

Greenwood support 'virtually unanimous,' but more legislative scrutiny coming

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HONOLULU (HawaiiNewsNow) - Support for embattled University of Hawaii President M.R.C. Greenwood was "virtually unanimous" among the UH Board of Regents who met in secret Thursday to discuss her future and then issued a statement supporting her, sources said.

While the all-volunteer board members have not been happy with the way Greenwood handled the aftermath of the bungled Stevie Wonder concert, they felt her overall record overshadowed this embarrassing chapter of UH history, sources said.

Some UH observers wondered Friday if the regents' statement of support for Greenwood was part of a graceful way to transition to a new UH leader by saying nice things about her in public but making a private deal with her to leave UH several months or a year down the road. There was no such deal, a source said, adding that the board's statement showed "genuine support" for Greenwood.

While that support wasn't unanimous, sources said it was "virtually unanimous," with just one or two regents out of 15 opposing her Thursday. In recent weeks, sources said about one third of the



regents, mostly those appointed by Gov. Neil Abercrombie, opposed Greenwood.

Next year, Abercrombie will nominate three more regents to replace those whose terms are expiring. So Greenwood can expect more scrutiny when the new regents take office July 1, after they are confirmed by the State Senate.

During the nearly three-and-a-half hour executive session held at UH Maui College Thursday afternoon, Greenwood apologized to the regents for sending them a ten-page demand letter last month that threatened to sue them and asked for a \$2 million confidential buyout. She withdrew the letter Nov. 6.

That demand letter has upset state lawmakers, even those who said they were willing to give Greenwood the benefit of the doubt, according to interviews with five state representatives and senators Friday.

One state representative who asked to remain anonymous said, "She may have the support of the regents today, but I'll tell you that her support throughout the state is gone. She's putting her personal self interests above the university and it's just not healthy."

When Greenwood and university officials appear before lawmakers' committees asking for money for UH during next year's legislative session, one state senator said, "There's going to be a lot more surgical questioning and she is not going to be enjoying the easy-going ata-girl attitude there was before."

Greenwood has repeatedly complained she dealt with unfair political pressure from Abercrombie and state legislators who asked her to keep Jim Donovan in his former position as UH athletics director. Abercrombie has said he was responding to Greenwood's request for advice and was just giving her options.

Some lawmakers said they supported keeping Donovan in his \$240,000-a-year AD post until his contract expired in March 2013, and then replacing him, a less costly option than UH ultimately took. Instead, as part of a settlement to Donovan's threatened lawsuit, UH removed him as AD, agreed to create a new communications position for him with a \$211,000 salary for three years.

"She threw the regents, the governor, the legislature under the bus. She has no friends," said a third lawmaker. The lawmakers spoke on the condition of anonymity, because they said they would be more truthful if their names were not included in this story.

A fourth legislator said "I think Greenwood's going to come in for some hard questioning [before lawmakers]. As well she should. She has some explaining to do."

For Greenwood, the easy part may have been keeping her job. Now the hard part begins: dealing with all the politicians and others she's blamed and threatened in the aftermath of UH's failed Stevie Wonder concert.

On Monday, the State Senate committee that held the briefings investigating the concert meets to release its findings.

That's also when senators are expected to announce several legislative measures that will put UH under more scrutiny. One proposal will ask for a "special master" to be appointed to make sure all the policy and procedural changes UH is pledging to make actually get done, sources said.

Greenwood, 69, has a contract paying her \$475,000 a year as UH president until July of 2015. Like nearly all other UH employees, she has voluntarily taken pay reductions, in her case, worth ten percent of that salary.

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