As one of seven campuses of the University of Hawai‘i Community Colleges that is committed to becoming a model indigenous-serving institution, the Kupu Ka Wai Hawaiian Council and Kūlana Hawai‘i Hawaiian Division at Honolulu Community College condemn the actions of the University of Hawai‘i, State Department of Transportation, Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, and State of Hawai‘i on Mauna Kea and express their support for the kia‘i (protectors) who have taken a stand to defend the ‘āina.

The issues on Mauna Kea shed light on a history of injustices against the Hawaiian people. This conflict is not about science vs. culture. We are staunch supporters of science, as is evidenced by the numerous Native Hawaiian-serving STEM programs on our campus including the Kūkala’ula STEM Pathways Program, Po‘i Nā Nalu Native Hawaiian Career & Technical Education Program, Ho‘omānalowai STEM Student & Teacher Preparation Program, OHA STEM Scholarship, Hālau Ola Honua Partnerships for Geoscience Education, Pre-Engineering Education Collaborative, and the Strategic Transfer Alliance for Minority Participation Bridges to Baccalaureate program. In addition, our college is the only campus that offers a concentration in traditional Hawaiian navigation through our Hawaiian Studies Associate in Arts degree. Students in the program gain hands-on experience in voyaging techniques that successfully merge Hawaiian cultural practices and STEM.

We believe in STEM initiatives that do not cause harm or divide the community. We oppose the process by which TMT was allowed to proceed despite environmental and cultural concerns and large community opposition to the project. We believe in a collaborative process grounded in “Pono Science,” which includes the culture, values, and voice of Native Hawaiians. Available reports, including and not limited to the Environmental Impact Statements and Comprehensive Management Reports, do not demonstrate that Pono Science was a part of the TMT permitting process. Furthermore, both the
Supreme Court and Governor of Hawai‘i have acknowledged a history of mismanagement on Mauna Kea, which casts doubts on the University of Hawai‘i’s ability to move forward on this project without causing more degradation.

For these reasons, the Kupu Ka Wai Council and Kūlana Hawai‘i Hawaiian Division are opposed to the following actions by the State of Hawai‘i, Department of Transportation, and Department of Hawaiian Home Lands:

1) Use of excessive force against the protectors of Mauna Kea;

2) Failure to include leadership from the Kia‘i in the negotiations process;

3) Failure to acknowledge the sacredness and cultural importance of Mauna Kea to the Hawaiian people;

4) Desecration of the Hae Hawai‘i, a symbol of Hawaiian national pride and cultural identity;

5) Discriminatory issuance of traffic citations against Kia‘i on Daniel K. Inouye Highway; and

6) Harassment of kūpuna positioned on the Mauna Kea Access Road (i.e. shining high beam lights into the kūpuna tents late at night).

Furthermore, many Honolulu Community College faculty, staff, and students have been, and continue to support Kia‘i on Mauna Kea. Our students, especially those who oppose TMT, have expressed concern that they do not feel supported by the University of Hawai‘i. We encourage their civic engagement, and we are committed to providing them with safe spaces on our campus. If we are to become a truly indigenous-serving institution, we ask that the University of Hawai‘i commit to the following:

1) Provide safe spaces for our faculty, staff, and students to express their concerns;

2) Provide safe spaces for faculty, staff, and students to learn more about both sides of this issue;

3) Listen to concerns from the Native Hawaiian community;

4) Protect students (on either side of the issue) from harassment by staff and faculty;

5) Ensure that students who decide to stand with the Kia‘i on Mauna Kea are not subject to excessive force or harassment.

This statement is released with full support from members of the Kupu Ka Wai Hawaiian Council and members of the Kūlana Hawai‘i Hawaiian Division at Honolulu Community College.