

Testimony by
Jay Maddock, Ph.D.
Director and Associate Professor
Office of Public Health Studies
University of Hawai`i at Mānoa
March 11, 2008

Honorable Chair Person Chang and Higher Education Committee Members:

I am the Director of the Office of Public Health Studies testifying as an individual in favor of **HCR 119**, Urging the University of Hawai`i to Rebuild the School of Public Health by 2012. My statement on this resolution does not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawai`i.

The School of Public Health at the University of Hawai`i was closed in 1999 and reorganized into the Office of Public Health Studies. As an Office, we have been very successful in providing excellence in public health education and research. In 2007, we were awarded seven years of accreditation of our graduate programs by the Council on Education in Public Health, the longest possible. We currently offer training in epidemiology and the social and behavioral health sciences. We will begin offering the Doctorate in Public Health again starting in the fall of 2008. Despite our success as a small program, the lack of a School of Public Health in Hawai`i puts us at grave risk. In almost 10 years, we have not graduated any students in environmental health, health services, health policy and biostatistics. With an aging workforce, the Department of Health will soon be facing numerous vacancies that they are unable to fill with qualified people. The public health threat to Hawai`i is real. Pandemic influenza, SARS, bioterrorism, childhood obesity, the aging population and climate change are all real and present dangers. Faculty from a School of Public Health could inform us about the safety of the sand after the sewage spill in Waikiki or the effects of pharmaceuticals in our water supply.

The Office of Public Health Studies has recently completed a business plan that outlines what it would take to rebuild the School of Public Health. We estimate that the School of Public Health would require about \$4 million annually to operate. This funding would result in 350 newly trained public health workers and an estimated \$45 million in extramural grants. The value of the protection of the people of Hawai`i is of course incalculable.

Your support of this resolution will help us on our path, supporting the expansion of public health education and research in Hawai`i and beginning to stem the public health workforce crisis that faces the state.

March 11, 2008

Testifier: Nancy S. Partika, RN, MPH

Bill: HCR 119 & HR 101, Urging the University of Hawaii to Rebuild the School of Public Health by 2012.

Committee: House Higher Education

Aloha Representative Chang and HED Committee Members:

I am a faculty member in Public Health testifying as an individual in strong support for **HR 101** and **HCR 119**, Urging the University of Hawaii to Rebuild the School of Public Health by 2012. I am also a former president of both the Hawaii Public Health Association (2000-2002) and SPH Alumni Association.

The UH School of Public Health (SPH) was established in the 1960's to meet the needs for a public health workforce in Hawaii, Asia and the Pacific, as well as nationally. Hawaii, For 30+ years, the SPH prepared over 3,500 professionals for challenging public health work in epidemiology, gerontology, maternal and child health, health administration and planning, nutrition, and international health, as well as other areas..

The mission of the UH Department of Public Health Sciences (DPHS) is to advance the health of the people of Hawaii, the nation, and the Asia-Pacific region through the education and training of public health professionals, innovative research in public health sciences, and public health service to the community. The Program emphasizes the preparation of future public health leaders who are proficient at employing public health knowledge and practical skills in a culturally-diverse environment.

The knowledge and professional expertise of public health professionals is required in order to:

- Monitor health status and develop health promotion programs;
- Investigate health hazards and provide problem-based solutions;
- Engage, inform & educate the general public on personal and public health concerns;
- Mobilize community partnerships and collaboration;
- Develop policies to support and promote health in local communities;
- Enforce public health laws and legal regulations;
- Ensure a competent and skilled health PH workforce;
- Provide health care services and ensure more effective distribution of health care resources;
- Conduct research and evaluate public health programs.

With over 3,500 graduates of the SPH, the institution has trained leaders who make up the backbone of the public health infrastructure in Hawaii and contributed to workforce needs on the mainland and in the Asia & Pacific region.

When the school lost its PH accreditation in 1999 and became a department under the School of Medicine in 2000, many alumni and supporters in the community were devastated by the loss of the only school of public health in the US-Pacific, and very concerned about the monumental efforts it would take to rebuild the SPH again.

