



# 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  
Friday, March 14, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.

By

Michael Bruno, Provost  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

And

Maenette Benham, EdD, Chancellor  
University of Hawai'i – West O'ahu  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

#### SB 1502 SD1 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 1502 SD1. This bill seeks to establish faculty positions, student programs and facilities within the College of Social Sciences (CSS) at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UH Mānoa) and the University of Hawai'i – West O'ahu (UH West O'ahu). Its goal is a skilled workforce in the intelligence sector of the state's economy, and would lead to Hawai'i educating and hiring its own college-prepared national intelligence workforce.

This workforce development project is supported by the Chamber of Commerce Hawai'i, Pacific Intelligence Innovation Initiative, the J9 of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and other community partners

#### University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Since 2023, CSS has developed and delivered programs to prepare high school and university students for careers in intelligence analysis, national intelligence and cybersecurity. Now, in 2025, CSS and other UH Mānoa units are ready to broaden the scope of these pilot projects by establishing a UH Mānoa-based academic program, Intelligence Studies in the Asia Pacific (ISAP).

ISAP would change the historical practice of transferring personnel from the continent and foreign countries and moving them to Hawai'i to fill local jobs in national security. This workforce development project would enable the people of Hawai'i, who have a strong affinity for Pacific Islander and Asian cultures and languages, to take the lead in monitoring and addressing regional international affairs and security issues within their home state.

CSS will continue to work closely with UH Mānoa units, including the College of Engineering and the College of Arts, Languages and Letters, as well as other campuses within the UH System. This workforce initiative would attract and serve students who are pursuing a variety of majors.

### University of Hawai'i – West O'ahu

The Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity provides students with an advanced cybersecurity education in information security, mathematics, computer science, and computer engineering. This technical cybersecurity degree program prepares students to meet the advanced cybersecurity workforce requirements of public sector agencies and private sector enterprises. This degree program supports both four-year students at UH West O'ahu and pathway students from aligned Associate Degree programs from the University of Hawai'i Community Colleges.

In partnership with the CCS academic program, ISAP, our collective goal is to prepare Hawai'i's people for local high-paying careers in national security fields. UH West O'ahu's Cyber Security Coordination Center (CSCC) provides students with unique opportunity to develop subject matter expertise and identification of best practices for network defense, vulnerability research, forensic analysis, and industrial control systems. The Cyber Security Research Laboratory (CSRL) provides students with unique internship opportunities to combine cyber security education and skills to promote advanced knowledge in an applied research environment.

Students participate in faculty guided applied analysis and research related to the understanding and improvement of security and resiliency for critical information infrastructures and systems at the local, regional, and national level. The CSCC and CSRL provide a collaborative resource for Cybersecurity, Information Security and Assurance, and Information Technology degree students that will also produce highly trained cybersecurity and information technology professionals to meet increasing technical workforce requirements that exists in our communities.

### Funding

The funding allocated in this bill will support the following initiatives:

1. At UH Mānoa's CSS: The establishment of this multidisciplinary ISAP at UH Mānoa would utilize 4.5 FTE employees, including 3 faculty, with an estimated budget of \$500,000. ISAP is especially pertinent at this time, given the U.S. government's current focus on decreasing its workforce and looking to the states to fill employment needs. Over the past 10 years, CSS has experienced an increase in enrollment, a higher trend in "persistence" (continuous Fall to Fall enrollment) in comparison to the UH Mānoa campus, and a shorter time to degree than the combined UH Mānoa campus. CSS also has zero to few vacant faculty positions at this time.

2. At UH West O'ahu: The creation of a 0.5 FTE position for the Director of the Cyber Security Coordination Center and a 0.5 FTE position for the Director of the Cyber Security Research Laboratory at the UH West O'ahu, at an estimated budget of \$130,000. This funding will also cover expenses related to student internships, certifications, equipment, software, and professional certification fees at an estimated budget of \$270,000.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our testimony in support and respectfully ask for your favorable consideration, provided its adoption does not impact priorities as indicated in our Board of Regents Approved Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this matter.



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 1502 SD1  
Relating to the University of Hawaii**

Committee on Higher Education  
Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair  
Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair

Friday, March 14, 2025 at 2:00 PM  
Conference Room 309 & Videoconference  
415 South Beretania Street

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Military Affairs Council ("MAC") supports SB 1502 SD1 which appropriates funds for the establishment of faculty positions, student programs, and facilities in the College of Social Sciences at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and the University of Hawaii West Oahu for workforce development in the defense sector of the State's economy.

