

**SB 285**

# HMSA



An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

February 25, 2011

The Honorable David Y. Ige, Chair  
The Honorable Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

**Re: SB 285 SD1 – Relating to Health**

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

The Hawaii Medical Service Association (HMSA) appreciates the opportunity to testify on SB 285 SD1 which would authorize the Department of Human Services (DHS) to allow QUEST-eligible individuals to access telehealth services. HMSA supports this measure.

The Legislature authorized \$350,000 in Act 162, SLH 2009, for the purchase of a mobile medical van for services to the South Kona, Ka'u, and upper Puna areas of Hawaii Island. We are aware that those monies have been encumbered to Kona Hospital, and the Hospital is in the process of procuring the medical van.

In 2010, the Legislature passed S.B. 2491, SD2, HD1, CD1, which would have authorized telehealth services under the Department of Human Services' Medicaid or QUEST program. However, the Governor vetoed that message indicating that federal funding was not authorized for that purpose, and State General Funds also were not appropriated for the medical van services.

This Bill is an attempt to address the Governor's concerns by acknowledging the efforts of the Hospital to secure non-governmental funding for the operations of the van. During the interim, Kona Hospital worked with HMSA, and we will be assisting with a two-year pilot program to help finance the operations of the medical van program. HMSA recognizes Hawaii Island's unique demographics – a population widely dispersed over a large geographic area – making a mobile medical van a potentially ideal service.

Supporting these kinds of telehealth services gained national attention when President Barack Obama included the goal of making "it possible for business to deploy the next generation of high-speed wireless coverage to 98 percent of all Americans" in his State of the Union address. One of the examples he provided regarding this was to ensure the ability of patients to "have face-to-face video chats" with their physicians. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Again, HMSA is pleased to support this Bill.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Diesman  
Vice President,  
Government Relations



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**Re: SB 285 SD1 – Relating to Health**

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

My name is Howard Lee and I am President of the Hawaii Association of Health Plans (“HAHP”). HAHP is a non-profit organization consisting of eight (8) member organizations:

AlohaCare	Kaiser Permanente
Hawaii Medical Assurance Association	MDX Hawai‘i
HMSA	University Health Alliance
Hawaii-Western Management Group, Inc.	UnitedHealthcare

Our mission is to promote initiatives aimed at improving the overall health of Hawaii. We are also active participants in the legislative process. Before providing any testimony at a Legislative hearing, all HAHP member organizations must be in unanimous agreement of the statement or position.

HAHP appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of SB 285 SD1 which would provide for QUEST members to receive telehealth services through a medical van in Kona.

HAHP membership includes health plans which contract with the state to provide QUEST services. The Big Island of Hawaii’s geography and sparsely distributed population may translate into barriers to care for some. Bringing access to medical care to the neediest of populations via a mobile medical van makes sense to assist in improving the overall health of rural underserved populations. We would respectfully request the Committees see fit to pass this measure today. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Howard Lee  
President

• AlohaCare • HMAA • HMSA • HWMG • Kaiser Permanente • MDX Hawaii • UHA • UnitedHealthcare •  
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