

TESTIMONY BY GEORGINA K. KAWAMURA
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
STATE OF HAWAII
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 1504

March 4, 2009

RELATING TO HEALTH

House Bill No. 1504 proposes to establish a Hawaii Health Authority administratively attached to the Department of Budget and Finance. The Hawaii Health Authority would be responsible for developing a health plan to provide health care coverage for all individuals in Hawaii.

We are opposed to this bill.

We have concerns on the feasibility of establishing a universal health care insurance system. It is uncertain how the system will be financed and if it will be able to accommodate the additional costs of providing health care for those who are not currently insured. It is also unclear how the healthcare plans of the Employer-Union Health Benefits Trust Fund and the plans of private employers will be combined into a single entity.

Further, the bill makes the proposed Hawaii Health Authority responsible for overall health planning for the State and for determining future capacity needs of health providers, facilities, equipment, and support services providers. This responsibility duplicates the functions of the State Health Planning and Development Agency.



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

RANDY PERREIRA

Executive Director

Tel: 808.543.0011

Fax: 808.528.0922

NORA A. NOMURA

Deputy Executive Director

Tel: 808.543.0003

Fax: 808.528.0922

DEREK M. MIZUNO

Deputy Executive Director

Tel: 808.543.0055

Fax: 808.523.6879

The Twenty-Fifth Legislature, State of Hawaii
Hawaii State House of Representatives
Committee on Finance

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association
March 4, 2009

H.B. 1504 – RELATING TO HEALTH

The Hawaii Government Employees Association supports the purpose and intent of H.B. 1504, which is to establish the Hawaii Health Authority. The primary responsibility of the authority is to develop a comprehensive plan to provide universal health care in Hawaii.

The current health care system in Hawaii and nationally is not working very well. It is estimated that approximately 10% of the State's population does not have health insurance. We have a system that is characterized by high costs, uneven quality and limited access. Our national union, AFSCME, is a leader in the movement for meaningful health care reform to address such problems which are posing a real threat to the economic security of most workers. Affordability of benefits, quality of health care services, and coverage for all is a basic human right that must be recognized and fulfilled.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 1504.

Respectfully submitted,

Nora A. Nomura
Deputy Executive Director

The Twenty-Fifth Legislature
Regular Session of 2009

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Committee on Finance
Rep. Marcus R. Oshiro, Chair
Rep. Marilyn B. Lee, Vice Chair

State Capitol, Conference Room 308
Wednesday, March 4, 2009; 10:00 a.m.

**STATEMENT OF THE ILWU LOCAL 142 ON H.B. 1504
RELATING TO HEALTH**

The ILWU Local 142 supports H.B. 1504, which creates the Hawaii Health Authority to develop a health plan to provide universal health care in Hawaii.

Hawaii's Prepaid Health Care Act ensures that employers provide health care coverage for employees who work more than 20 hours a week for four consecutive weeks. Some employers skirt the law by employing their workers less than 20 hours a week. The employer saves money, but the worker is saddled with a huge burden to provide for his or her own health care needs. Family coverage may be provided, but at an often enormous cost to the worker. As individual plans are expensive, many workers just do without.

It is understandable that employers will balk at the expense of providing for health care. The cost of providing coverage is the biggest expense, next to wages, to employ a worker. Yet coverage is essential if workers are to avoid going bankrupt when a catastrophic illness or injury strikes or if more costly medical procedures are to be avoided by early intervention or prevention. In addition, healthy workers mean greater productivity.

H.B. 1504 will establish the Hawaii Health Authority to consider providing for universal health care in Hawaii. All possibilities should be considered and the best, most cost-effective and fair course of action must be adopted. Hawaii, like the rest of the nation, cannot continue to be held hostage by the ever-rising cost of health care. If other countries are able to provide health coverage to all its citizens (and even non-citizens), the U.S. with its technological and financial might should be able to do the same or better. And Hawaii, with its landmark legislation for Prepaid Health Care, should lead the nation.

