



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 Ways and Means
Thursday, March 30, 2023 at 10:05 a.m.

By

Megan Donahue, Interim Director
Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology

And

Charles "Chip" Fletcher, Interim Dean
School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology

And

Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 848 HD2 SD1 – RELATING TO HAWAII INSTITUTE FOR MARINE BIOLOGY

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support for HB 848 HD2 SD1, which appropriates funds for the following support staff positions at the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB):

- 1) Building Maintenance Worker II
- 2) Administrative Officer APT-B
- 3) Website specialist APT-B

HIMB is a world-class center for research and education with a mission to advance understanding and stewardship of oceans and coasts locally and globally. The proximity of the twenty-six acre campus with high-quality lab facilities to a living coral reef provides unparalleled opportunities for research. HIMB's scientists, educators, and support staff bring in close to \$9M in research, education, and outreach funds annually that contribute to our ability to hire Windward-based staff. As these programs continually expand, new permanent staff positions are crucial to help us sustain daily operations and meet the needs and expectations of our community partners.

HIMB has a long history of undertaking cutting edge science and our scientists were the first to report large scale coral bleaching in Hawaii and link it to high water temperatures, calling the world's attention to the consequences of global climate change. We apply our knowledge to address local as well as global problems. HIMB is pilot testing construction of hybrid reefs – human-built structures that interact with natural processes to create living reefs – that could reduce wave energy and protect nearshore cultural and infrastructure resources. HIMB is also testing novel shoreline erosion mitigation techniques that build on traditional practices to work *with* nature rather than fighting against it to shore up coastlines.

HIMB is well-known for internationally recognized training for students in conservation oriented and place-based scientific research, but we have also been working to expand vocational and technical training opportunities for local students. For example, we recently created a paid

experiential learning internship program for local community college students to train with Facilities, Administration, Water Safety, Fiscal or Human Resources departments within our institution, preparing local students for real world jobs close to home.

Success in growing such programs, which provide direct benefits to local students and the State, is dependent on having permanent support staff that possess the institutional memory to efficiently navigate the State and University systems and do not turn over with individual grant cycles.

Building maintenance is critical to the operations at HIMB, with 8 research buildings, 5 housing buildings, storage facilities, boat docks, and sheds. HIMB is already operating under a minimal facilities crew and struggles to keep up with existing infrastructure maintenance needs. This hire is critical for health and safety concerns. Filling this position will allow research and education activities that are highly relevant to the university and the State to continue operating safely in well-maintained buildings. Without adequate building maintenance, HIMB may not be able to maintain a functional research infrastructure.

HIMB currently has only two permanent Administrative Officers to support 25 faculty and manage over 130 project accounts. This project load requires extensive grant management, account maintenance, budget oversight, forecasting, procurement, and disbursement of appropriated, extramural, and revolving funds. Hiring this third Administrative Officer position is essential to avoid overtime pay, staff burnout (with subsequent departure), and loss of research capacity. This hire is critical for maintaining a minimum base level of research productivity; without it, extramural grant submissions and success would likely be significantly diminished, resulting in reductions in extramural funding and associated research spending in the state.

HIMB has never had a permanent Website Specialist position. Website support was previously fulfilled by graduate assistants or extramurally-funded part-time staff, but these positions have been discontinued. HIMB has been without dedicated website and information services support for several years. With extensive programming in research, education, visitor, and community service, HIMB critically needs a permanent staff member who can manage the entirety of our web presence, online dissemination, and social media needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support for HB 848 HD2 SD1, provided that its passage does not impact priorities as indicated in the University's Board of Regents Approved Executive Biennium Budget.

Your consideration is greatly appreciated.

HB-848-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2023 10:34:11 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/30/2023 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rob Toonen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB) is a globally renowned marine biology unit that requires additional staff to maintain the facilities and quality of the educational and research experience for our local students. I strongly support this measure to provide the permanent support staff positions that are critical to sustaining daily operations for initiatives at HIMB.

HB-848-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2023 7:26:09 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/30/2023 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carl Meyer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB848, which would establish new permanent support staff positions that are critical to sustaining daily operations at HIMB. HIMB is a world-renowned marine laboratory and research institute where cutting-edge science is combined with expert training for future generations of marine scientists. In order to continue to thrive as a flagship research and training institute, it is vital that HIMB has essential support services. We are currently understaffed in key support areas and our existing support staff is currently spread thin taking on additional duties to keep our institution running. The support provided by HB848 will help to alleviate this situation and is a worthwhile investment in the continued success of HIMB.

HB 848 HD2 SD1 – RELATING TO HAWAI‘I INSITUTE OF MARINE BIOLOGY

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaron, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support for HB 848 HD2 SD1, which appropriates funds for the following support staff positions at the Hawai‘i Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB):

- 1) Building Maintenance Worker II
- 2) Administrative Officer APT-B
- 3) Website specialist APT-B

As noted in the bill’s language, HIMB is a world-class center of innovation for science and technology, place-based education, and indigenous resource management approaches, with a mission to advance understanding and stewardship of oceans and coasts locally and globally. HIMBs ~29 acre campus and associated facilities and programs provide direct benefits to local students and the State, are dependent permanent support staff and that possess the institutional knowledge to efficiently navigate the processes of the State and University of Hawaii. The purpose of this bill is to appropriate funds to establish new permanent support staff positions that are critical to sustaining daily operations for the initiatives at HIMB.