The MAC was established in 1985 when the Chamber was appointed by the State to serve as the liaison to the military. The MAC advocates on behalf of Hawaii's military, and is comprised of business leaders, academic institutions, State and County officials, members of the CODEL, community leaders, labor unions and organizations and retired U.S. flag and general officers. The MAC works to support Hawaii's location as a strategic U.S. headquarters in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region which is crucial for U.S. national and homeland security.

The defense industry is a critical economic driver for Hawaii, ranking as the second largest industry segment after tourism. Developing a local workforce to meet the growing demand in defense-related personnel is crucial for Hawaii's economic diversification and long-term prosperity. Defense continues to play a significant investment in Hawaii and has created thousands of high-quality jobs in fields like information technology, cybersecurity, intelligence, and data science, providing vital economic opportunities for our residents.

SB 1502 SD1 will help develop a skilled local workforce to meet the growing demand in these critical fields, and will serve as a pipeline and be a catalyst for talented graduates ready to contribute to Hawaii's defense sector.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support.

**Testimony to the House Committee on Higher Education  
Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair  
Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair**

**Friday, March 14, 2025, at 2:00PM  
Conference Room 309 & Videoconference**

**RE: SB1502 SD1 Relating to the University of Hawaii**

Aloha e Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, 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 1502 Senate Draft 1 (SB1502 SD1), which appropriates funds for the establishment of faculty positions, student programs, and facilities at the College of Social Sciences at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa and the University of Hawai'i, West Oahu for workforce development in the defense sector of the State's economy.

SB1502 SD1 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Military and Defense. This bill promotes policies that drive economic growth, enhance workforce opportunities, and improve the quality of life for Hawaii's residents.

Hawaii faces a pressing need to grow its workforce for the defense sector, which has seen nearly ten thousand new positions between fiscal years 2018 and 2022 and received almost \$9 billion in defense spending in fiscal year 2022. Meeting this surge in demand—especially for IT, cybersecurity, intelligence, and data science jobs—necessitates leveraging the resources of the University of Hawaii's College of Social Sciences at Mānoa and the Business Administration program at West Oahu.

In response, this legislation allocates funds to establish new faculty positions, internship programs, and specialized training facilities at these institutions. By integrating academic expertise with real-world industry needs, it fosters a robust talent pipeline, amplifies economic growth, and opens promising career pathways for local students. The Chamber supports this bill, recognizing that these strategic investments will reinforce Hawaii's competitive edge in the defense sector, create more opportunities for residents, and contribute to the State's broader economic vitality.

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 1502 Senate Draft 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



# Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce

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## TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION SB1502 SD1 - Relating to the University of Hawaii – IN SUPPORT

Friday, March 14, 2025 2:00 PM

Aloha Chair Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice Chair Terez Amato, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce, representing over 300 businesses and individual members primarily on the East side of Hawai'i Island, I submit this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 1502 Senate Draft 1 (SB1502 SD1). This bill appropriates funding to establish faculty positions, student programs, and facilities at the College of Social Sciences at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and the University of Hawai'i – West O'ahu, strengthening workforce development in the state's defense sector.

Investing in workforce development is essential to equipping local students with the skills and opportunities needed to succeed in high-demand fields such as cybersecurity, intelligence, and data science. By expanding educational and training programs in these areas, we can help retain local talent and reduce brain drain, ensuring that Hawai'i's young professionals have viable career paths at home rather than seeking opportunities elsewhere.

SB1502 SD1 prioritizes funding for workforce development programs that will prepare students for careers in the defense sector. By leveraging the expertise of UH Mānoa's College of Social Sciences and UH West O'ahu's Business Administration program, this initiative will support faculty positions, student programs, and operational resources to develop a highly skilled workforce ready to address emerging defense challenges.

Specifically, this bill allocates funding for faculty specializing in international economics, intelligence studies, and cybersecurity, as well as educational specialists, research assistants, and hands-on training initiatives. The Chamber strongly supports this investment as a crucial step toward fostering job growth, enhancing workforce capabilities, and reinforcing Hawai'i's role in national security and economic stability.

We respectfully urge the passage of Senate Bill 1502 Senate Draft 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Carla Kuo  
Executive Officer  
Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce

Dear Members of the Higher Education Committee,

I am Dr. Jairus Grove, Director of the intelligence initiative (Intelligence Studies in the Asia-Pacific, or ISAP) at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I express my utmost support for institutionalizing and further developing the Intelligence Initiative program. This program stands as a beacon of opportunity, aimed at ensuring that Hawai'i residents are competitive in securing government billets and contractor jobs in national intelligence and are well-represented as decision-makers impacting the future safety and security of our state and nation.