Ah Quon McElrath, retired ILWU social worker, long advocated for universal health care. She tirelessly walked the halls of the Capitol and spoke with every legislator who would listen about the absolute need to provide for the health care needs of everyone in the state. Ah Quon passed away in December. We carry on in her memory to appeal for universal health care.

The ILWU urges passage of H.B. 1504. Thank you for the opportunity to share our views on this important matter.



Hawai'i Primary Care Association

345 Queen Street | Suite 601 | Honolulu, HI 96813-4718 | Tel: 808.536.8442 | Fax: 808.524.0347
www.hawaiipca.net

To: **The House Committee on Finance**
The Hon. Marcus Oshiro, Chair
The Hon. Marilyn Lee, Vice Chair

Testimony in Support of House Bill 1504

Relating to Health

Submitted by Beth Giesting, CEO

Wednesday, March 4, 2009, 10:00 a.m. agenda, Room 308

The Hawaii Primary Care Association supports this bill, which would result in a plan for universal access to health care in Hawaii. We firmly believe that all residents of Hawaii should have access to the health care they need and have been witness to the tragic consequences to individuals and families when access to care is not available. We believe that, if done right, a Hawaii health authority could remake our health system to align incentives to prioritize prevention and primary care, which would result both in better population health and considerable cost savings.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

JOINT LEGISLATIVE EFFORT

E-Mail: FINtestimony@Capitol.hawaii.gov
Regarding: Finance Committee
Hearing on: Wednesday, March 4, 2009; Room 308

HAWAII FAMILY FORUM BOARD

Francis Oda
President

Austin Imamura
Vice-President

Gill Berger
Secretary

Brogan, Mary Lou
O'lier, H. Mitchell

Hawaii Family Forum is a non-profit, pro-family education organization committed to preserving and strengthening families in Hawaii. The Roman Catholic Church in Hawaii, under the leadership of Bishop Larry Silva, represents over 220,000 Catholics in Hawaii.

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee

Pace, Dr. Nancy
Paty, William
Pflueger, Nancy
Tsujiimura, R. Brian
Young, Sandra

HAWAII CATHOLIC CONFERENCE BOARD

Most Reverend Clarence Silva
Bishop of Honolulu

Alexander, Very Rev. Marc
Andrade, Eva
Chung, Sr. Earnest
Coleman, David
Downes, Patrick
Himenes, Dr. Carmen

Date: March 3, 2009

To:

From: Dennis Arakaki
Executive Director
Hawaii Family Forum / Hawaii Catholic Conference

Re: Strong Support for HB 1504, Relating to Health

Honorable Chair Oshiro, Vice-chair Lee and members of the Finance Committee, I am Dennis Arakaki, **representing both the Hawaii Family Forum and the Roman Catholic Church in the State of Hawaii.**

I am in strong support for HB 1504, creating the Hawaii Health Authority.

Hawaii has long been known as the "Health State". Hawaii led the way in being the first state to guarantee health insurance coverage for all employees working 20 hours or more a week in the 1970s through the passage of the Hawaii Prepaid Health Act. As one of the original authors and introducer of the Universal Health Bill in the House, I know that the concept of this landmark bill was due in no small part to the tireless efforts of the recently deceased community organizer and University of Hawaii Regent Ah Quon McElrath, one of the architects of the current bill. Ah Quon recognized that the economy has changed, and the Hawaii Prepaid Health Act is no longer enough. I suggest and request that you include language in the findings of this bill to honor the tireless effort and dedication of A.Q. McElrath.

While unemployment levels are below the rest of the country, Hawaii has the highest rate of involuntary part-time employment. The current health care system is a poorly woven patchwork quilt, with little to show from its high costs in population health indicators. The United States is one of the only developed countries where health indicators have *fallen* in recent years. The health care system in the U.S. drastically needs reform, but politicians in Washington D.C. are offering the same tired ideas in response to the crisis. As the case of Massachusetts has regrettably shown, attempting to achieve health care for all through complicated additions to an already broken system does not work. The great state of Hawaii needs to lead by example by providing health care to all its residents through a comprehensive state health plan.