My name is Malia Rivera, and I submit this testimony as an individual, and thus it doesn’t not represent official testimony of the University of Hawai‘i.

I have been at HIMB since 2005, serving as a tenured faculty member whose work focuses on K-20 marine science education and training, with an emphasis on creating access to place-based marine science research experiences for Hawai‘i students and facilitating pathways to undergraduate careers in this discipline. The goal of my efforts is to increase representation in professional pathways amongst students from Hawai‘i with the hopes of bolstering local workforce development. As a kama‘āina who grew up in ‘Āhuimanu and a graduate of James B. Castle High School, the communities around Kāne‘ohe Bay and the bay itself are special to me and thus my work is of personal importance, as my own journey navigating this pathway presented many challenges and barriers as an underrepresented student in STEM at UHM.

Despite the gains in increasing the number of marine STEM programs such as the ones I have created at HIMB for our local students, I, and my colleagues at HIMB, remain significantly hampered by the extremely heavy administrative and non-discipline related workloads we as individual faculty and staff must endure at the institute, relative to our colleagues on the main campus. Because HIMB at Moku o Lo‘e is a campus unto itself, we have burdens (both actual and fiscal) as far as the physical plant maintenance, grounds caretaking and administration that most other units at the University need not worry about (or pay for). For example, although my main responsibility is to create and deliver education and training programs for Hawai‘i students, I estimate I spend ~ 50% of my time on administrative tasks because our existing administrative staff are incredibly overtaxed. Similarly, my program’s education and teaching staff have

sometimes even undertaken building maintenance, janitorial and grounds related work, as HIMB has not had sufficient coverage in these areas for as long as I can remember. We make do, but it comes at the expense of doing our primary jobs, that is, educating Hawai'i K-20 students in marine science. Our website and communications, which help the broader community gain access to HIMB information and programs and to better understand HIMB's important work in marine conservation science and its relevance to the state of Hawai'i and the world, are dated and obsolete because existing staff have no time to update and keep it current.

Funding for these support positions is critical to HIMB's mission and would be a first step to help offset the existing significant burdens on current faculty and staff so they can more efficiently do the important work they were actually hired to do, that directly benefits the our local communities, the State of Hawai'i, and the world.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this important measure.

HB-848-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2023 9:26:46 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/30/2023 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mark Royer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Ways and Means Committee,

I urge your support for HB848 to appropriate funds for a building maintenance worker, administrative office, and website specialist at the Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB). Having worked at HIMB over the past 12 years as a graduate research assistant and postdoctoral scholar, I can attest to the valuable research that has contributed to everything from advancing the knowledge of local community ecology to advancing the field of marine biology as a whole. HIMB needs the additional administrative and maintenance capacity to maintain our growing research and outreach potential.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark Royer PhD

HB-848-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2023 9:57:00 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/30/2023 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kim Holland	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It is vital that the state's assets (including those assigned to UH) are maintained at the highest level so that they provide maximum opportunities to serve Hawaii's people. This bill will assist in achieving that goal.



HB-848-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2023 10:08:08 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/30/2023 10:05:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Judy Lemus	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

I am providing personal testimony in support for HB848 HD2 SD1, which appropriates funds for three support staff positions at the Hawai‘i Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB).

Since the 1950s, the University of Hawai‘i has had a marine science lab located on Moku o Lo‘e. And over the past seven decades, HIMB scientists helped establish aquaculture in the State of Hawai‘i, provided the first demonstration of coral bleaching as a result of thermal stress, and conducted the first studies on Hawaiian sharks. HIMB continues to occupy a pre-eminent position in research on coral reef ecosystem processes, marine animal biosensory ecology and bioenergetics, marine evolutionary and ecological genetics, and coastal technologies. HIMB faculty are leading experts in tropical marine biology research and education, advancing the informed stewardship of Hawai‘i’s marine and coastal biodiversity.

As a former interim Director of HIMB, Associate Director, and a current faculty member, I have first hand experience with the stressors and challenges that insufficient staffing creates on the productivity and innovation at HIMB. Faculty and staff are top-notch, but are continuously overloaded with work. For example, one full-time building maintenance worker is simply not enough to maintain all of the research, education, and housing buildings and auxiliary facilities on the 26-acre island campus. Elsewhere on UH campuses, there would be several workers to cover this amount of space and infrastructure.

Likewise, our productivity and ability to manage extramural funding is hampered by a shortage of administrative support. We have been quite successful attracting funding, in fact, our extramural awards are double what they were several years ago. But we are now challenged in operationalizing these awards due to heavy procurement and contracting protocols. Unfortunately, grant funding cannot support sustained fiscal management. Our existing two administrative staff do not have the bandwidth to provide all of these functions for 25 highly productive researchers. There is a real risk we may not be able to fulfill all of our award obligations without additional support, thus jeopardizing future funding for our Hawai‘i-based research and education.

Finally, our website and social media presence are essentially our digital calling cards to the rest of the world, both here in Hawai‘i and abroad. Today’s funders and donors EXPECT premier research institutes to have modern, innovative, and forward facing online platforms. Community

members and schools rely on this online information about our many educational programs, internships, and tours. HIMB has never had dedicated website support and at this critical time in which we are experiencing unprecedented growth, a full-time website specialist is especially important to our continued success.

Thank you for your consideration in appropriating these important positions for HIMB.