

LATE

Kalihi-Palama Health Center
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SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
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SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH
Hon. Josh Green, Chair
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Testimony on SB 2227 RELATING TO HEALTH

Report Title: Health Care; Funding for the uninsured; Community Health Centers; Appropriation

Submitted by Emmanuel Kintu, Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director

Date of Hearing: February 6, 2012; at 3:00 p.m., Room 229

Kalihi-Palama Health Center (KPHC) strongly supports SB 2227 to provide funding for quality, cost effective health care for Hawaii's uninsured through non-profit community health centers. Federally Qualified Community Health Centers (FQHCs) have demonstrated that they are a foundation of Hawaii's Health Care Safety Net. When we do our work effectively, we provide comprehensive, integrated, culturally appropriate primary health care. We improve clinical outcomes, **improve the health and wellness of our communities, reduce total health care costs**, and stimulate the economies of the communities where we operate.

FQHCs are effective at managing patients with chronic conditions and have demonstrated that established many patients who actively participate in the patient-centered home have superior clinical outcomes and lower hospital stays. This contributes to a significant reduction in the total cost of care.

One of the strengths of FQHCs is the demonstrated ability to serve the underserved population - effectively. Our linguistic and cultural proficiency, coupled with a good understanding of the psychosocial issues and other barriers that our patients face when they try to access health and social services, has earned us the trust of our patients. With this trust, we are able to work effectively with the patients and convince them to seek appropriate levels of care in appropriate settings. When it is appropriate we direct them to the emergency department and advise them to follow up with a primary care visit after being discharged. We are working with one health plan and two hospitals to help streamline the transition from hospital to the primary care setting. We intend to replicate this approach with all health plans and hospitals that are willing to work with us to improve access to care for the patients we serve. This approach promises to improve outcomes while reducing costs and helping our patients to change behaviors regarding seeking health care.

Funding for the uninsured will enable us to extend these services to all of our patients. The State of Hawaii will benefit from the improvement in health and wellness of our communities, and from the attendant reduction in total cost of health care services.

In 2010 KPHC served 21,252 patients. The main ethnicities were: 45% Asian, 35 Pacific Islander, 7% Native Hawaiian. Patient income status was 76% below 100% Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPL), 12% over 200%FPL, and 3% unknown. We also serve 1,800 Homeless patients and provided housing assistance to 330 less fortunate members of our community.

KPHC served **4 out of every 10 uninsured patients** who sought primary care on Oahu in 2010. We project that should the number of uninsured in Hawaii grow by 4,500, we would see an increase of about 1,200 uninsured patients for a total of 10,400 uninsured patients seeking services at KPHC. Without additional State funding for the uninsured, we would not be able to meet the increase in demand for health care and social services.

We would like to point out that as a result of changes in circumstances, with time, a significant number of patients who are uninsured could become eligible for QUEST or QUEST Expanded benefits. If those patients do not receive appropriate primary care when they are uninsured, their conditions worsen, they experience preventable suffering, and they could end up with long hospital stays and high total costs. Investing in primary care for the uninsured makes good health and wellness sense. Investing in primary care for the uninsured it makes good business sense.

On behalf of KPHC and the community we serve, I strongly support SB 2227 to provide funding for quality, cost effective health care for Hawaii's uninsured through non-profit community health centers.