The creation of the Hawaii Health Authority is an essential step toward creating a rational plan for comprehensive health care services that lowers cost while expanding access to health services to everyone. While there is great hope with President Obama that we will soon have universal health for all of America's citizens, we have the opportunity to stay ahead of the curve and prepare for that day. Let us not be forced into accepting a lower standard of health care by upholding our already superior health care system.

The Hawaii Health Care Authority should bring together the finest minds most significant backgrounds in healthcare to plan and prepare for a Universal Health Care system. During these economic challenging times, there is also an opportunity to put all the healthcare resources on the table in order to maximize those resources and eliminate duplicity and waste. It is time to envision a comprehensive system of care for all of Hawaii's citizens where no one is left out or left behind and precious resources are balanced between health, wellness and illness.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



AMERICANS FOR DEMOCRATIC ACTION

OFFICERS	DIRECTORS		MAILING ADDRESS	
Brien Hallet, President	Juliet Begley	Nancy Bey Little	Barbara Polk	PO. Box 61792
Karin Gill., Vice-President	John Bickel	Jan Lubin	George Simson	Honolulu,
Fritz Fritschel, Treasurer	Carolyn Golojuch	Stephen O'Harrow		Hawai'i 96822
Tom Horton, Secretary	Chuck Huxel	Jim Olson	Bart Dame (Alt)	

March 3, 2009

TO: Chair Marcus Oshiro, Vice Chair Marilyn Lee
Members of the House Finance Committee

FROM: Barbara Polk, Legislative Committee Chair
Americans for Democratic Action, Hawaii Chapter

SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR HB1504 Relating to Health

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important bill.

"Americans for Democratic Action, Hawaii, supports establishment of a single-payer health care system in Hawaii that would cover all illnesses and medically necessary services for all residents. We recognize that our current system of health care is broken, and that any solution that continues to allow profiteering on human illness is doomed to failure."

For this reason, we support HB 1504 as a step toward making sure that all Hawaii residents have access to and receive health care.

HMSA



An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

March 4, 2009

The Honorable Marcus Oshiro, Chair
The Honorable Marilyn Lee, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

Re: HB 1504 – Relating to Health

Dear Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Medical Service Association (HMSA) appreciates the opportunity to testify on HB 1504.

The language contained in HB 1504 would create an entity to examine how health care could be reformed in the State of Hawaii. During the 2005 legislative session, Act 223 was passed to create the Health Care Task Force made up of individuals representing all aspects of health care in the community including legislators, hospitals, physicians and the Insurance Commissioner. The Legislature appropriated \$200,000 to the Task Force which was used to contract with The Lewin Group to conduct a study of health care in the state utilizing information contained in the Vision 2000 Healthcare Congress and the Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel on Cancer Care in Hawaii among other resources.

Based on the Task Force meetings, the Lewin Group produced a lengthy 85 page report. Since this report examined many of the issues raised in HB 1504, we believe that the efforts outlined in HB 1504 may end up being duplicative.

Additionally, with President Obama's Administration keenly interested in changing the way the health care system operates today, the Legislature may wish to postpone any changes for now since there may be an opportunity to work collaboratively with federal initiatives in the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Diesman
Assistant Vice President
Government Relations



KOKUA KALIHI VALLEY

Comprehensive Family Services

2239 North School Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96819

Phone (808) 791-9400 ♦ Fax (808) 848-0979

March 2, 2009

House Finance Committee
Hearing on Wednesday March 4, 2009 10:00am
Conference Room 308

RE: Testimony in Support of HB 1504

Dear Chair Oshiro, Vice-Chair Lee, and Members of the House Finance Committee:

I am writing to testify in strong support for HB 1504, the bill that would create the Hawaii Health Authority and develop a comprehensive plan to provide universal health care in Hawaii. I am a physician working at Kokua Kalihi Valley, Kalihi Palama Health Center, IHS HealthCare For the Homeless Project and the Aloha Medical Mission.

Health care is a right, not a privilege. The current health care system is broken, fragmented and inefficient, with little to show for its high costs. The health care system in the United States drastically needs reform, however politicians in Washington D.C. are offering the same tired ideas in response to the crisis. Attempting to achieve health care for all through complicated additions to an already broken system does not work, as the case of Massachusetts has demonstrated.