Since that time, the Dept. of Public Health Sciences has made slow but steady progress towards rebuilding the School of Public Health. There is more PH faculty to support a greater array of PH specializations needed to train PH workers. There has been recent CEPH re-accreditation, which is essential to the good standing and continuation of the program. More collaboration with the community and other UH programs is occurring and more students are entering PH than has occurred in the past 8 years. Community support for rebuilding the SPH is strong and unwavering, as it is clear that Hawaii faces many public health challenges that can only be addressed with a well-trained and supported PH

workforce. There is now a business plan in place to help guide rebuilding the SPH in a well-organized and cost-effective manner.

Workforce surveys indicate that the current public health DOH workforce is aging (the average age is 47); is retiring (over 45% of HI DOH workers will be able to retire in next few years), is hardly being replaced (20% vacancy, 14% turnover rate); and, more often than not, does not have an adequate up-to-date level of formal education in public health. A recent national report on the public health workforce status recognized Hawai'i with the dubious reputation as one of trouble spots for public health, which is primarily attributed to the closing of Hawaii's School of Public Health and its lingering negative impact on current and future workforce needs of health sector in Hawaii.

Having a School of Public Health will allow us to better respond to Hawaii's public health needs, including issues relating a potential pandemic flu epidemic, substance use, disparities in health status, environmental health problems, diabetes, elder health, injury prevention, childhood obesity, bioterrorism, SARS, and many other local and global health challenges.

Disparities in health and socioeconomic status as well as existing barriers to access available health care, social and educational services are clearly documented in Hawaii. An estimated 29% of our population now lives on neighbor islands, and a growing number of people lives in suburban and rural areas of Oahu. This sizable population group has expressed significant needs for public health training and education, which is now only minimally accessible.

Having a School of Public Health brings other advantages. It will increase our eligibility and potential to be awarded more federal grants. It increases our ability to attract and graduate students supported by international scholarship programs. It will allow us to develop distance education programs to facilitate enrollment of students living and working on neighbor islands. There is a recognized the need to expand PH distance education capacity and scope in order to reach more under-represented public health students, to create high-quality local health workforce and also to compete in the national public health educational market with other academic institutions, schools and programs.

We appreciate your strong and unequivocal support for HR 101 and HCR 119 to help us move forward in rebuilding our critically-needed Hawaii School of Public Health for Hawaii by 2012.

March 11, 2008

TO: Honorable Chairperson Jerry L. Chang
Honorable Vice-Chairperson Joe Betram III
Higher Education Committee

FROM: Yuka Jokura Chairperson of Hui Ola Pono (UHM Public Health student group)

RE: House Bill HCR 119

I am writing on behalf of the public health student body group in favor of **HCR 119**, Urging the University of Hawai'i to Rebuild the School of Public Health by 2012.

Hawaii is currently facing significant and emerging public health issues requiring a skilled and educated workforce to help address these problems. A substantial percentage of Hawai'i's public health workforce has either retired or is on the verge of retiring, especially those in leadership and mid-level management. Additionally, many non-profits and the public health workforce in rural areas of our neighbor islands are in dire need of replacements to meet the public health demands. As soon-to-be members of the public health workforce in Hawaii, we feel that it is imperative that we have enough well-trained colleagues to work with in order to effectively address these pressing public health issues.

Since the downsizing of the School of Public Health, students are now offered two out of the five areas of public health specializations that are considered standard in other schools of public health. In order for us to adequately respond to problems in public health such as geographic and ethnic health disparities, disaster management, water quality, childhood obesity, epidemics of chronic disease and homelessness we will be required to have more comprehensive training in these other specialization areas.

A School of Public Health can offer greater opportunities for research, education, and community service that broaden the public health infrastructure for Hawai'i, the Pacific and Asia region which would attract and support students. As students and future public health workers we would benefit the most from greater choices and availability in practicum opportunities, classes, fellowship positions and research areas.

