



HAWAII HEALTH SYSTEMS
C O R P O R A T I O N

"Touching Lives Every Day"

The House of Representatives

Committee on Health
Representative Ryan I. Yamane, Chair
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair

January 30, 2009
8:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329
Hawaii State Capitol

HB 687 RELATING TO VETERANS

Transfers Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home from department of health, Hawaii health systems corporation, to department of defense, office of veterans' services

By Thomas M. Driskill, Jr.
President and Chief Executive Officer
Hawaii Health Systems Corporation (HHSC)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 687 relating to the Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home. HHSC opposes the transfer of The Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home to the State of Hawaii Department of Defense.

HHSC thinks that this program is appropriately placed in the state's safety net system of healthcare that is comprised of five regions in Hawaii, Kauai, Maui and Oahu and that Veterans throughout the state would be best served with the program's healthcare system management and operations. HHSC is committed to providing best access to quality healthcare to Veterans at this facility and would be happy to work cooperatively with the department of defense and its programs regarding any concerns and interests in serving veterans.

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From: Elena Cabatu [ecabatu@hhsc.org]
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2009 8:01 AM
To: HLTtestimony
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By Howard Ainsley
Chief Executive Officer
Hilo Medical Center, East Hawaii Region
Hawaii Health Systems Corporation (HHSC)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 687 relating to the Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home. The Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home was established in 1 July 2003 by the twenty second legislature with a combination of federal and state funds. The Home is operated at no cost to the state under contract to Avalon Care Center Hawaii, LLC

The East Hawaii Regional Board believes that this program is appropriately placed in the state's system of healthcare, and that Veterans throughout the state are best served by the program's management and operations. The Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home-Hilo is committed to providing the highest quality long-term care to the veterans of our state for the services they have freely given to preserve our freedom. The East Hawaii Regional Board and Hawaii Health Systems Corporation welcomes any further advise and coordination with the department of defense, the office of veterans' services, the Advisory Council as well as veterans across our state regarding concerns and interests in serving veterans; but do not believe a transfer of facility would be necessary. Thank you.

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STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES
TESTIMONY ON H.B. No. 687, RELATING TO VETERANS
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH
JANUARY 30, 2009

Good morning Chair Ryan Yamane, Vice-Chair Scott Nishimoto, and members of the House Committee on Health.

I am Mark Moses, Director of the Office of Veterans Services (OVS). I appreciate this opportunity to make some brief comments in opposition to H.B. 687. The intent of this measure is the transfer of the Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home from the Department of Health, Hawaii Health Systems Corporation to the Department of Defense, Office of Veteran Services.

There is some merit to such a change as veterans are concerned about the present positioning of the Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home under the East Hawaii Regional Board, and the appearance, to veterans, that the perspective of the Home has shifted from statewide to regional.

This concern is further bolstered by the fact that as of 2007, there were 93 Veterans Homes in the 50 states, the Territories, and the District of Columbia. In 24 of them the Homes fall under a state department of Veterans Affairs, in 17 they fall under some type of State Board of Trustees, and in 9 they fall under some type of Department of Health or Human Services.

Governor Linda Lingle in a letter sent to Mr. Frank K. Salvas, Chief, State Home Construction Program, VA, Geriatrics and Extended Care, dated June 28, 2004, stated, *"the Director of the Office of Veterans Services (OVS) along with the Advisory Council (Board on Veterans Services), will be and is serving a major advisory role in this important new initiative, which will result in increased access to high quality long-term care services for our veterans in Hawaii."*

As a result of this as well as this offices responsibilities as contained in HRS 363, it is not necessary for the Office of Veteran Services to operate the Home, rather the Office of Veteran Services stands ready to advise and assist the Hawaii Health Systems Corporation on the operation of the Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home, and in developing the strategic planning required to serve all Hawaii's veterans and eligible dependents. We look forward to continuing our ongoing dialog with HHSC to achieve these objectives.

Thank you for allowing me to present the Veterans' perspective on the need to keep the Yukio Okutsu State Veteran Home a State asset.

I will respond to any questions.

**Testimony
The House of Representatives**

**Committee on Health
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Theodore Decker

Theodore Decker, USAF (Ret)
Resident Yukio State Veterans' Home-Hilo

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 687 relating to the Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home. As a Resident of the Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home I feel that current governance of Hawaii Health Systems Corporation is best. They have the experience in health care and understand the long-term needs of the Home Residents. I feel that the Office of Veterans Services should serve in a major advisory roll in the homes mission and in strategic planning of future homes. However, I do not believe a transfer of facility would be necessary. Thank you.

Testimony on HB 691
January 29, 2009

I wish to personally convey strong my support for HB 691.

The John A. Burns School of Medicine was founded in 1965 to provide opportunity to citizens of Hawai'i – both through the provision of physician education in Hawai'i for state residents and by providing a means to enhance the retention of practicing physicians with ties to Hawai'i within the state.

The current educational debt of the medical school graduates of the John A. Burns School of Medicine exceeds \$85,000 among those with educational debt. Coupled with a higher cost of living and lower physician reimbursement in Hawai'i than elsewhere in the U.S., the retention of medical school graduates in Hawai'i is becoming more challenging. This phenomenon has reached critical proportions on our neighbor islands.

A loan repayment program that provides some relief of this educational debt and assists with the establishment of new physician practices on the neighbor islands will assist with the significant physician access problem existing on the neighbor islands. As demonstrated on the mainland, educational debt loan repayment programs can aid physician recruitment to rural areas.

This program will be most successful if coupled with neighbor island educational programs that are under development by the John A. Burns School of Medicine. An extended exposure to our more rural communities while a medical student, resident (post medical school specialty training) and/or through such a loan repayment program will enhance long-term career and practice site choices favoring the neighbor islands.

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