

SB 596



HAWAII MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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Thursday, February 24, 2011, 9:00am, Conference Room 211

To: COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator David Ige, Chair
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

From: Hawaii Medical Association
Dr. Morris Mitsunaga, MD, President
Linda Rasmussen, MD, Legislative Co-Chair
Dr. Joseph Zobian, MD, Legislative Co-Chair
Dr. Christopher Flanders, DO, Executive Director
Lauren Zirbel, Community and Government Relations

Re: SB 596 RELATING TO HAWAII HEALTH CORPS

In Support.

Chairs & Committee Members:

Inadequate access to health care on the neighbor islands has become a vitally important issue. Too many people die, or suffer poor outcomes, because there are inadequate numbers of practicing physicians. The life span of a Big Island resident is currently 2 years shorter than those in other parts of the state. Because hospitals are so financially stressed that they do not have the ability to establish or partner to provide services and achieve the programs necessary for the recruitment and retention of physicians.

The introduction of SB596 is important to all neighboring islands in that it establishes support in the recruitment and retention of health care providers. Financial assistance to the organizing Family Medicine residency program in Hilo will augment an island-wide community fundraising effort, and with corporate donations, bring young, energetic physicians to train in the rural setting of the Big Island. Studies show that physicians tend to begin their practice within 50 miles of their training site. This,

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combined with exposure to a rural medicine setting, will help to build a foundation on which a growing medical community may be built.

Establishment of the Hawaii Health Corps will relieve the financial stressors of building a practice in a rural area, where reimbursements for medical services are often much lower than those of urban medicine. Student loan repayment will incentivize the retention of those trained on the Big Island, as well as attract experienced providers and new graduates from Oahu and elsewhere.

The Hawaii Medical Association strongly supports SB596 as being important to the rural areas of the state, and beneficial to the state as a whole.



Senate Ways and Means Committee
Senator David Ige, Chair

February 23, 2011

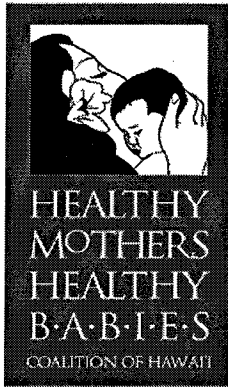
Honorable Chairman Ige and Committee Members;

We'd like to go on record in **STRONG support of SB 596**, Creating an Hawaii Health Corps and providing loan relief to health Professionals, including Physician Assistants willing to participate.

Hawaii NEEDS a Health Corps, it needs a cadre of health professionals (physicians, PAs NPs and others) willing to roll up the sleeves and get to work providing health services to our citizens in need. Thanks to Senator Josh Green for persevering in this effort. Let Hawaii set a standard for the country in how to mobilize and reward health professionals who choose health service as their carriers. This program will do a lot to help relieve our critical provider shortage. Implementing a Health Corps will cost some dollars, but the returns in service to our underserved communities will more than be paid for in improved health and wellbeing

Thank you for this opportunity to offer supportive testimony for SB596.

Sincerely,
Dan Domizio PA, MPH
Clinical Programs Director and CEO
Puna Community Medical Center
Pahoa, Hawaii



February 23, 2011

TO: Senator David Y. Ige, Chair, Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair and Members of the Committee On Ways and Means
FROM: Jackie Berry, Executive Director
RE: **SB 596, SD1**
Hearing: Friday, February 4, 2011 at 2:45pm

Honorable Chairperson Ige, Vice Chairperson Kidani and Members of the Committee on Ways and Means

HMHB is a statewide coalition of public and private agencies and individuals committed to the improvement of maternal and infant health status in Hawaii through education, coordination and advocacy. **HMHB is testifying today in support of SB 596 Relating to Hawaii Health Corps.**

As we all know physician shortages on the neighbor islands and in the rural areas of Oah'u is a serious problem. Whenever we talk with women about their health care, access to quality health care is raised as one of the major problems facing them. HMHB believes that the establishment of a Hawaii health corps program to provide loan repayments on behalf of eligible physicians, physician assistant, and nurse practitioners in any county having a shortage of these professionals, with a priority given to those practicing in rural areas is an important step toward attracting practioners in areas of need.

We urge you to **support** this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration of this bill and our testimony.

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