



# 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  
Thursday, March 20, 2025, at 3:01 p.m.

By

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

SR 172/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 Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i (UH) appreciates the opportunity to submit comments regarding SR 172/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-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. 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 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, we recommend adding a representative from UH Hilo to the working group. Given their 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments regarding SR 172/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: March 17, 2025

To: Chair Sen. Donna Mercado Kim  
Vice Chair Sen. Michelle Kidani  
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 SR 172 / SCR 192  
Thursday, March 20, 2025, 3:01 p.m., Room 229 & Videoconference

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On behalf of the Hawaiian Humane Society, thank you for considering our support for Senate Resolution 172 / 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. 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 SR 172 / SCR 192 and create a brighter future for animals, pet owners and aspiring veterinary professionals. Mahalo for your consideration.



Date: 3/19/2025

To: Chair Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Senator Michelle N. Kidani, and Members of the Committee on Higher Education

Submitted By: Smeeta Narang, Communications Coordinator  
Kaua'i Humane Society, (808) 632 - 0610

RE: Testimony in support of SR 172/SCR 192

Thursday, March 20th, 2025 TIME:3:10PM ROOM 229 AND VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

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On behalf of Kaua'i Humane Society, I am honored to offer my testimony in support of SR172. This Senate Resolution calls for the establishment of a Veterinary Medicine Expansion Working Group to assess the feasibility of creating a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program at Windward Community College—a measure that is essential for Hawai'i's future.

The ongoing shortage of veterinarians in our state is a significant concern. Many talented individuals from Hawai'i are forced to leave for veterinary education due to the lack of a local program, and too often, they do not return. SR172 recognizes that this situation undermines our ability to meet the veterinary needs of our communities, particularly in rural areas and within agricultural sectors.

By exploring strategic partnerships with mainland veterinary schools, aligning education and workforce pipelines, and addressing the critical issues of infrastructure, accreditation, and faculty requirements, SR172 provides a comprehensive framework to help retain homegrown talent. An in-state Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program will not only reduce the financial and logistical barriers for aspiring veterinarians but will also ensure that our communities have a reliable source of skilled professionals to care for our animals.

I urge the Senate to support SR172 as a proactive and essential step to strengthen our veterinary workforce, protect animal welfare, and secure the health of our local agriculture and biosecurity. Mahalo for your consideration.

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**SR-172**

Submitted on: 3/18/2025 6:32:37 AM

Testimony for HRE on 3/20/2025 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marian Hussenbux	Testifying for Animal Interfaith Alliance in Britain	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As we are informed that there is a shortage of veterinary professionals in Hawai'i, it would be a positive move to set up this working group and hopefully establish a Veterinary Medicine degree course at the Windward Community College.

We beg to support this proposition.

**SR-172**

Submitted on: 3/17/2025 4:21:14 PM

Testimony for HRE on 3/20/2025 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lois Crozer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I totally love the idea of having a school of veterinary medicine on Oahu so that our pets can get the care they need. Too often people lack the resources to care for their pets because of cost or availability of a veterinarian. We could use them to increase our spay/neuter programs as well, as there are way too many stray dogs and cats wandering our streets.

To the Hawaii Committee on Higher Education, 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 Windward Community College (WCC)

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 WCC 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. Every College of Veterinary Medicine in the US is associated with a 4-year degree seeking University. There are no programs (unless I missed one) associated with a community college. This is purposeful to share assets (student support, library services, etc.) across a larger campus footprint. I don't see how a community college can absorb these expenses, nor does UH-Manoa have this footprint.
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.

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). While some feel we don't have enough specialists within our field, this can't be fixed by creating a veterinary school.

Here are some things our state legislators could do to help our veterinary field.

1. Formulate actual guidelines for our licensed veterinary technicians to work by.
2. Establish technical training of Veterinary Assistants in our high schools, especially those with a higher percentage of native Hawaiian students (like Kapolei HS, Campbell HS).
3. Expand the Veterinary Technician program at WCC to other islands to increase access to education.
4. Establish a Hawaii Veterinary Scholarship Program to help with tuition assistance for HI students enrolled in EXISTING DVM programs.
5. Do more with WICHE to get Hawaii students into DVM programs.
6. Come up with a concrete plan to execute SB 1023

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  
Animal House Veterinary Center  
91-919 Fort Weaver Road #114  
Ewa Beach, HI 96706  
254-458-9610

**SR-172**

Submitted on: 3/17/2025 7:08:57 PM

Testimony for HRE on 3/20/2025 3:01:00 PM

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 subject-based 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.

**SR-172**

Submitted on: 3/18/2025 2:53:02 AM

Testimony for HRE on 3/20/2025 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Chiwa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Kim, Vice Chair Senator Kidani and Members of the Committee on Higher Education.

Please support SR172/SCR 192 as consideration of establishing a doctor of veterinary medicine program would be very beneficial to, what I understand, is a shortage of veterinarians in Hawaii.

Mahalo.

Jennifer Chiwa

Makiki and life long resident of Oahu

**SR-172**

Submitted on: 3/18/2025 8:30:45 AM

Testimony for HRE on 3/20/2025 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carole R. Richelieu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

These measures address the persistent veterinary medicine shortage in our state by creating home-grown talent.

**SR-172**

Submitted on: 3/18/2025 8:46:33 AM

Testimony for HRE on 3/20/2025 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Serena Stefanic-Phillip	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of Bill SR172.

**SR-172**

Submitted on: 3/18/2025 9:31:53 AM

Testimony for HRE on 3/20/2025 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jane E Arnold	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SR172 and SCR192. We have a shortage of veterinarians in Hawai‘i, which, among other things, makes it diifficult to get pet or feral cats spayed or neutered. This causes overpopulation of cats, which most people consider a problem.

Jane E Arnold

1763 Iwi Way, Apt D

Honolulu HI. 96816

**SR-172**

Submitted on: 3/18/2025 2:01:04 PM

Testimony for HRE on 3/20/2025 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Natalie Graham-Wood	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SR 172 and SCR 192. My name is Natalie Graham-Wood and I live at Sunset Beach, Oahu.