Hawaii needs to set an example for the nation by proving that it is possible to provide affordable and efficient health care to all its residents through a comprehensive state health plan. Hawaii led the way in being the first state to guarantee health insurance coverage for all employees working 20 hours or more a week in the 1970s through work of Ah Quon McElrath, and the passage of the Hawaii Prepaid Health Act. The creation of the Hawaii Health Authority is an essential step toward creating a rational plan for comprehensive health care services that lowers cost while expanding access to health services to everyone. By bringing the 273,000 households in Hawaii below 300% of poverty into a single administrative entity, the State will generate one billion dollars per year of Federal funds from the Center for Medicare/Medicaid Services.

Please do the right thing and pass HB 1504. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Ritabelle Fernandes, MD, MPH, FACP
Internist and Geriatrician

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1504: Relating to Health Care.

**House Finance Committee Hearing
Wednesday, March 4 2009, 10:00 am**

To: Rep. Marcus Oshiro, Chair, and members of the Finance Committee

Aloha, Chair Oshiro and House Finance Committee members!

Representative Oshiro, thank you for your very moving and eloquent tribute to A.Q. McElrath at the Celebration of her life at the ILWU last Saturday. In her memory and for the sake of the people of Hawaii, please pass this bill out of your committee and strongly support it on the floor--to avoid disappointing A.Q. and so many of us! In the Senate when S.B. 424--a bill identical to H.B. 1504-- was heard, over 95% of the testimony was in favor of the legislation. This bill has overwhelming support.

Access to high-quality health care is a right of all people. Health care should be affordable and should be provided to all as a public service rather than bought and sold for profit as a job-related insurance plan or program.

Our present health care system is a hodge-podge of nonfunctional parts. The more affluent have more than adequate coverage. The poor and elderly usually have publicly provided health care coverage and benefits through Medicare, Medicaid, and State welfare programs. But health care should be equitable for all and be provided by the government using tax dollars, and not tied to jobs.

Health insurance companies nationally have profited from excessive premium charges and medical institutions have also become big businesses whether for-profit or non-profit. Whenever national health insurance is on the national political agenda, then suddenly rates level out or go down slightly. After the "threat" of a more sane system passes (usually through Congressional or legislative inaction), rates begin to climb again, as they did under the Bush regime.

We have to eliminate the excessive profits made in the health care and pharmaceutical industries. Providing decent health care for all should be a public service like ambulance, lifeguard and fire-fighting services--and not be subject to whether one has insurance or what one can pay.

We urgently need a health care system which covers everyone, allows a choice of doctor and/or clinic, and in which medical decisions are not made by institutional HMOs or health insurance bureaucrats, but, rather, are made by the doctor and patient--and are not subject to cost considerations.

The optimal system would be a single-payer system--with a large, single pool of those covered. Every other developed country provides health care for their citizens through

their tax system, and we can do it too. Michael Moore's excellent documentary film "Sicko" showed the benefits and lower costs of health care in Canada, England, France, and Cuba. Japan and most European nations have more affordable, less costly, more efficient, and universally provided health care. It is a travesty that the United States, with such wealth and resources, lacks such a system and that over 30 to 60 million of our people are without health care services or insurance.

Instead, insurance companies' profits and billing costs reportedly eat up 31 cents of every health care dollar. With one combined health services pool of citizens, there would be enough money to cover everyone. A single-payer system would not cost more, most studies show, and for most people it would cost less. Its great advantage is that it would cover ALL.

The U.S. Congress currently has a few versions of universal health care reform legislation before it and one of them, H.R. 676, Medicare for All, currently has over 85 co-sponsors in the U.S. House of Representatives, including Hawaii's own Congressman Neil Abercrombie and Congresswoman Mazie Hirono. The Obama administration has also unveiled basic components of its plan for more universal health care which allows choice of options.

