

# GM884

## SHARON VITOUSEK

Nomination to the Hawaii Medical  
Education Council

## HMEC Interest Qualifications: Vitousek, April 2012

### **1. Why did you apply to serve on the HMEC?**

I want to help to improve health outcomes for the people of Hawaii. I believe this will require improving access to primary care and reducing the current gap between the demand for health providers in Hawaii and the supply. I believe that a key strategy to accomplish these goals is to improve Hawaii's capacity to "grow our own providers" through strengthening Hawaii's graduate medical education training programs.

### **2. Given your understanding of the role & responsibilities of HMEC, why do you believe you are qualified for the position? What skills, expertise, or knowledge would aid in your decision making on HMEC? Highlight three qualities you feel make you a highly qualified candidate.**

My knowledge of Hawaii's health outcomes, health disparities and health workforce shortages could be a valuable resource to the HMEC in its efforts to guide strategies and policies in graduate medical education. My experience as a graduate of the UH JABSOM and the UH Integrated Internal medicine residency programs could be beneficial as the council works to improve medical education in Hawaii. In addition my relatively recent conversations with many students who have recently attended the UH medical school and applied for residency programs, helps me to understand current issues from the student's perspective. My experience on multiple boards, including the Hawaii State Board of Health can also help me understand group decision making processes and group dynamics.

Three qualities that could help to make me a qualified candidate are:

- my curiosity and commitment to work to frame issues so that discussions center around trying to answer important and relevant questions,
- my commitment to continuous learning, continuous improvement and keeping an open mind,
- my commitment to data driven policies as well as to finding and developing accurate, timely, relevant data to quantify measures of success.

### **3. What recommendations would you make the legislature & board of regents to improve Healthcare training programs in the state?**

The recommendations that I would give at this point may or may not be the same recommendations that I would give after working with the HMEC and learning more about the current issues. However, at this point, based on what I know now, I would recommend that the state work to assure an exceptionally high quality training program and develop the partnerships and revenue streams to fund and expand graduate medical education programs in Hawaii.

**4. What challenges do you see facing our healthcare industry, specifically relating to our work force needs?**

Some of the key challenges that I see facing the Hawaii healthcare industry include:

- Severe and growing health provider workforce shortages, especially the undersupply of primary care, which is worse on the neighbor islands,
- Lack of capital, for aging facilities, expensive information systems, telecommunications and investments in top notch human resources,
- Large gap between the cost of doing business and reimbursement in Hawaii, which is largely based on the relatively low Medicare reimbursement,
- The healthcare industry is in transition between a fee-for-service model, which incentivizes providers for doing more and a newer population health model which incentivizes providers for doing less, such as for keeping people out of expensive hospitals & emergency rooms. During the transition, providers must live in two worlds, and third party administrators such as Medicaid must live in two worlds.
- The new model of healthcare requires expensive investments in Health Information Systems, as well as investments in skills to help providers navigate the transformation, analyze population health data and use it effectively to improve processes of care and outcomes,
- Effective use of health information requires effective exchange of health information, which in turn requires changes at the legislative level in Hawaii's Health Information Exchange laws,
- A change in the culture of health providers from a nearly 24hour/day commitment to service to a more balanced almost "shift worker" approach,
- Higher rates of poverty especially on neighbor island, which are associated with less healthy lifestyles and with lower health literacy and poorer health outcomes,
- Geographic isolation of counties making healthcare access an even bigger challenge and expense
- Hawaii's relatively low Medicare reimbursement and, to my knowledge, Hawaii's failure to fully maximize the geographic modifier component of reimbursement,
- Inaccurate and insufficient data on access to primary and specialty care in Hawaii. (Since about 50 % of the licensed physicians in Hawaii do not live in Hawaii, it appears that Hawaii has better access than it does, based on physic to population ratios. This apparently better ratio may reduce Hawaii's chances of receiving more federal money to address its workforce shortage problems.)

Unfortunately, this list is long. Although, the last two bullets are relatively small and very technical issues, substantial improvements in these two areas could yield high returns of significantly more federal dollars to Hawaii.

