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February 6, 2008

To: Sen. Norman Sakamoto, Chair
Sen. Jill Tokuda, Vice Chair
Senate Education Committee

Sen. David Ige, Chair
Sen. Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair
Senate Health Committee

From: Cynthia J. Goto, M.D., President
Linda Rasmussen, M.D., Legislative Co-Chair
Philip Hellreich, M.D., Legislative Co-Chair
Paula Arcena, Executive Director
Dick Botti, Government Affairs Liaison

Re: SB2590 Relating to Health Care in Rural Communities
(Requires all graduates from the University of Hawaii school of medicine who have completed residency and are licensed to practice medicine to work 2 years in a rural community in the State. Imposes penalty for noncompliance. Requires board of medical examiners to adopt rules.)

Hawaii Medical Association strongly opposes SB2590 due to the bill's requirement that all graduates of the University of Hawaii, John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM), provide two years of service in rural areas.

We respectfully request that the committee hold this bill.

The preamble of the bill states that regardless of tuition paid by students, the State of Hawaii subsidizes the education of medical students, and therefore students are obligated to re-pay their debt by serving in rural communities of the state.

HMA agrees that Hawaii has a patient access to care crisis because lacks an adequate supply of physicians and supports efforts to reverse that trend. However, we believe this method will actually worsen rather than improve our situation.

The requirement that all graduates must provide two years of service in rural areas, will significantly decrease the ability of JABSOM to attract the most qualified candidates, thereby actually decreasing the State's return on its investment in the school;

PLEASE DELIVER
SEN CPH COMMITTEE

Wed.
2/6/08
1:15pm
Room 225

The typical student debt upon graduation is approximately \$150,000. Few students will choose to invest their money in a JABSOM education due to the rural service requirement. They will simply choose to spend their tuition money elsewhere.

In combination with Hawaii's high medical malpractice insurance premiums, high cost of living and low physician reimbursements, this additional restriction will make Hawaii even less competitive for a physician workforce than it is now.

Instead of SB2590, HMA suggests the committee consider legislation that grants free medical school tuition to students who volunteer to provide services to rural areas after completing their medical education at JABSOM.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.