Putting every citizen in one risk pool would eliminate the insurance companies who choose to insure only the low-cost and healthy. Single-payer does not aim to eliminate private health care or private insurance. For-profit services such as cosmetic surgery can continue. Private hospitals can still cater to wealthier clients without government support or subsidy.

A single-payer system is the best and probably the only way to achieve universal health insurance that is affordable and accessible, and it can be achieved state by state. Already some cities like San Francisco have moved in that direction. It would take several years to implement such a system in Hawaii, and when we have national health insurance, our state system could integrate into it.

Health care is a basic right, not a privilege. I strongly urge the committee to approve H.B. 1504 and get Hawaii behind a national single payer system of health care--with Hawaii being one of the pioneering pace-setters and initiators. Decades ago, through the efforts of the labor unions and advocates like A.Q. McElrath and others, Hawaii played that role on mandatory employer-provided health care for employees working 20 hours or more per week. It would be fitting for Hawaii to be one of the first states to adopt a single payer system of health care.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

John Witeck
2252 Puna Street
Honolulu, HI 96817
(808) 347-3306

Testimony in Strong Support of HB 1504

Wednesday, March 4, 2009, 10:00am
Conference Room 308

Chair Oshiro, Vice-Chair Lee and Members of the Committee on Finance:

I am writing to testify in strong support of HB 1504.

Economic analysis has repeatedly shown that administrative overhead is far greater for competing private health plans than for a publicly financed single-payer system. Administrative costs are about 31% of the health care dollar in the US, compared to around 15% for countries with single-payer plans. (1) All other industrialized countries spend far less per capita than we do on health care, provide universal coverage, and their doctors and hospitals spend far less money and time on administration. Public plans do not need to pay for marketing, negotiating with employers, underwriting (techniques for avoiding or charging more for insuring sicker patients), multiple private bureaucracies, reserves, or profits.

A single-payer funding system is the only option that can assure quality and access at an affordable cost. We cannot continue an insurance system that profits by denying or avoiding paying for care. President Obama has proposed banning underwriting by private health insurers (standard benefits and same premiums regardless of health status), and allowing an expanded Medicare-like public plan to compete with private plans. This would remove the perverse incentives of plans to avoid covering the sick, but it would not reduce the excess cost and the burdens of complexity for both providers and patients in a system of competing plans. Obama's proposed plan also continues and expands Medicaid, a program so broken that Medicaid patients can no longer find a doctor who will see them.

National polls show most Americans favor a universal national health care program, along the lines of "Medicare for All." Most doctors also favor a single-payer plan, but justifiably fear "Medicare for All" because they have experienced claims processing problems and senseless, burdensome policies with Medicare. Fees are often irrational and inadequate, especially for primary care and "cognitive" specialties that emphasize time listening to and thinking about patients and their problems, rather than high-tech procedures. We have a shortage of primary care doctors, and few medical students are now willing to enter primary care careers. (2) Medicare's "Sustainable Growth Rate" formula is slated to slash physician fees by 30% over the next 5 years, so it has become very difficult to find a doctor accepting new Medicare patients. Medicare D drug coverage is intolerably complex and difficult. Hospitals are being driven into bankruptcy by the uninsured and below-cost reimbursement from Medicare and Medicaid, so they shift as much of their costs as possible onto commercially insured patients. A single-payer "Medicare for All" plan would require serious attention to correcting the flaws in the current Medicare program, but with proper representation from doctors, hospitals, and consumer groups, that should be far less difficult than fixing our current fragmented "system" of health care financing.

A single-payer program would save enough on administration to provide good health coverage for everyone for less than we spend now. It would greatly reduce administrative costs and hassles

for doctors and hospitals, and control out-of-pocket medical expenses for the public. Health coverage would be fully portable and not tied to employment. There would be no fragmentation or denial of care when insurers dispute responsibility for an illness or injury. Most of medical malpractice costs are tied to current and future health care expenses, so if all health care were fully covered by a universal system, malpractice costs would be slashed. So would worker's compensation and automobile insurance costs. Injured parties would not feel forced to sue for fear their health care might not otherwise be covered.