Your support of this resolution will help us on our path, supporting the expansion of public health education and research in Hawai'i and beginning to stem the public health workforce crisis that faces the state.

Sincerely

Yuka Jokura, Chairperson
Hui Ola Pono

Testimony by
Kathryn L. Braun, MPH, DrPH
Professor of Public Health, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
March 11, 2008

Honorable Chair Person Chang and Committee Members:

I am a Professor of Public Health testifying as an individual in favor of **HCR 119**, Urging the University of Hawai'i to Rebuild the School of Public Health by 2012.

The School of Public Health was established in the 1960's to meet the needs for a public health workforce in Hawai'i, our Asia-Pacific neighbors, and the continental US. The School kept its promise of training public health leaders. In Hawai'i, more than 1,200 alumni have formed the backbone of the public health workforce—from department of health, hospital and non-profit organization executives to the myriad of program managers who plan and implement health promotion and protection activities for the state. Many of the School's nearly 800 international alumni have returned to their countries to help develop centers for public health education. They are now faculty, deans, and ministers of health, providing leadership to solve the difficult public health problems of their nations.

But since the downsizing of the School of Public Health to a Program of Public Health in 2000, our ability to attract and graduate public health workers has been severely diminished. As noted by the Council on Education for Public Health, our accrediting body:

[The] university decision to phase out public health training would be hard to defend in light of a) a fairly stable and sustained student market... b) a mission that is congruent in many ways with the aspirations of the university; and c) unparalleled interest in public health training at the national level.

We have conducted studies that suggest that a substantial number of individuals in Hawai'i's public health workforce, especially those in leadership and mid-level management positions, have retired or are considering retirement. The Department of Health has numerous vacancies, as do many non-profit health care organizations. Hawai'i is facing a health workforce crisis that will be even more critical if public health training and education is not expanded.

Having a School of Public Health will allow us to better respond to Hawai'i's public health needs including issues relating pandemic influenza, substance use, disparities in health status, environmental health problems, diabetes, elder health, injury prevention, childhood obesity, bioterrorism, SARS, and other local and global health challenges.

Having a School of Public Health comes with other advantages. It will increase our eligibility and potential to win federal grants. It increases our ability to attract and graduate students supported by international scholarship programs. It will allow us to develop distance education programs to facilitate enrollment of students living and working on neighbor islands.

Faculty members have worked hard since 2000 to save and strengthen public health education in Hawai'i. For example, we have upgraded our two MPH programs, which have been fully accredited since 2002. We are reopening our DrPH program in Fall 2008. Faculty are securing research grants and contracts and engaging students in research addressing local public health problems. We have developed a Business Plan that shows what we need to rebuild our School by 2012.

Your support of this resolution will help us on our path, supporting the expansion of public health education and research in Hawaii and beginning to stem the public health workforce crisis that faces the state.

Dear Representative Jerry Chang and Higher Education Committee:

I urge you to pass the **HCR 119/HR 101** (***URGING THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII TO BEGIN REBUILDING THE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH BY 2012***).

The UH Administration is urged to begin the rebuilding the SPH by 2012, by working with the Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other key public health partners to collaborate on the rebuilding of the SPH, by no later than 2012.

Public health professionals play vital roles in promoting and protecting public health of Hawaii, Asia, the Pacific, and the U.S. Studies have shown that a substantial percentage of the existing DOH public health workforce, especially those in leadership and mid-level management positions, has retired or is on the verge of exiting the workforce to retire.

The Department of Public Health Sciences has made significant strides towards the rebuilding of public health education, research, and training since the closure of the School of Public Health in 2000, most significantly in gaining recent 7-year full accreditation from the Council on Education in Public Health (CEPH) for its program in public health.

There is a need to respond to current and projected opportunities for research, education & community service that broaden the PH infrastructure for Hawaii, the Pacific & Asia.

Due to the reasons stated above, I urge you to pass HCR 119/HR 101 through committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Kit Uyeda
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Aiea, HI 96701