**5. During these difficult economic times how can we ensure adequate funding for our healthcare training programs?**

This is a key question that I hope the HMEC will effectively address after studying this issue more thoroughly. So again, my answer at this point may be very different from my answer after additional study. At this point, I suspect that ensuring adequate funding for health training programs will require developing a top notch excellent product, developing the right partnerships and revenue streams. In addition ensuring funding will likely require collaboration to improve models of healthcare delivery such as increasing the effective use of mid-level providers and multi-disciplinary teams. Ensuring adequate funding will also likely require taking a systems approach to reduce waste in the health delivery system in order to re-allocate resources to healthcare training.

**6. Can you foresee any possible conflicts of interest that could arise during your service on HMEC? How would you overcome any possible conflicts of interest?**

It is hard to imagine conflicts of interest, at this point, since improving Hawaii's medical education training and growing the workforce seems entirely consistent with the mission of all the other healthcare boards and committees that I work with. However, unforeseen potential conflicts of interests might conceivable occur with the boards that I serve on: North Hawaii Community Hospital Board, Hawaii Island Healthcare Alliance and the Hawaii Island Beacon Community board. To address potential conflicts of interest, I would follow standard conflict of interest policies and processes and would identify and declare the potential conflict, discuss the conflict with members of the council and/ or the chair of the council and excuse myself from voting on any issue in which I had a conflict or even an apparent conflict.

Sincerely,

Sharon H Vitousek MD

North Hawaii Outcomes Project, Director

**GM884**

**TESTIMONY**

**Written Testimony  
In Support of  
Dr. Sharon Vitousek  
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 respectfully nominate Sharon Vitousek, MD for appointment to the council. Dr. Vitousek has been a community leader on the island of Hawaii in the areas of access to medical care, the physician and health provider shortage, and improvement in health outcomes for the people of Hawaii.

Dr. Vitousek is particularly knowledgeable in the area of graduate medical education in rural areas and has been a strong proponent of training on neighbor islands. We have worked with her on the Hilo Residency for a couple of years now and find her to be extremely dedicated and informed about medical education issues in our State. She is committed to Hawaii and to our medical community and brings a depth of experience that would greatly benefit the Council.

She is also an expert on the health outcomes in Hawaii, in particular the factors affecting sobering health statistics on the Big Island. As the overall goal for medical education must be to improve the health outcomes of the state, we believe her involvement will help keep us focused on the most important outcome, A.L.O.H.A. (Attaining Lasting Optimal Health for All).

Thank you for your favorable consideration.

*"Health care that is safe, health care that works, and health care that leaves no one behind"*

**Senate Committee on Education  
Senator Jill N. Tokuda, Chair  
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair**

**April 16, 2012  
Hawaii State Capitol Room 225**

**Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Hawai'i Medical Education Council,  
Gubernatorial Nominee, SHARON VITOUSEK, for a term to expire 6-30-2015.**

**Howard N. Ainsley  
East Hawaii Regional Chief Executive Officer  
Hawaii Health Systems Corporation**

It is my pleasure to strongly endorse Sharon Vitousek, M.D., to the Hawai'i Graduate Medical Education Council. Dr. Vitousek (JABSOM 1979) is an outstanding leader in the state's efforts to improve medical education and the health of our population. Her direction of the Hawai'i Island Healthcare Alliance and the North Hawaii Outcomes Project has advanced understanding of the health disparities of the Big Island. Moreover, Dr. Vitousek's focus has been to develop long standing solutions to improve health on the Big Island and throughout the state. Her intellect and desire to make a meaningful contribution to the people of Hawai'i is admirable.

Dr. Vitousek is a tremendous asset and I wholeheartedly support her candidacy.

## Erin Conner

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 03, 2012 2:51 PM  
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**Cc:** quick@ilhawaii.net  
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Testimony for EDU 4/16/2012 1:15:00 PM GM884

Conference room: 225  
Testifier position: Support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Carolyn Quick  
Organization: Individual  
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Submitted on: 4/3/2012

Comments: