vice-Chairs Sen. Kidani and Sen. Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee on Labor and Government Relations and Committee on Labor and Technology:

Board Members

Yoko Liriano

The Hawaii'i Workers Center (HWC) envisions a Hawaii'i in which all workers are empowered to exercise their right to organize for their social, economic and political well-being.

Nanea Lo

It is a resource of information, education, training and organizing for Hawaii's workers.

Innocenta
Sound-Kikku

Ray Catania

The HWC stands in strong support of S.B. 3317 which establishes a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawaii'i and community college system.

Justin Jansen

Leyton Torda

“I wasn't able to push for Title IX action almost entirely because as a graduate worker, I wasn't protected by a union but the faculty member was.” - UH graduate worker

Executive Director

Sergio Alcubilla III, Esq.

Graduate assistants deserve to be protected from exploitative labor practices just as much as any other worker. The days of overworking graduate assistants, not paying them for hours worked, and leaving them in precarious positions as it comes to healthcare and workplace protections belong in the past, not in 2024. The Hawaii'i Labor Relations board recently determined that graduate assistants are indeed public employees. S.B. 3317 is needed to get graduate assistants to the finish line and finally be recognized for the important contributions they continue to make to the University of Hawaii'i system. All workers should be entitled to the most basic protections against the exploitation of labor, including our graduate assistants.

We ask that you please pass and support S.B. 3317.

Sincerely,

Sergio Alcubilla
Executive Director

LATE

Labor and Higher Education Committee

Dr. Dean Itsuji Saranillio

January 31, 2024

SUPPORT FOR SB3317, relating to collective bargaining unit for graduate students at UH Mānoa

My name is Dr. Dean Itsuji Saranillio. I am an associate professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

I live in Mānoa, District 22, in Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett's district.

I write in strong support of SB3317

As a former graduate student from the University of California, Los Angeles and the University of Michigan, and former faculty at New York University where graduate students there recently won the right for collective bargaining, graduate students require a separate collective bargaining unit than currently exists.

Graduate students across the university face considerable short and long-term difficulties that grow out of both the structure of their compensation and Hawai'i's high cost of living. Graduate Assistants perform a central role in the core missions of the university and the lack of support for them creates conditions where their needs remain acute—many cannot afford adequate housing or food. As a result, our own department offers graduate students nonperishable food, an initiative founded and sustained by faculty donations.

Our students, who are highly educated and skilled, courageous and brilliant, are facing financial constraints that will have long-term consequences. The wages and working conditions they experience in graduate school will have material implications for their futures.

For these reasons and more, graduate students at the University of Hawai'i require a separate Collective Bargaining Unit that SB3317 can provide. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

LATE

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:43:54 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sarah Jung	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Sarah Jung and I'm a graduate assistant at the University of Hawai'i Manoa campus. I'm submitting this testimony in support of the ALU bill to establish our own collective bargaining unit and have our own union. As a current graduate teaching assistant, I have witnessed firsthand the invaluable contributions that graduate students make to the academic community, and I believe that affording them the right to collective bargaining is essential for fostering a fair and equitable academic environment.

Graduate students play a crucial role in the educational system by contributing to both research and teaching activities. Many of us are responsible for consistently producing scholarly work, providing instructional support, and facilitating better learning experiences for undergraduate students. Despite our significant contributions, we often face challenges such as precarious working conditions, inadequate compensation, and limited access to essential benefits.

Collective bargaining provides graduate students with a platform to address these challenges and negotiate for fair and just working conditions. By coming together as a collective force, we can advocate for improvements in stipends, healthcare benefits, job security, and other essential aspects of our working conditions. This not only benefits individual graduate students but also enhances the overall quality of education and research within our academic institutions.

Furthermore, collective bargaining empowers graduate students to have a meaningful voice in the decision-making processes that directly impact our lives and academic experiences. It allows us to engage in a constructive dialogue with university administrators, fostering a collaborative relationship that benefits all stakeholders. This democratic and inclusive approach ensures that the concerns and needs of graduate students are considered in shaping policies and practices within the institution.

I believe that recognizing and respecting the rights of graduate students to engage in collective bargaining is a step towards creating a more equitable and supportive academic environment. It enhances the well-being of graduate students, strengthens the academic community, and contributes to the overall success of our educational institutions.

I urge you to please consider the importance of collective bargaining for graduate students and to support our bill to form a union at UH Manoa. We will be able to build a more inclusive and

collaborative academic environment that values the contributions of graduate students and promotes both the pursuit and imparting of knowledge.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Sarah Jung
University of Hawai'i' Manoa
Department of American Studies

LATE

February 7, 2024

Senate Committee on Labor and Technology

Senator Aquino, Chair

Senator Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Higher Education

Senator Kim, Chair

Senator Kidani, Vice Chair

Re: **Bill SB 3317 Relating to Collective Bargaining**

Chairs Aquino and Kim, Vice Chairs Moriwaki and Kidani and Members of the Committees,

My name is Corey Asano. I am a Hotel Worker at the Sheraton Waikiki and a Unite Here Local 5 member. I am in SUPPORT of SB 3317. Unions make Hawaii better for all the people of Hawaii. I believe every job in Hawaii should be a union job. Unions allow workers to have a say in working conditions and negotiate better wages and champions workers' rights, dignity, and respect.

