



# 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 Agriculture & Food Systems  
Tuesday, April 1, 2025, at 11:15 a.m.

By

Debora Halbert, Vice President for Academic Strategy

And

Della Teraoka, Interim Vice President for Community Colleges  
University of Hawai'i System

HCR 195 HD1/HR 188 HD1 – REQUESTING THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM TO ESTABLISH A VETERINARY MEDICINE EXPANSION WORKING GROUP TO EXPLORE THE FEASIBILITY OF DEVELOPING A DOCTOR OF VETERINARY MEDICINE PROGRAM AT WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i (UH) appreciates the opportunity to submit comments regarding HCR 195 HD1/HR 188 HD1 which requests the University of Hawai'i System to establish a Veterinary Medicine expansion working group to explore the feasibility of developing a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) program at Windward Community College.

The UH agrees that Hawai'i faces a critical shortage of veterinarians, particularly in rural areas and for large animal agricultural services. As there is currently no DVM program within the state, students who wish to pursue veterinary medicine must leave Hawai'i to complete their education on the mainland. UH participates in the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) [Professional Student Exchange Program](#), which offers Hawai'i residents the opportunity to study veterinary medicine at participating institutions, but this program has limitations (limited slots and support for certain specialties, higher than in-state tuition rates) and does not address the long-term needs of the state.

The Veterinary Technology program at Windward Community College provides valuable entry-level training for students pursuing careers in veterinary medicine. Additionally, UH Mānoa's College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) offers a pre-vet curriculum and has a strong track record of Bachelor of Science alumni receiving DVM degrees. UH has also been exploring the possibility of expanding Windward Community College's program to a bachelor degree, which would require comprehensive discussions with key stakeholders to assess feasibility.

The UH supports addressing the critical need for animal science-related education in Hawai'i. However, we suggest amending the resolutions to request that the working

group be charged with not only assessing the feasibility of creating a DVM program, but also assessing the demand for such programs and their potential integration within the UH system at the most optimal campus. This expanded scope will ensure that the working group develops a clear, sustainable strategy that addresses the full spectrum of veterinary education in the state. It should be noted that community colleges are not authorized to offer doctoral programs, hence the need for a system-wide approach. As Windward Community College's institutional accrediting body, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), does not authorize its members to issue doctorate degrees, the college would first need to obtain accreditation from Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) or another regional accreditor, which is a fairly lengthy process.

Furthermore, while the revised resolution has included a representative from UH Hilo to the working group, we hope that the working group can also include a UH System representative given the need to coordinate on this project as a system. Together, these programs can provide the necessary pathways to a future DVM program and support the development of a comprehensive in-state veterinary workforce development strategy.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments regarding HCR 195 HD1/HR 188 HD1. We look forward to contributing to the development of a strategic plan that will address Hawai'i's veterinary workforce needs and support the long-term sustainability of veterinary education within the state.



## Hawaiian Humane Society

People for animals. Animals for people.

Date: March 28, 2025

To: Chair Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa  
Vice Chair Rep. Matthias Kusch  
and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

Submitted By: Stephanie Kendrick, Director of Community Engagement  
Hawaiian Humane Society, 808-356-2217

RE: Testimony in support of HCR 195, HD1 / HR 188, HD1  
Tuesday, April 1, 2025, 11:15 a.m., Room 325 & Videoconference

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On behalf of the Hawaiian Humane Society, thank you for considering our support for House Concurrent Resolution 195, HD1 / House Resolution 188, HD1, which requests the University of Hawai'i system to establish a veterinary medicine expansion working group to explore the feasibility of developing a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program at Windward Community College.

The nationwide shortage in veterinary professionals is acutely felt in our island state. As this measure points out, Hawai'i's high cost of living make it extremely difficult to attract veterinarians to return home or relocate to the state, even for salaries that are competitive with mainland locales. Specialists, such as those in shelter medicine, are in particularly short supply and high demand.

While this measure won't solve the shortage of veterinarians overnight, it would be an exciting step toward cultivating local talent in this high-demand field. Enabling local students to pursue veterinary medicine here at home at lower financial costs than studying at mainland schools, could encourage more of them to stay after graduation and serve our community.

The Hawaiian Humane Society partners with Windward Community College's outstanding Veterinary Technology program and this would be an exciting opportunity to expand on its professionalism and rigor by offering an advanced degree.

Please pass HCR 195, HD1 / HR 188, HD1 and create a brighter future for animals, pet owners and aspiring veterinary professionals. Mahalo for your consideration.



**Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.**

**COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS**

Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa, Chair

Rep. Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair

**HCR 195/HR 188**

Tuesday, April 1, 2025, 11:15 AM

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **supports HCR 195/HR 188** which requests the University of Hawaii System establish a veterinary medicine expansion working group to explore the feasibility of developing a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program at Windward Community College.

Veterinary doctors are crucial to a thriving livestock industry. Access to quality veterinarians who can service producers across the state is important for the health and well-being of livestock as well as for meeting the needs of veterinary requirements that livestock producers adhere to. We support the exploration of developing a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program, and this working group is the first step to reaching this.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify on this measure. The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council (HCC) is the Statewide umbrella organization comprised of the four county-level Cattlemen's Associations. Our member ranchers represent over 60,000 head of beef cows; more than 75% of all the beef cows in the State. Ranchers are the stewards of over 750 thousand acres of land in Hawaii, or 20% of the State's total land mass. We represent the interests of Hawaii's cattle producers.

