

April 3, 2008

LATE TESTIMONY

**Testifier: Nancy S. Partika, RN, MPH**

**Bill: SCR 94, Urging the University of Hawaii to Rebuild the School of Public Health by 2012.**

**Committee: House Higher Education**

**Aloha Chairperson Chang, Vice-Chairperson Bertram and HED Committee Members:**

**I am a faculty member in Public Health testifying as an individual in strong support for SCR 94, 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.**

**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); with many retiring (over 45% of HI DOH workers will be able to retire in next few years), having workforce replacement and retention issues (20% vacancy, 14% DOH turnover rate); and with many DOH workers lacking formal education in public health. A recent national report on the public health workforce status recognized Hawaii as one of trouble spots for public health, which was primarily attributed to the closing of Hawaii's School of Public Health and its lingering negative impact on current and future workforce needs of the health sector in Hawaii.**

**A viable 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.**

**Reviving our Hawaii 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 SCR 94 to help us move forward in rebuilding our critically-needed Hawaii School of Public Health for Hawaii by 2012. Thank you for hearing this important public health resolution.**

Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Higher Education  
April 3, 2008

Satoru Izutsu, Ph.D. Professor Emeritus  
John A. Burns School of Medicine

**SCR 94, URGING THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII TO BEGIN  
REBUILDING THE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH BY 2012.**

Chair Chang, Vice Chair Bertram, and Members of the Committee:

I am a Professor Emeritus in Public Health and Psychiatry and testifying in strong support of SCR 94, a significant step towards the reestablishment of the School of Public Health at the University of Hawaii.

In 1999 the school was closed due to the inability to comply with accreditation standards, primarily related to resources requirements. Under the direction of the UH Board of Regents, a Department and later renamed an Office of Public Health Sciences was installed in the John A. Burns School of Medicine. To date, the Office has made significant strides toward seeking accreditation as a School. Toward the objective of becoming a School, the following have been achieved:

1. In 2007, Public Health as a Program was awarded seven years of accreditation, the maximum number of years possible, from the Council on Education in Public Health. The next step is to seek accreditation as a School of Public Health.
2. A business plan has been completed to outline what it would take to annually maintain a School of Public Health. It is estimated that it would require about \$4 million annually to operate a School. This investment is estimated to result in the training of 350 newly trained public health workers and increase the prospects of generating extramural funds.

With the assistance of the Hawaii State Legislature, a School of Public Health in Hawaii will be poised to train professional personnel to contribute to the health of the people of Hawaii. In addition, a school will pursue its place in globalization where traditional links with Asia/Pacific are strengthened. Specifically, training and research in public health will

address safety and security measures associated with disasters and diseases such as bio-terrorism, AVN Flu, and AIDS.

It is respectfully requested that the State Legislature support the University of Hawaii, John A. Burns School of Medicine, to continue seeking re-accreditation of a School of Public Health by 2012.