



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
Thursday, March 30, 2023 at 2:00 p.m.

By

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

SB 500 SD1 HD1– RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



ASUH

Associated Students of the University of Hawai'i

YOUR STUDENT GOVERNMENT

Aloha Members of the Finance Committee,

I strongly support Senate Bill 500, which would allocate funds to establish three additional permanent full-time equivalent mental health practitioner positions within the Counseling and Student Development Center (CSDC) at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Mental health resources have been historically underfunded and strained, and the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this issue. The proposed positions would significantly improve counselor-to-student ratios, providing timely and effective support to more students in need as rates of anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues have increased among students.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 500 and appropriate funds to establish these crucial mental health practitioner positions. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rudy".

Rudy Ramirez
ASUH President

SB-500-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2023 9:10:37 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/30/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelly Chan	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

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

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

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

Sincerely,

Kelly Chan

SB-500-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2023 12:48:20 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/30/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Samantha Yee	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair Kyle Yamashita, Vice Chair Lisa Kitagawa, and members of the Committee on Finance,

My name is Samantha Yee and I am currently a student at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Thompson School of Social Work and Public Health. I strongly express my support for SB 500.

Mahalo for your time.

Sincerely,

Samantha Yee

**Written Testimony to the
Senate Committee in support of SB 500
RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII**
Hearing Date and Time: March 30th, 2023, 2:00 pm

Individual Testimony of Noel Akbar

Aloha Senator Yamashita and Senator Kitagawa, and distinguished members of the Senate Committee on Finance, my name is Noel Akbar and I am testifying in support of SB500, relating to Mental Health at the University of Hawaii.

I am currently a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, though I am not testifying on behalf of the university. I am in strong support of SB500 and its goal to establish additional mental health practitioners. Free mental health services are crucial to students at Mānoa, as many students are unable to receive outside care due to barriers such as insurance or income requirements. The counseling and student development center provides these necessary services to registered students for free, which eliminates those barriers. Though UH Mānoa mental health services are easily accessible to students, the wait times for services due to a lack of service providers has proven to be a problem for those in need.

A 2019 Civil Beat article on Hawaii's Mental Health Crisis found that:

- Nationally, the percentage of teenagers and young adults who report mental distress, depression and suicidal ideations has increased significantly among those 26 and younger over the past decade.
- According to University of Hawaii officials, At the university's main campus in Mānoa, the backlog of students waiting for a non-urgent appointment is 60 people long. It could take an average of 17 days to get the initial intake interview.

As a current graduate student at the Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work at UH Mānoa with a focus in behavioral mental health, I have had the opportunity to learn about the importance of therapy and mental health service accessibility for people in need. Normalization of mental health services within government funded programs and sectors, expresses the acceptance and understanding of the needs of our communities. Many of the students that I have had the opportunity to work with at UH Mānoa since my undergraduate years have taken advantage of the mental health services on campus and have expressed their appreciation for the chance to talk to someone who can help them.

Overall, I believe that providing the funding for additional positions through SB500 will increase accessibility and promote the overall wellbeing of our student community which can in turn impact our communities as a whole. Thank you for your consideration.