A well designed universal health plan can contain costs and maintain access and quality by serving patients and the providers of their health care, instead of health care industry "middle men."

I strongly urge the committee to pass HB 1504. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Stephen Kemble, MD
Psychiatrist
1950 Mott-Smith Drive
Honolulu, HI 96822
(808) 497-6521 (mobile)\
(808) 536-2665 (work)
(808) 538-7498 (home)
sbkemble@hawaii.rr.com

References:

1. 2. Wollhandler S, Campbell T, Himmelstein D. The Costs of Health Care Administration in the United States and Canada. N Engl J Med 2003;349:768-75.
2. Bodenheimer T. Primary Care – Will It Survive? New England Journal of Medicine 355;9, Aug. 31, 2006:861-864

TESTIMONY
HB 1504
ROOM 308
3/4/2009
10:00 AM

House Finance Committee

Chair Oshiro and Members of the Committee:

I urge your support for HB 1504, creating the Hawaii Health Authority.

For over 20 years A. Q. McElrath (one of the authors of the Hawaii Prepaid Act) has been advocating for revisions in the way Hawaii delivers healthcare to residents of the State - to adapt to the socio/political changes that have transpired since 1974. She has emphasized the need to “rationalize” a system that has become splintered, unequal in application, unaffordable for small employers and the self insured, and fundamentally broken.

(A simple analogy is what happens to a five year old computer that has never been defragmented – it stops working, or works so inefficiently it is no longer useful or effective at doing its task.)

Our healthcare system needs to be “defragged”. A cohesive, coherent, affordable, data driven, and rational model needs to be implemented in Hawaii, and throughout the U.S. HB1504 creates the Hawaii Health Authority, a body charged with developing a plan to “defrag” Hawaii’s healthcare non-system. With your support Hawaii can look forward to a rational, affordable, benefit and beneficiary driven, comprehensive plan by July 1, 2011.

Jory Watland, Coordinator
Health Care for All Hawaii

Testimony in Support of HB 1504

Wednesday, March 4, 2009, 10:00am
Conference Room 308

Honorable Chair Marcus Oshiro and Members of the Committee on Finance:

I am writing to testify in strong support of HB 1504.

Access to health care for all residents in the State of Hawaii has always been a concern for me. Having worked for over 15 years in public health related occupations (Oahu Head Start and Kokua Kalihi Valley) I have experienced the effects of working with families who had no health care coverage and who urgently needed health care services. I have assisted many families in acquiring healthcare coverage of which some individuals landed in the Hospitals for emergency care. Universal health care would provide for all of Hawaii's residents what they all need without any social and economic boundaries.

I am a strong advocate of Preventive Health Care. With preventive measures, the cost for health care would be lowered. Having a universal health care system which encourages preventive care would decrease the pain and suffering, it would decrease the number of emergency room visits, and there would be a decrease in the spreading of communicable diseases.

The current health care system does not cover all of Hawaii's residents as I have personally witnessed. There are still many people who fall through the cracks and have no medical/dental coverage. The astronomical medical/dental bills faced by these families paint a dismal picture for their future dreams. Please help these families by supporting HB 1504.

I urge the committee to pass HB 1504. Thank you for this opportunity to submit my testimony.

Sincerely,

Janet M.Y. Primiano, RDH, MPH
President, Na Lei Wili AHEC Board of Directors
302 Kolekole Drive
Wahiawa, Hawaii 96786
808-621-5555

Testimony in Support of HB 1504
Monday, March 4, 2009
Conference Room 308

TO: Chair Oshiro and Members of the Committee on Finance

Re: Support of HB 1504

Hawaii has long been acknowledged as a leader in Health Care in the United States. We achieved this position not by resting on our laurels, and burying our heads in the sand but by the vision, hard work and commitment of leaders like the late Ah Quon McElrath. We speak of a system of health care, but what we have now is no longer a system as much as it is a patchwork quilt of too many pieces which is looking rather torn and tattered. Health care costs too darn much! Insurance based on ones' employment means that precisely when you most need insurance, you are least likely to have it. Folks are tired of playing games with the insurers. Doctors are spending too much time figuring out what they can and can not provide to their patients and too little time with their patients! Many of our communities are suffering from poor access to care. Patients are having to decide every day whether or not to forgoe expensive tests or medicines that they can't afford, and run the risk of getting sicker and sicker. The Hawai'i Health Authority will consolidate Medicaid, Medicare, the State Health Insurance Programs, the State Health Trust Fund, and other Private, State and Federal Funds for Health. We can have a comprehensive state health plan and provide quality affordable health care to all. Lets show real leadership to the rest of the nation.