Our program focuses on nurturing talent from high school through the PhD level, integrating students from all corners of the state. We emphasize the essential knowledge required across disciplines—including STEM, Social Sciences, and Humanities—ensuring these disciplines contribute effectively to the greater mission of U.S. national security.

Three core components of the Intelligence Initiative are crucial to our success:

1. **Talent Alignment:** We ensure students understand how their unique skills can be harnessed to contribute to national security missions.
2. **Experiential Learning:** We place students in strategic internships that provide indispensable security clearances, boosting their competitiveness for consequential roles.
3. **Workforce Diversity and Stability:** We collaborate with the U.S. government to cultivate a workforce that reflects our diverse community and is ready to lead our nation's efforts in the Asia-Pacific region.

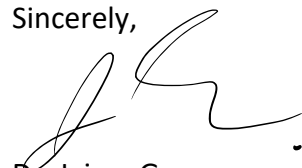
We have emerged beyond our pilot phase after five years of fruitful collaboration with Indo-Pacific Command and business enterprises supporting these endeavors. Our initiative provides students unparalleled mentorship opportunities from renowned national leaders, effectively building networks that will position them at the forefront of the intelligence job market.

While we have thrived on federal and university support, we seek your support to position our program as a permanent resource. This necessitates expanding our faculty to maintain a competitive standing alongside national intelligence programs. We must harness our brightest minds in Hawai'i, empowering them to solve the nation's most pressing challenges.

Our initiative embodies the state's values of a civically minded, diverse community. However, if we cannot build a sustainable program, we risk losing the chance to ensure national security leadership mirrors the vibrant communities of Hawai'i.

Thank you for considering our request. We are dedicated to enhancing our residents' economic and security prospects and hope your support will help achieve this transformative vision for Hawai'i and beyond.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jairus Grove  
Professor of International Relations  
Department of Political Science  
University of Hawaii at Manoa

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 1502 SD1  
Relating to the University of Hawaii

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION  
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Rep. Terez Amato, Vice Chair

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Rep. Trish La Chica      Rep. Kanani Souza  
Rep. Ikaika Olds

Friday, March 14, 2025 at 2:00PM Conference Room 309 & Videoconference 415 South Beretania Street

My name is Kendall Wong and I am providing written testimony in strong support of SB1502 SD1. As a current UH West Oahu Cybersecurity student and former Department of Defense high school intern, this bill would greatly benefit our program and would help to promote more cybersecurity related jobs. This field is going to continue to grow in a world where digital technology dominates and is integrated into the many daily lives of people all around the world. As cyber threats evolve and new ones emerge, we need more people working in this field to innovate and create solutions to combat these threats. By adding additional faculty positions for our program, it will mean more mentors, classes, and resources to help students like me learn, succeed and apply the knowledge and skills in this increasingly important field.

I respectfully request that SB1501 SD1 be passed. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify.

Very Respectfully,

Kendall Wong



**SB-1502-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2025 11:35:50 AM

Testimony for HED on 3/14/2025 2:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify                |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Emily Sarasa | Individual   | Oppose             | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Committee Members,

I oppose SB1502, which aims to make the University of Hawai'i at Manoa a pipeline for students to enter the defense sector. I oppose further militarization of Hawai'i. We have to envision a future that does not revolve around U.S. military dominance and control. Instead, we need to offer students job opportunities that will improve life here.

Any funds allocated in this bill could be used to build and bolster sectors that our residents desperately need—R&D on clean transportation, building materials, energy autonomy, food sovereignty, and climate change resilience. The defense sector is touted as an economic boon in Hawai'i, but that viewpoint overlooks the military's extractive presence, environmental damage, and other harmful behaviors. Investing in the defense sector only seems like a valuable opportunity because the State is not investing enough in creating other opportunities.

I agree that security is important, but our communities here are concerned about the *immediate* security needs of food, shelter, and disaster preparedness. Federal funds are being cut under this administration, but as one state agency pointed out yesterday in testimony for a similar bill (SB1503), defense sector spending will not be. The State should not be directing its limited funds to feed into the most well-funded agency in the U.S. If UH wants an even stronger DOD presence at our University, it should seek out federal funding.

I urge you to oppose SB1502 and use our taxpayer dollars to support real economic opportunities for our students and the broader community.

Mahalo nui,

Emily Sarasa