



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 Higher Education
Wednesday, April 9, 2025, at 2:00 p.m.

By

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

SCR 192 – 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 Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i (UH) appreciates the opportunity to submit comments regarding SCR 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 (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-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; 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. 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-level degrees, the College would first need to obtain accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) or another regional accreditor, which is a fairly lengthy process.

Furthermore, this version of the resolution does not include representatives from the UH System or UH Hilo. Thus, we recommend adding a representative from each to the working group. Given UH Hilo's established veterinary-related programs and expertise, their inclusion will be essential to creating a coordinated approach to veterinary education in Hawai'i. 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. Including a representative from the UH System will help coordinate the campus responses.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments regarding SCR 192. 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: April 7, 2025

To: Chair Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett
Vice Chair Rep. Terez Amato
and Members of the Committee on Higher Education

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

RE: Testimony in support of SCR 192
Wednesday, April 9, 2025, 2:00 p.m., Room 309 & 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 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.

The Hawaiian Humane Society partners with Windward Community College's outstanding Veterinary Technology program and appreciates this recognition of its professionalism and rigor. However, given the concern raised by the University of Hawaii that community colleges are not authorized to offer doctoral programs, we would ask that 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 and create a brighter future for animals, pet owners and aspiring veterinary professionals. Mahalo for your consideration.