

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Thursday, February 04, 2010 3:22 PM
To: HTHTestimony
Cc: ubatzogs@waimanalohc.org
Subject: Testimony for SB2490 on 2/5/2010 2:55:00 PM

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Testimony for HTH 2/5/2010 2:55:00 PM SB2490

Conference room: 016
Testifier position: support
Testifier will be present: No
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Submitted on: 2/4/2010

Comments:
Date: February 4, 2010

To: Senate Committee on Health
The Hon. David Ige, Chair
The Hon. Josh Green, MD, Vice Chair

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2490 Relating to Community Health Centers

Please support Senate Bill 2490 which appropriates moneys from the community health centers special fund to be used by community health centers in Hawai'i.

As an Finance Director of the Waimānalo Health Center I am proud of the services that we provide to the community and all too familiar with the increased struggle in providing these services during these harsh economic times. I strongly support this measure which would ensure that the cigarette tax funds identified for the use of community health centers are fully expended for this purpose.

Community health centers across the State of Hawai'i provide an important safety net for the underserved populations including the homeless, the medically uninsured, Native Hawaiians, and immigrants. Over the past several months community health centers, such as the Waimānalo Health Center, have experienced a surge in the uninsured population. Over 50% of the new patients the Waimānalo Health Center serves are uninsured.

Although there has been an increased need for these vital medical services, organizations such as ours have also experienced nearly 50% cuts to most of our state-level funding. While state funding for mental health and dental health services have been reduced and more residents throughout Hawai'i are experiencing salary cuts and layoffs, many find themselves at our doors. And, despite the financial struggle, we continue to humbly serve them. At the Waimānalo Health Center we've implemented cost-saving measures and have focused our efforts on securing private funding. But, the need is too great for us to sustain much longer.

We strongly urge you to pass this measure and restore community health center funding where we are confident we can make an impact to the underserved community of our State of Hawai'i. Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in support of this very important bill.