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GOVERNOR



KEITH T. HAYASHI
SUPERINTENDENT

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 02/11/2025

Time: 03:10 PM

Location: CR 229 & Videoconference

Committee: Senate Higher Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Bill Title: SB 1489 RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII RESIDENT TUITION FEE.

Purpose of Bill: Requires the University of Hawaii to grant the resident tuition fee for enrollment at any University of Hawaii campus to individuals who have graduated from a Hawaii high school and are enrolling in an undergraduate degree program, under certain conditions.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports SB 1489 and defers to the University of Hawaii as to its implementation.

Affordable college tuition is an investment in our state's future that fosters social mobility and drives economic growth. Securing the resident tuition fee for Hawaii high school graduates will increase accessibility for students who are deterred from seeking an undergraduate degree due to perceived high cost and will provide a competitive choice for students considering out-of-state options. The Department is supportive of any effort to smooth the pathway for our students to continue their education as well as provide opportunities to learn and enter the workforce in Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 1489.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education
Tuesday, February 11, 2025, at 3:10 p.m.

By

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

SB 1489 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII RESIDENT TUITION FEE

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 1489 relating to the University of Hawai'i (UH) resident tuition fee.

SB 1489 would classify graduates of a Hawai'i high school as residents for the purpose of in-state tuition at UH. A well-educated citizenry is essential for a vibrant state. As the sole provider of public higher education in the State of Hawai'i, UH supports this bill to increase access to higher education and streamline the application process for residents, particularly recent high school graduates.

By offering four-years of in-state tuition to qualifying students, this initiative makes higher education more accessible for an extended period after high school. Basing residency determination on high school graduation within the state simplifies the process and reduces barriers for local students seeking to enroll at UH to pursue further education and training.

Hawai'i's "college-going rate" for high school graduates declined during the pandemic, falling from 55% to 51% in immediate post-graduation enrollment. This drop disproportionately affected low-income, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander graduates. While some of this decline can be attributed to the uncertainties created by the pandemic, it is crucial that the UH works to streamline the transition from high school to college as we move forward.

As written, for residents who may have left the state and decide to return for various reasons within four years of graduating from a Hawai'i high school, this bill would facilitate a quicker transition to higher education. This would support their up-skilling or career changes without delaying their educational and life goals. Additionally, this extension could serve as an incentive for residents who moved away to return to Hawai'i and pursue higher education at an affordable cost, thereby contributing to the local economy and addressing the issue of brain drain when students leave for college and do not return.

Passing this measure would ensure the current statutory residency requirements for tuition purposes. This change aims to ease the challenges faced by some high school seniors and recent graduates in Hawai'i. It would also align with the UH's amendments to administrative rules, streamlining the enrollment process for all applicants seeking admission into the UH System.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I STUDENT CAUCUS

Date 02/11/2025

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Relating to SB 1489

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

The University of Hawai'i Student Caucus (UHSC) is formally authorized to serve as a system-wide association of all University of Hawai'i campus student governments, representing approximately 50,000 students across the 10 campuses of the UH System.

The UHSC unanimously shares a position of strong support for SB 1489.

From a student perspective, there are no downsides to this measure. This measure simply seeks to add an additional clarification clause allowing Hawai'i graduating students to remain eligible for residency status for a short period of time after graduation. That 4 year period can allow students to explore other options and make an informed decision that a college education is really what they want to pursue before committing time, energy and resources. This measure does not ask for appropriations nor will it have a significant financial impact on either the state or the University of Hawaii.

Students are not punished for taking a gap year or extended leave out of state. Currently, if a Hawai'i high school graduate, for whatever reason (work, family, etc.), decided to leave the state for a period of time exceeding the original residency clause of one year, they would then be no longer eligible for the resident tuition rate for the state in which they lived their whole lives. This measure makes it possible for students who leave the state to return within four years after graduation and pursue higher education without the ramification of having to pay non-resident tuition.

The University of Hawaii will become more attractive to financially insecure students. Many students leave the state after high school or shortly after high school to seek cheaper education and housing. By widening the margin for which these students could remain eligible for resident tuition, this would allow exploration while still providing an incentive for them to enroll in the University of Hawaii as opposed to other institutions.

Sincerely,
Ronald Sturges,
Chairperson, UH Student Caucus