

HB 991



To: Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Shan S. Tsutsui, Vice Chair

Date: 04-02-09, 9:30 a.m., Conference Room 211

Re: **HB 991, HD2, SD1 RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII**

Chair Mercado Kim and Committee Members:

My name is Barbara Kim Stanton, State Director of AARP Hawaii. AARP is a membership organization of people 50 and older with nearly 160,000 members in Hawaii. We are committed to championing access to affordable, quality health care for all generations, providing the tools needed to save for retirement, and serving as a reliable information source on issues critical to Americans age 50+.

We are submitting testimony **in support of HB 991, HD2, SD1** which establishes the Hawaii Medical Doctor Loan Repayment Program for University of Hawaii medical school graduates and medical school graduates with training from a Hawaii-based medical program working in rural areas of the state.

It is no secret that Hawaii experiences a critical shortage of physicians and that the problem is getting worse as doctors retire or leave the islands. This is a measure that would help to address the growing problem of physician shortages in the state, especially in rural areas and on the neighbor islands. We believe the situation will only worsen with the health care needs of Hawaii's aging population. AARP notes that the number of people age 65 and older in the state is projected to grow by about 86% in the next two decades. Our own AARP members on the neighbor islands report that they are having trouble getting care when they need it.

AARP believes that all individuals have a right to health care services and that government has the responsibility to develop a system that ensures access to health care services for all individuals. This should include physical and mental health services with special consideration to ensuring access for minorities, people with disabilities and those who reside in medically underserved communities.

We urge you to pass this measure that would support physician recruitment and retention in underserved areas in Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.