I urge the committee to pass HB 1504. Thank you in advance for your attention.

Sincerely,

David Derauf MD MPH
2239 N School Street
Honolulu, HI 96819

Testimony: Wednesday, March 4, 2009
House of Representatives, Finance Committee
H.B. No. 1504

Gail Long
17012 Lomond Blvd.
Cleveland OH, 44120
(216) 751-1499

Good morning Mr. Chair and members of the Committee. My name is Gail Long and I am the daughter of Ah Quon McElrath. By way of background, I was born and raised here in Honolulu and am now a resident of the State of Ohio. For the last 30 years I have worked on issues that relate to the access to quality, affordable health care. For many of those years, Hawaii's Prepaid Health Care Act (PHCA) and the legislature's attempts to pass a bill that would lead to universal coverage for all residents of the State have been held up as a model by leaders of Ohio's movement as the way to go.

Today, I am here to urge you to rise above all of the reasons that have been stated by the opposition indicating why you, the policy makers of this State, should not pass a universal coverage bill and approve H.B. No. 1504. Adding a new chapter to the Hawaii Revised Statutes is not only the right thing to do, it will in the long run reduce the cost of health care. Providers will then be able to focus on preventive services rather than more costly emergency room care. Seeking well care will become the norm for individuals and families rather than them seeking care only when they are sick.

With the passage of HB 1504, you will be able to draw upon the wisdom of a diverse group of nine individuals. They will determine how a comprehensive plan will be framed, what waivers will be necessary and, at the end of their work, submit a plan that can be implemented in the most cost-effective way. Pass HB 1504 so that you will not have to look over your shoulder each day and wonder whether or not A.Q. is coming to scold you.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

FINTestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2009 9:02 PM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: leslieg@maui.net
Subject: Testimony for HB1504 on 3/4/2009 10:00:00 AM

Testimony for FIN 3/4/2009 10:00:00 AM HB1504

Conference room: 308
Testifier position: support
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: Leslie Hartley Gise MD
Organization: Individual
Address: 1035 Naalae Road Kula HI 96790
Phone: 8088783314
E-mail: leslieg@maui.net
Submitted on: 3/2/2009

Comments:
Testimony in Support of HB 1504
Monday, March 4, 2009
Conference Room 308

TO: Chair Oshiro and Members of the Committee on Finance

Re: Support of HB 1504

Health care is too expensive. We are paying for universal coverage but we are not getting it. Our health outcomes are poor. Minorities, including part-Hawaiians have even worse outcomes. I see patients every day who have to change their doctor, who have had their insurance discontinued, who are afraid to go to the doctor or the emergency room because they are afraid of the bill, who cannot get their medicine because of cost and who skip medication because of lack of money. Doctors have no time to talk to patients because the pay is so poor while high tech tests and treatments are paid well although they often do result in better health outcomes (like heart surgery). Universal health care would mean that I would not have to stay in a job for the insurance and I would be proud to be a medical doctor again.

One risk pool is the only cost sustainable solution for health care. 20% of the people use 80% of the care so if we all contribute there is plenty of money to cover everyone for all necessary care. The Hawa'i Health Authority will consolidate Medicaid, Medicare, the State Health Insurance Programs, the State Health Trust Fund, and other Private, State and Federal Funds for Health. We can have a comprehensive state health plan and provide quality affordable health care to all. We are the "Health State" and have been a leader in the past with the Hawai'i Prepaid Health Act in the 1970s supported by Ah Quon McElrath who also helped with HB 1504. We do not need to wait for a national program. This can be done on a state level now and rolled into a national program later.

