



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

**Written Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Education and
Senate Committee on Health
April 14, 2008, 2:45 p.m., Room 225**

by
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HCR 226 - Requesting the University of Hawaii's John A. Burns School of Medicine to provide admission preference to students that mirrors the demographics of rural health professional shortage areas of the state to address the shortage of physicians on our neighbor islands.

Chair Sakamoto, Chair Ige, and Members of the Committees:

The John A. Burns School of Medicine appreciates the intent of HCR 226 to address the shortage of physicians on our neighbor islands.

However, we must respectfully submit that the resolution, as written, will be difficult to enact. As a student traverses through the higher education system and prepares for medical school, it is unclear at best whether there is any increased likelihood that the student will practice primary care in a rural area, given they were raised in a rural area.

Graduates of medical schools are faced with an ever-increasing educational debt. When faced with poor reimbursement in rural areas and a large educational debt, these graduates often elect a specialty that can be practiced in a more urban setting and that will result in better reimbursement.

It is important that we re-direct this discussion to how we can make rural practice more attractive to John A. Burns School of Medicine graduates. Modifying admission practices to favor students who grew up in rural areas may run afoul of federal discrimination laws. It also may encourage the acceptance of students who may be under-prepared for medical school, simply to fulfill a demographic target.

We respectfully suggest a more meaningful approach to this issue would be the development of a commission that includes hospital administrators, insurance payers, rural practitioners, members of the Hawai'i Medical Association, medical students, and the John A. Burns School of Medicine leadership. Such a commission would review the barriers to medical students selecting a rural Hawai'i practice site and propose actions to overcome those barriers. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.



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April 14, 2008

To: Senator Norman Sakamoto, Chair
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**PLEASE DELIVER TO:
Education Committee**

Mondy
4/14/2008
2:45pm
Room 225

Re: HCR 226 Requesting the University of Hawaii's John A. Burns School of Medicine to provide admission preference to students that mirrors the demographics of rural health professional shortage areas of the state to address the shortage of physicians on our neighbor islands.

The Hawaii Medical Association supports the intent of HCR 226 to increase the physician workforce in rural areas of Hawaii. However, we have concerns that giving admission preference to students from rural areas will compromise academic criteria in favor of geographic criteria.

Instead, we suggest the committee focus its attention on HB2519, HD2, which would establish the Hawaii Health Corps, providing loan repayment and stipends for physicians and dentists who agree to work in health professional shortage areas and as first responders during civil defense and other emergencies. HB2519, HD2 also would establish the Enterprise Zone Business Tax Credit, general excise tax exemption and other business incentives to include physicians and dentists who establish or maintain practices in designated areas.

We believe HB2519 represents a more meaningful way to address the physician shortage in rural areas than does HCR 226.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

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**TESTIMONY OF ROBERT TOYOFUKU ON BEHALF OF THE CONSUMER
LAWYERS OF HAWAII (CLH) IN SUPPORT OF H.C.R. NO. 226**

April 14, 2008

To: Chairmen Norman Sakamoto and David Ige and Members of the Senate Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Health:

My name is Bob Toyofuku and I am presenting this testimony on behalf of the Consumer Lawyers of Hawaii (CLH) in support of H.C.R. No. 226.

The purpose of this resolution is to address the shortage of physicians in rural areas and in particular on the neighbor islands. CLH has previously stated that a program which encourages and even subsidizes persons from a rural area who intends to go to medical school is one alternative to address the shortage problem in these areas.

CLH supports the idea of JABSOM providing some preference to students that are from the neighbor islands where there is a shortage of physicians provided that it is not contrary to any federal or state law.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.