



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 Labor and Technology
Friday, January 31, 2025, at 3:00 p.m.

By

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

SB 1233 – RELATING TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Chair Aquino, Vice Chair Lee, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 1233. The University of Hawai'i (UH) supports the establishment of a state-funded internship program within state departments and agencies as outlined in this bill. This program presents a strategic opportunity not only to address workforce shortages but also to cultivate a well-prepared, diverse talent pool for public service employees.

As the bill correctly identifies, many state departments and agencies are struggling with workforce shortages. One challenge in public service recruitment is that pathways into state jobs are not always clear or intuitive for students. A structured internship program is a possible way to address these challenges. By providing internships, the state can help fill positions in departments where vacancies are most pressing, providing short-term relief while simultaneously developing a pool of qualified candidates for future full-time roles.

The creation of an internship program specifically targeted at state departments and agencies offers students a direct, hands-on experience with the diverse career opportunities in public service. Internships are invaluable in helping students understand the types of roles available in government, from policy research and administration to technical and operational positions, and everything in between. By exposing students to these roles early, the state creates a natural pipeline for future public servants.

This internship program is not just an opportunity for traditional college students but is open to recent high school graduates, post-graduate students, and individuals seeking a career change. By providing these opportunities, the program ensures that students from diverse backgrounds, including those underrepresented in public service, have a clear pathway into state government positions. This inclusivity is vital to building a workforce that reflects the diverse communities it serves, improving the state's ability to meet the needs of its people through inclusive and innovative policies.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



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Statement of
BRENNA H. HASHIMOTO
Director, Department of Human Resources Development

Before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY
Friday, January 31, 2025
3:00PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 224

In consideration of
SB1233, RELATING TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Chair Aquino, Vice-Chair Lee and members of the committee.

The Department of Human Resources Development (HRD) is in **support** of Senate Bill 1233.

The purpose of SB1233 is to establish within the Department of Human Resources Development the state internship and workforce development program.

This allows the State to support workforce development while addressing vacancies in public service positions by:

1. Recruiting and investing in interns interested in public service positions;
2. Developing standardized guidelines to align with internship duties and length of assignment with the qualifications required for employment; and
3. Providing consistent and relevant professional development skills and training.

As a central support agency for the Executive Branch, HRD is positioned to most effectively address the opportunities as listed above between several of our departmental programs: Recruitment, Staffing, and Learning & Development.

Unlike other statewide internship programs, our primary purpose is to support the departments and all employees of the Executive Branch, therefore, our focus would be on the State of Hawai'i as the employer; filling vacancies, developing programs by partnering with the high schools, community colleges and universities to prepare students at all levels seeking full-time employment to fill public sector positions in the

Executive Branch. This is achieved by intradepartmental collaboration, utilizing the expertise of many divisions toward the common goal: Recruitment, Classification and Training. HRD has the knowledge and expertise to best match an intern with a department that aligns the interns educational and occupational goals as well as the department's mission. Additionally, we can provide the host departments with training for mentors; well-trained mentors maximize the intern experience as well as provide leadership opportunities for our existing supervisors and managers. This continuum of developing, placing and growing interns as well as growing our leadership team is a comprehensive program opportunity the Department of Human Resources Development is uniquely positioned to champion.

To implement this program, HRD requests 5.0 positions (4.0 Human Resources Specialist V and 1 Account Clerk V and \$333,000 to effectively operate and maintain the program.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and comments on this measure.



**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Labor and Technology
Friday, January 31, 2025; 3:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 224
Via Videoconference**

RE: SENATE BILL NO. 1233, RELATING TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.

Chair Aquino, Vice Chair Lee, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Primary Care Association (HPCA) is a 501(c)(3) organization established to advocate for, expand access to, and sustain high quality care through the statewide network of Community Health Centers throughout the State of Hawaii. The HPCA **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill No. 1233, RELATING TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.

By way of background, the HPCA represents Hawaii's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). FQHCs provide desperately needed medical services at the frontlines to over 150,000 patients each year who live in rural and underserved communities. Long considered champions for creating a more sustainable, integrated, and wellness-oriented system of health, FQHCs provide a more efficient, more effective and more comprehensive system of healthcare.

This measure, as received by your Committee, would establish a state-funded internship program that provides participants with practical work experience, fosters interest in public service careers, and helps address workforce shortages in State departments and agencies.

The State of Hawaii is experiencing a severe shortage of health care professionals in the workforce, especially in rural areas. Recent studies note that the current shortage of physicians is at 20% of the total full-time equivalent positions throughout the State. The shortage is especially severe in the fields of primary care, infectious diseases, colorectal surgery, pathology, general surgery, pulmonology, neurology, neurosurgery, orthopedic surgery, family medicine, cardiothoracic surgery, rheumatology, cardiology, hematology/oncology, and pediatric subspecialties of endocrinology, cardiology, neurology, hematology/oncology, and gastroenterology.

The same can be said for registered and practical nurses, community health workers, social workers, pharmacists, and other disciplines in the field of health care.

Testimony on Senate Bill No. 1233
Friday, January 31, 2025; 3:00 p.m.
Page 2

The HPCA believes this program would provide a needed service to our community by preparing students for meaningful employment, diversifying their learning opportunities, and promoting responsible citizenship. In addition, the program will facilitate partnerships between businesses and educators for the creation of mentoring ventures and other opportunities so that Hawaii's youth may gain the practical experience that will enable them to be productive members of our labor force. This is critical for the field of health care, especially in rural communities.

Because of this, the HPCA urges your favorable consideration of this measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Public Affairs and Policy Director Erik K. Abe at 536-8442, or eabe@hawaiiipca.net.

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Labor and Technology
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Chair
Senator Chris Lee, Vice Chair**

**Friday, January 31, 2025, at 3:00 PM
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference**

RE: SB1233 RELATING TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Aloha e Chair Aquino, Vice Chair Lee, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports Senate Bill 1233 (SB1233), which establishes within the Department of Human Resources Development the state internship and workforce development program.

SB1233 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Business Services. This bill promotes policies that drive economic growth, enhance workforce opportunities, and improve the quality of life for Hawaii's residents.

Hawaii is experiencing a brain drain as young talent leaves in record numbers. Expanding apprenticeships and state-funded internships to include private-sector roles can provide valuable hands-on experience, creating career pathways that strengthen the workforce. These efforts align with the priorities outlined in the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii, benefiting both employers and the local economy.

State-funded private-sector internships serve a vital role in fostering public-private collaborations, offering Hawaii's youth opportunities to gain valuable work experience, and preparing them for successful careers in a variety of industries. SB1233 will contribute to workforce development by equipping interns with the skills and professional exposure needed to thrive in today's competitive job market.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.

We respectfully ask to pass Senate Bill 1233. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.