

HMSA

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An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

February 19, 2010

The Honorable Rosalyn Baker, Chair
The Honorable David Ige, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection

Re: SB 2491 SD1 – Relating to Telemedicine

Dear Chair Baker, Vice Chair Ige and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Medical Service Association (HMSA) appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of SB 2491 SD1 which would clarify telemedicine as a practice of medicine and require insurers offering medical malpractice insurance coverage also cover telemedicine services.

As you are aware, Hawaii is on the cutting edge of health care technology through initiatives such as HMSA's Online Care, the Hawaii Health Information Exchange and the initiative on the Big Island to develop a regional health information exchange. As health technology advances, the government, both state and federal, will need to examine outdated barriers that restrict true reform from occurring. SB 2491 SD1 takes small steps towards ensuring that barriers to care do not exist whether a patient is seeing a provider in their office or via telehealth means. Legislation such as SB 2491 SD1 will assist in ensuring that these many projects are successful.

SB 2491 SD1 would require medical malpractice insurance cover a physician regardless of the treating environment in which they are practicing. Accessing care through HMSA's Online Care is just another tool available to physicians to expand access to health care much like email and telephone calls. Current medical malpractice coverage includes these more traditional care settings but some carriers have made the decision to explicitly exclude telehealth services. We believe that this is a disservice to those in the medical community who are interested in exploring new ways of assisting their patients.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JD", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jennifer Diesman
Vice President
Government Relations