I urge the committee to pass HB 1504. Thank you in advance for your attention.

Sincerely,

Leslie Hartley Gise MD
Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, John A Burns School of Medicine
1035 Na'ala Road
Kula HI 96790
808 878 3314

FINTestimony

From: Joel Fischer [jfischer@hawaii.edu]
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2009 12:29 PM
To: FINTestimony
Subject: HB1504;FIN;3/4/09;10AM;Rm308
Importance: High

HB1504, Relating to Health
FIN; Chair, Rep Oshiro

PLEASE,PLEASE PASS THIS BILL!

In a session where legislators are under intense pressure to identify priorities, there is virtually no higher priority than health care. It seems increasingly clear that our state must adopt some form of universal health care, because too many people are falling through the cracks and losing their health care. In addition, the federal government under President Obama is moving in that direction as well.

This is the time for Hawai'i to lead the way in exploring options for ensuring that all of our people have access to health care. That must be a right, not a privilege!

For those who are reluctant to vote for this bill, I must remind you that this bill only establishes an Authority to explore the issue. It does not create any form whatsoever of universal care. Open minds discuss all options. Closed minds actually fear open discussion.

I trust all legislators in Hawai'i are open-minded enough on this issue to believe that **now** is the time to discuss it.

Thank you for passing this bill.

Aloha, joel

Dr. Joel Fischer, ACSW
Professor
University of Hawai'i, School of Social Work
Henke Hall
Honolulu, HI 96822

"It is reasonable that everyone who asks justice should DO justice."
Thomas Jefferson

"There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but one must take it because one's conscience tells one that it is right."
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Never, never, never quit."
Winston Churchill

FINTestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2009 9:10 PM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: jbickel15@yahoo.com
Subject: Testimony for HB1504 on 3/4/2009 10:00:00 AM

Testimony for FIN 3/4/2009 10:00:00 AM HB1504

Conference room: 308
Testifier position: support
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: John Bickel
Organization: Individual
Address: 2415 Ala Wai Blvd. 901 Honolulu, Hawaii
Phone: 808-728-9682
E-mail: jbickel15@yahoo.com
Submitted on: 3/2/2009

Comments:

Health care should be a right and not a privilege. The only way our society can afford to do this is by cutting out wasteful middle managers and insurance personnel by adopting a single payer system. We can afford this if we do it right. Pass this bill!

Testimony on House Bill 1504
Finance Committee
March 4, 2009

Dear Chair Oshiro and Finance Committee members,

Access to health care is a human right, and it is being systematically violated for tens of millions of Americans. *It is time for Hawaii to unambiguously reject this violation of human rights through the creation of the Hawaii Health Authority*, with a mandate to create a plan for universal coverage of all state residents by 2010. We have a choice. We can lead by example in these trying economic times, or we can fall back on business as usual, and pay later for our refusal to act now.

The costs of our broken system are falling health indicators and significant excess death, illness and injury. The currency of this cost is in human life and wellbeing. The emergency room should be a last resort, and not the first point of access for Americans who waited too long to seek help in the fear that they could not afford medical care.

The current employer-based health system is failing to cover Hawaii's population, a fact oft repeated by the late A.Q. McElrath, the legendary community organizer who helped shape the Hawaii Prepaid Health Act in the 1970s and a longtime supporter of the current bill. Employers must still play an important part in ensuring health insurance for their employees, but the current system encourages employers to create more part-time jobs to avoid covering workers' insurance premiums. Too many of Hawaii's residents are excluded by the current system of financing the provision of health care.

Fixing a broken system is no small task, but as a student of public health and a former and future health care worker, I can attest that finding a way to provide *comprehensive* health care to all residents of Hawaii is necessary for a number of social, economic and health reasons. It also is simply the right thing to do. I thank the Committee and its members for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kris Coontz
Hui Ola Pono
Graduate Student group
The Department of Public Health Sciences
University of Hawaii at Manoa

Address: 1099 Green St. Apt. 409
Honolulu, HI 96822
808-927-0048
kcoontz@hawaii.edu