



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 15, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

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

**SCR 192 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**

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

The University of Hawai'i (UH) appreciates the opportunity to submit comments regarding SCR 192 HD1 which requests that a working group be developed to explore the feasibility of developing a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) program.

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 may not fully 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-veterinary 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 and appreciates the revisions to this resolution that have been made to reflect the need for a system-wide assessment of the issues. 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments regarding SCR 192 HD1.



Hawaiian Humane Society

People for animals. Animals for people.

Date: April 13, 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 SCR 192, HD1
Tuesday, April 15, 2025, 10:00 a.m., Room 430 & Videoconference

On behalf of the Hawaiian Humane Society, thank you for considering our support for the intent of Senate Concurrent Resolution 192, 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.

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.

The Hawaiian Humane Society supports the changes in the HD1 that allow the working group envisioned by this measure consider a systemwide approach assessing the demand for a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine Program and its potential integration within the UH system.

Please pass SCR 192, HD1, and create a brighter future for animals, pet owners and aspiring veterinary professionals.

Mahalo for your consideration.



COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

Rep. Kirstin Kahaloe, Chair
Rep. Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair

SCR192 HD1

Tuesday, April 15, 2025, 10:00 AM
Conference Room 430 & Videoconference

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

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **supports SCR192 HD1** 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.

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. Currently, there are no veterinary schools located in the state. This is a barrier to attracting and retaining veterinarians who are familiar with Hawaii. 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



SCR-192-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/11/2025 4:47:35 PM

Testimony for AGR on 4/15/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
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.

SCR-192-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/11/2025 7:30:31 PM

Testimony for AGR on 4/15/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Theresa M Thompson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SCR192 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.

Mahalo,

Theresa Thompson

To the Hawaii Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems, Hawaii State Senators and Legislators

Regarding: SCR 192/SR 172 – The establishment of a working group to explore the feasibility of developing a DVM program at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

This is testimony OPPOSED to this action.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. I have been a small animal Veterinarian on the island of Oahu for roughly 7 years. As our veterinary field changes, I do NOT feel a working group should be established, since I do NOT feel a DVM program at UH is worth the time to explore for the following reasons.

1. There are currently 30 veterinary colleges in the US which matriculate approximately 100 students per year. There are 4 provisionally accredited schools and 10 proposed schools which will come into the system in the next few years (JAVMA, March 2025, pg. 306). These provisional and proposed schools will increase the number of schools by 33%, resulting in an influx of DVMs as well. While some pundits feel our industry has a dearth of veterinarians at this time, we will quickly catch up and have an over-supply probably sooner than projected (currently projected to hit an equilibrium by 2030-2035).
2. According to the American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) 2022 report, there are roughly 2.4 applicants for every seat for the class of 2026 and 80% of applicants get into a program on their first application. So, with the addition of 14 veterinary colleges to the existing 30, one can assume the number of applicants/seats will actually drop since there are more options. Do we then hit a saturation of DVM programs since demand is fulfilled? <https://www.aavmc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2022-AAVMC-Annual-Data-Report-Final.pdf>
3. Can the physical footprint of UH-Manoa even support building a College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM)? Let's also talk about how much the cost is to build a CVM, not to include yearly program costs. Clemson University is establishing a DVM program and currently on provisional status at this time. Building the Harvey S. Peeler College of Veterinary Medicine at Auburn is expected to cost \$285 million to build (<https://www.greenevilleonline.com>), with an anticipated opening date of Fall 2026. This is obviously a conservative estimate of cost that doesn't include any further increase in the price of lumber, steel, fixtures, labor, etc. This is also the cost of a facility on the mainland, not Hawaii (which will probably cost more for obvious reasons). Where does this committee plan on putting large animal teaching facilities? While there's land at UH-

West, I'm sure my friends in Kanehili would not be happy to have a dairy barn or feed lot in their back yard.

4. The average established DVM program costs roughly \$60-89 million dollars per year to operate (AAVMC 2022 report and <https://budget.kansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/368-KSU-Vet-Med-FY-2025.pdf>). How will the state budget for this? More taxes on tourists?
5. Roughly 20% of income for most DVM programs comes from having a teaching hospital and diagnostic lab and another 20% from direct government appropriations, grants, and contracts (AAVMC report). Most of these federal funds are through NIH grants. With the current federal government situation, these NIH funds may not be an option. While a distributive model of training is also an option (where students go into local clinics/hospitals for hands-on training), we only have two major referral hospitals on island and they most likely can't absorb this type of training. So, if you have 100 students in each class and each student needs 10 rotations in their fourth-year to graduate, that's 10,000 rotations/year that must be available. This will take away our specialists from serving the people of Hawaii who are paying for their services.
6. Most DVM programs rely on out-of-state applicants (who subsequently pay higher tuition) for the bulk of their tuition income. These are students who you educate, but then go back to their home-state to work. This doesn't keep DVMs in Hawaii, nor does it solve any perceived lack of services. If there is a demographic/region of the state who feels more DVMs are needed, then those individual veterinary clinics/hospitals need to figure out how to bring more DVM's to their area. There is a constant discussion on rural veterinary care, both in HI and on the mainland, but rural clients generally don't have the financial resources to compensate these DVMs either.
7. I do not see a dearth of DVMs in HI to justify setting up a vet school. The hospital I work in receives 2-4 unsolicited DVM resumes each year (and we aren't looking for a new DVM). We also get considerable interest from relief veterinarians wanting to work in our clinic, with the flexibility of scheduling their own days. While we might need more rural veterinarians, these voids can be filled by creating a Rural Veterinary Training Program or incentive for veterinarians to come and work in rural areas of Hawaii.

Here are a few NEW recommendations how our state legislators could help our veterinary field.

1. PUT MORE MONEY INTO K-12 EDUCATION!!! US News and World Reports ranks Hawaii #33 in PreK-12 education. THAT'S THE BOTTOM HALF OF THE US!! We have a state-wide graduation rate of 86% and NAEP math scores of 270 (below the national average). Our keiki are the future and any money allocated to a DVM program would be better served increasing state funding for school lunches, pre-K education, after-school programs, technical programs in high schools, etc.

2. Establish a Rural Veterinary Training program and scholarship for Hawaii students who want to become veterinarians. These students will be trained at other schools and their debt paid off by the state of Hawaii, as long as these students return to HI to work in underserved areas.

3.

Thank you again for reading my testimony. Caring for the pets of Hawaii has been an honor for me. Please feel free to reach out to me anytime.

Sincerely,

Tracey L. Mullins, DVM, MBA
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