



Legislative Testimony

S.C.R. 94

**URGING THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII TO BEGIN REBUILDING THE SCHOOL
OF PUBLIC HEALTH BY 2012**

Senate Committees on Education & Health

March 24, 2008

1:15 PM

Room: 225

Aloha Chairpersons Sakamoto and Ige, Vice Chairpersons Tokuda and Fukunaga, and members of the Education and Health committees. The Office of Hawaiian Affairs **SUPPORTS WITH AMMENDMENTS** S.C.R. 94. While OHA fully supports the intent of S.C.R. 94 to begin the rebuilding of the School of Public Health in Hawaii by 2012, additions are advised to ensure its education is geared towards serving the unique needs of Hawaii's people.

Medical practitioners typically focus on the treatment of disease on an individual basis. It is the role of Public Health, then to focus on the social context of health within a community so to provide educated and effective prevention and treatment of disease.

Hawaii's health problems are not isolated events, but systemic and interrelated to other socio-economic and cultural issues. OHA believes that the methodologies and trainings of Public Health are essential to improvements in Hawaii's health. Along with this belief, we submit the following additions to the resolution:

- 1) OHA encourages in-depth cultural trainings as part of Public Health coursework. Graduates of the school should be specifically prepared to improve the health of this State through a sound understanding of the Hawaii's cultural contexts. In order to do such, partnerships with other UH departments (i.e. Hawaiian Studies) may prove to be important.
- 2) Special focus must be paid to Hawaii's ailing rural communities. Previously OHA has advised loan repayment aid for nurses who choose to work with Hawaii's rural populations post-graduation. In lieu with this idea, OHA suggests that graduates from the future University of Hawaii School of Public Health receive loan repayment benefits for each post-graduate year spent servicing Hawaii's rural communities.

A Hawaii-specific Public Health program is essential to the future health of our State, and we strongly urge its revival.

Mahalo for the opportunity to present testimony.