Graduate students do the bulk of the work, are "workers" and deserve to Unionize in the way they see fit.

Mahalo,

Corey

LATE

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 3:14:26 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Tajima	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Kakahiaka, Members of the Senate Committees on Higher Education and Labor and Technology:

My name is Elizabeth Tajima. I am the secretary of the Dept. of Geography and Environment in the College of Social Sciences, at the University of Hawaii, Mānoa. I live on Kalākaua Avenue, on the border of Waikīkī, Mō‘ili‘ili and McCully. My State Senator is Sharon Moriwaki (District 12), and my State Representative is Scott Nishimoto (District 23).

I am writing in support of SB 3317, Relating to Collective Bargaining.

For almost two decades I worked as a marketing coordinator, then a proposal specialist. There was no union I could turn to for support when I was expected to complete an overwhelming number of deadlines that caused me to work around the clock, with very little time to eat decent meals or get a solid night’s sleep.

In my current job as a dept. secretary—a support staff person in my college—I interact daily with graduate teaching assistants. They are intelligent, earnest, full of mental and physical energy, and my heartfelt wish is for them to have the right to join a labor union for representation and support should they find themselves in situations where discussions must take place with managers regarding inhumane workloads, unsafe physical working conditions, and unequal pay scales. Their right to unionize must be realized, to ensure that this younger generation has opportunities to maintain good physical and mental health, has access to decent, affordable living quarters, and reinforces their belief that they are fortunate to be contributing members in our university system, living in our wonderful state of Hawai‘i that is home to all of us.

Mahalo for your time to read my testimony and for your consideration to pass SB 3317.

LATE

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 6:14:04 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy O'Brien	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Senators,

I write in support of SB 3317 to establish an appropriate bargaining unit for University of Hawai'i graduate workers. Please see the detailed letter below from the president of the National Council of Higher Education, an organization of NEA higher education members within the NEA, of which I am an associate member. I support President Sheaffer's position.

Thank you for your consideration of my views.

Sincerely,

Nancy O'Brien

Letter from NCHE

Senate Labor and Technology Chair Henry Aquino

Senate Labor and Technology Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki

Senate Higher Education Chair Sen Donna Mercado Kim

Senate Higher Education Vice Chair Michelle Kidani

Dear Chair Aquino, Vice Chair Moriwaki, Chair Mercado Kim, and Vice Chair Kidani:

I am writing to you in my capacity as President of NEA's National Council on Higher Education (NCHE) to bring to your attention a matter of utmost importance regarding the collective bargaining rights of University of Hawai'i graduate workers. The landmark decision by the Hawai'i Supreme Court in 2023 recognized these individuals as public employees, thereby affirming their entitlement to the fundamental right of collective bargaining.

However, a critical hurdle has emerged with the determination by the Hawaii Labor Relations Board that existing bargaining units do not fit into an appropriate community of interest for graduate workers, necessitating immediate legislative action. SB 3317 has been introduced with the specific purpose of establishing an appropriate bargaining unit for University of Hawai'i graduate workers.

NCHE staunchly supports SB 3317 and urgently calls upon the esteemed members of the Labor and Technology and Higher Education Committees to endorse this crucial bill. The need for swift and decisive action cannot be overstated.

In light of the well-established norms and legal precedents and widespread expansion of graduate worker unionization, it is imperative to recognize and affirm the right of graduate workers at the University of Hawai'i to collectively bargain. SB 3317 represents a critical step towards ensuring fair and equitable labor practices for this essential segment of the academic workforce.

Your urgent attention and support on this matter are highly appreciated. If you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

DeWayne Sheaffer

President, National Council for Higher Education

LATE

February 8, 2024

Senate Labor and Technology Chair Henry Aquino
Senate Labor and Technology Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki
Senate Higher Education Chair Sen Donna Mercado Kim
Senate Higher Education Vice Chair Michelle Kidani

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Sincerely,
DeWayne Sheaffer
President, National Council for Higher Education

LATE

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 8:48:08 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emi Jenkins	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

As an undergraduate engineering student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, I see firsthand how vital graduate students are. As a research university, professors are hired to do research, not teach classes, so it falls on the teaching assistants to create and grade assignments and provide support to the students. The graduate students are often the teachers themselves, and more often than not, do a better job at teaching than the out-of-touch professors who focused on their research. If graduate students are working nights alongside the long hours their classes and research demand, the quality of mine and the entire undergraduate population's education goes down. If graduate students are not even allowed to advocate for themselves effectively, there is no possible way for this to change. The people raising the next generation of professionals deserves a voice and deserves to fight for their right to make this state more educated.

LATE

SB-3317

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 10:56:24 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/8/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ashley Sanchez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB3317 in its current written form.