



# 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  
Tuesday, February 11, 2025, at 3:10 p.m.

By

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### SB 636 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT HILO

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony on SB 636. The University of Hawai'i at Hilo (UH Hilo) supports SB 636, which seeks to assist UH Hilo in our retention and recruitment efforts through an appropriation for positions and operating funds to support student enrollment management initiatives.

Enrollment management is essential to the long-term success and sustainability of UH Hilo, especially as we face increasing competition and shifting demographics in higher education. Increased focus on student enrollment management will optimize recruitment, admissions, and retention strategies while enhancing services for key student populations. This investment will have a direct impact on increasing enrollment, improving student satisfaction, and enhancing the overall student experience, aligning with our institutional goals of growth, inclusivity, and student success.

Student retention is a critical metric that impacts both the financial sustainability of the institution and the long-term success of our students. A Retention Coordinator will allow for a proactive approach to identifying at-risk students and implementing tailored interventions to support their persistence toward degree completion. This position will also work collaboratively across campus units to enhance existing programs, introduce retention strategies grounded in national best practices, and streamline student support services. By investing in retention, the institution not only improves student outcomes but also generates significant cost savings by reducing dropout rates, ultimately contributing to our strategic goals of student success and institutional sustainability.

Internships are essential for preparing students for post-graduate success, helping them gain practical experience, develop professional networks, and apply classroom learning in real-world environments. An Internship Coordinator will serve as the bridge between students, faculty, and external partners, ensuring that our programs are aligned with industry standards and that students are placed in meaningful internships. This position will also track student outcomes, providing data that can be used to further refine and improve the program. The Internship Coordinator's efforts will directly support career

readiness, increase student retention through engaged learning, and strengthen partnerships with local employers and community stakeholders.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 636.