Nicole Galase  
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council  
Managing Director



**Committee:** House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems  
**Bill Number:** HB 739, RELATING TO HOUSING  
**Hearing Date & Time:** April 1, 2025 at 11:15am  
**Re:** Testimony of Malia Wisch **in Support of HCR195 / HR188**

Aloha Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Kusch and members of the committee:

My name is Malia Wisch and I am heavily involved in the effort to reduce the number of free-roaming cats on Oahu. I am a third-generation Kailua resident and a local professional.

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**I am testifying in support of HCR195 / HR188**, requesting the University of Hawaii system to establish a veterinary medicine expansion working group to explore the feasibility of developing a doctor of veterinary medicine program at Windward Community College.

So many of the efforts we're undertaking now to reduce the number of free-roaming cats are ultimately hamstrung by a lack of spay/neuter services. People want to spay/neuter their pets, but cannot due to the cost at private clinics and the lack of availability of subsidized services.

The Humane Society's spay/neuter center cannot meet current demand and appointments are filled months in advance because they cannot staff enough vets and technicians to provide more surgeries on more days of the week.

Meanwhile, cats and dogs are reproducing, adding more puppies and kittens to our community than we can humanely care for.

Any and all efforts to enable and incentivize local people to pursue veterinary education is a win-win, providing valuable job skills and providing desperately needed community service.

Mahalo for considering my testimony in support of this important legislation.

Sara Malia Wisch

**HCR-195-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 2:06:44 PM

Testimony for AGR on 4/1/2025 11:15:00 AM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>         |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Vivian S. Toellner  | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

"There is a demand for veterinary education by qualified applicants that exceeds the seats available in current veterinary schools," says Texas A&M University professor emerita and dean emerita of veterinary medicine Eleanor Green, DVM,. "Existing veterinary schools cannot expand their class sizes to meet this need."

At the University of Hawai'i at Hilo (UH Hilo) there is a farm laboratory located 5 miles from the main campus in Panaewa, Hawai'i. The 110-acre farm is used primarily for UH Hilo/ CAFNRM courses to provide students with a unique opportunity for hands-on learning. "Learning by doing" allows students to connect lecture-based information with practical subjectbased experiences. The farm also supports local applied research activities and outreach with substantial community engagement. This track of study provides students with a variety of animal science courses related to health and management. All the courses are aimed at giving students hands-on experiences working with livestock through farm laboratory activities. The courses emphasize safe and confident animal handling and good animal husbandry practices. The Animal Science areas at the UH Hilo farm consists of: Horse arena and barns, Goat and cattle barns, and Swine facility.

There is a severe shortage of veterinarians and access to veterinary care here in Hawaii and across the country. Many animals are not receiving the care they need.

A Veterinary School would be a dream come true for Hawaii, in so many ways. Please recommend requesting the university of Hawaii system to establish a veterinary medicine expansion working group to explore the feasibility of developing a doctor of veterinary medicine program in Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments. Aloha and Mahalo.

**HCR-195-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 5:24:17 PM

Testimony for AGR on 4/1/2025 11:15:00 AM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Nandita Sharma      | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

I strongly support this Bill. Hawaii has a serious shortage of vets and this will go some way towards addressing this shortfall.

**HCR-195-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 11:20:20 PM

Testimony for AGR on 4/1/2025 11:15:00 AM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| lynne matusow       | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

We have a shortage of verterinarians. At times it is hard to get an appointment for an ill pet. We should have a veterinary school in Hawaii. Please move this reso forward.



**HCR-195-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 2:22:27 PM

Testimony for AGR on 4/1/2025 11:15:00 AM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Carole R. Richelieu | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

strongly support a study. Hawai'i needs such educational and career opportunities.

Hawai'i Kai

**HCR-195-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 5:26:15 AM

Testimony for AGR on 4/1/2025 11:15:00 AM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Melanie Kim         | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

Please support this bill. Hawaii has a severe veterinarian shortage, often making it difficult for Hawaii residents to have their furry family members , livestock and other animals being cared for by a certified professional. Having a school will encourage these professionals to stay in the island to practice. The state has already embarked on similar efforts with the educating doctors here with the intent to practice in Hawaii and address the doctor shortage. Again please support this bill to improve care for Hawaii's animals!

**HCR-195-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 5:28:30 AM

Testimony for AGR on 4/1/2025 11:15:00 AM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>         |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Jennifer Chiwa      | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair Representative Kahaloa, Vice Chair Representative Kusch and Members of the Committee on Agriculture Food Systems.

Please support HCR 195 HD 1/HR 188 HD 1. To my understanding, there is a shortage of veterinarians in Hawaii, and voting for this resolution would be helpful to ending this shortage and keeping local residents here while they pursue a doctor of veterinary medicine degree.

Mahalo.

Jennifer Chiwa

Makiki and life long resident of Oahu