



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Lower & Higher Education
March 18, 2019 at 2:00 p.m.

By
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Vice President for Community Colleges
University of Hawai'i System

HCR 143 / HR 132 – URGING THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII TO STUDY THE FEASIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING A HAWAII COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTANCE LEARNING CENTER IN THE PUNA DISTRICT.

Chair Woodson, Vice Chairs Hashem and Perruso, and members of the committee:

The University of Hawai'i (UH) supports HCR 143 / HR 132 which urges the University of Hawai'i to study the feasibility of establishing a Hawai'i Community College distance learning center in the District of Puna.

There is a critical need to strengthen rural outreach, education and economic development in Puna which is one of the most underserved areas in the state and also the fastest growing district on Hawai'i Island. It would be most feasible and beneficial for the residents of Puna for the Center to be under the University of Hawai'i, with UH Hilo and Hawai'i Community College collaborating and partnering to provide higher education and career options to the people of Hawai'i Island.

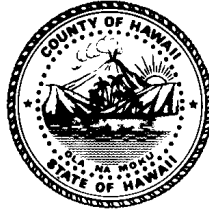
Transportation is one of the major barriers to higher education for residents in the Puna District. Given the geography of Hawai'i Island, Hawai'i Community College is committed to building a "distributed" model of higher education that relies on multiple locations to best serve our community.

However, a critical missing piece of this plan is the ability to serve the highly populated, geographically remote District of Puna. Establishing an education resource center in Puna would be a tremendous step in establishing an island-wide model of higher education that can help us fulfill our mission to serve "all segments of the Hawai'i Island Community."

HCR 143 / HR 132 support the strategic decision to better position Hawai'i Community College as a provider of post-secondary education to the entire island of Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Aloha.

Harry Kim
Mayor



Wil Okabe
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March 15, 2019

Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Representative Mark J. Hashem, Vice Chair
Representative Amy A. Perruso, Vice Chair
Committee on Lower and Higher Education

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chairs Hashem and Perruso, and Committee Members:

RE: HCR 143/HR 132 Urging the University of Hawai'i to Study the Feasibility of Establishing a Hawai'i Community College Distance Learning Center in the Puna District

Puna, with a land mass about the size of Oahu, is the largest geographic area in the State of Hawai'i without an institution of higher learning. Its residents, perhaps attracted by the relative affordability of housing, are among the state's lowest income and suffer the highest poverty rates. Much of the district lacks access to reliable, high speed internet, making on-line or web-based learning a challenging hardship, and the long commute to Hilo and its "big city amenities," like the University of Hawai'i at Hilo and Hawai'i Community College, may be prohibitive for reasons of both time and money.

The establishment of a distance learning center within the Puna district would provide essential access to post-secondary education within a reasonable commute distance, thereby enhancing opportunities for students to develop their skills and improve their futures without leaving their home district.

I appreciate this Committee's support of SB 457, SD1, on this same subject, and ask that you support this Resolution and Concurrent Resolution as well.

Respectfully Submitted,

Harry Kim
MAYOR