

# GM882

## KENNETH ROBBINS

Nomination to the Hawaii Medical  
Education Council

April 9, 2012

Senator Jill Tokuda  
Senate Committee on Education  
The Senate  
State Capitol  
Honolulu HI 96813

Dear Senator Takuda,

Thank you for your recent letter. I am submitting the information you requested regarding my nomination to the Hawaii Medical Education Council. Please find my responses below.

Sincerely,

Kenneth B. Robbins, M.D.  
549 Kiholo Street  
Honolulu HI 96821

- (1) Why did you apply to serve on the Hawaii Education Council?
- (2) Why do you believe you are qualified for the position?

As Chief Medical Officer for Hawaii Pacific Health, I am responsible for overseeing the recruitment of physicians for our four hospitals (Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children, Pali Momi Medical Center, Straub Clinic and Hospital, and Wilcox Hospital) and our three medical groups (Kapiolani Medical Specialists, Straub Clinic and Hospital, and Kauai Medical Clinic.). In this role, I have been active in physician recruitment activities in Hawaii for the last ten years, recruiting both private practice and employed physicians to the Islands. I am aware of the needs for primary care and specialists on Oahu and the neighbor islands, and I can bring that perspective and ideas for potential solutions to physician shortages to the Hawaii Medical Education Council. I meet monthly with the Associate Dean for the medical school (Dr. Roy Magnusson) to discuss issues of mutual concern, including issues in graduate medical education, physician workforce needs and physician recruitment. I gave my input to Dr. Kelley Withy and Dr. David Sakamoto during the development of the December 2010 Physician Workforce Report and actively participated in the community meeting to identify solutions to what has the potential to become a crisis in access to physicians in our community.

Prior to my administrative career, I was a full time practicing pediatrician at Straub Clinic & Hospital for fifteen years, from 1985 to 2000. In 1984 I held a full time position on the Pediatric Faculty at the University of Hawai'i Medical School and Residency Program for one year, and I continue to teach pediatric residents as an Associate Clinical Professor of Pediatrics at the medical school. I am therefore knowledgeable about the Pediatric Residency Program and the medical

school. From 1982-1984 I served as a captain in the US Army as a pediatrician, taking care of U.S. military dependents in Stuttgart, Germany. My pediatric residency training was from 1979-1982 at the University of Hawai'i Pediatric Residency Program at Kapi'olani Hospital. Because of my experience, I feel that I can bring a valuable perspective to the committee and I would be honored if given the opportunity to serve.

- (3) What recommendations would you make to the legislature and the Board of Regents to improve healthcare training programs in the state?
- (4) What challenges do you see facing our healthcare industry, specifically related to our workforce needs?

The December 2010 Report from the Hawai'i Physician Workforce Assessment Project noted a current shortage of 600 physicians in Hawaii (more than 20% of our total supply) and an impending shortage of 1,600 by 2020. Hawai'i needs over 200 additional adult primary care providers and is particularly short of Neurosurgeons, Cardiologists, Gastroenterologists, Infectious Disease specialists and General Surgeons. Geographically, although the problem is most acute on Hawai'i Island, residents throughout the state are beginning to experience problems accessing physician services. If these shortages are not addressed adequately, we will find Hawaii citizens and visitors in situations where they are unable to get the healthcare they need and deserve. This is a serious problem which could result in preventable deaths and disability.

The state funds the UH medical school in order to assure that the state will have a trained physician workforce needed to care for the people of Hawaii. Unfortunately, a number of UH medical students attend residency programs on the mainland after medical school and do not return. Since medical school admission is highly competitive, I would suggest tying admission to UH medical school to a commitment of two years of service in an underserved area in Hawaii (or perhaps designating a certain number of medical school scholarship positions to this commitment). I would also suggest offering out of state medical school scholarships to Hawaii residents who attend mainland medical schools, with the commitment that they will return to Hawaii and serve in an underserved area. There is a model for these kinds of scholarships with the National Health Service Corps.

I also think the medical school and Internal Medicine Residency Program should be choosing applicants who have a passion for and commitment to primary care, which is a critical area of shortage in our state. We know that when physicians complete their training in Hawaii, they tend to stay here for their careers. We should consider developing additional residency and fellowship training opportunities in Hawaii, such as increasing Family Medicine and Internal Medicine Primary Care residency training positions and starting a Gastroenterology Fellowship. We should also be tracking all UH medical student and resident graduates in a database, and encouraging those who are on the mainland to apply for available positions in Hawaii.

- (5) During these difficult economic times, how can we ensure adequate funding for our healthcare training programs?

It is often said that an individual's priorities, in good times and bad, should be as follows: first your health, then your family, then your job. Without good health, you cannot take care of your family or do a good job at work. The same applies at a population level. Assuring access to quality healthcare for the people of Hawaii and our visitors should be the state's top priority. That means that in good times and bad, the state should be ensuring adequate funding for healthcare training programs and healthcare workforce development. Without that commitment, we will see deterioration in the access to healthcare and the quality of healthcare in this state, with many negative consequences to the people and the economy of Hawaii.

(6) Can you see any potential conflicts of interest that could arise during your service on the Hawaii Medical Education Council?

I am employed as Chief Medical Officer by Hawaii Pacific Health, which has a number of medical student and residency programs operating in its facilities. In my role on the Hawaii Medical Education Council I may be advocating for increasing training programs and opportunities in specialty fields where I know there are shortages of physicians within HPH facilities, but most likely those shortages also exist in the other medical facilities in the state. I would not be advocating for a position that would benefit HPH over other facilities. If I ever detected during a discussion a conflict of interest between what is good for the state vs what is good for HPH, I would disclose this potential conflict of interest and if appropriate, recuse myself from further discussion on the issue. I am not aware of any personal financial arrangements that would put me in a potential conflict of interest situation by serving on the Hawaii Medical Education Council.

**GM882**

**TESTIMONY**

**Written Testimony  
In Support of  
Dr. Ken Robbins  
By  
Jerris Hedges, MD, MS, MMM**

Chair Tokuda, Vice-Chair Kidani, and members of the Senate Education Committee,

As chair of the Hawaii Medical Education Council, I would like to testify on behalf of Dr. Ken Robbins as a nominee to represent hospitals at which accredited medical education programs are conducted. Dr. Robbins is a pediatrician and Chief Medical Officer of Hawaii Pacific Health (HPH). This combination of clinical understanding and management experience is unique and would serve the Council well. As you may know the HPH hospitals are sites for training our medical students, residents and fellows in a number of specialties including pediatrics, obstetrics, medicine and surgery.

Dr. Robbins has been a longtime champion for quality medical education in Hawaii. Overall we believe he will be an outstanding addition to our efforts on behalf of the people of Hawaii.

Thank you for your favorable consideration.