

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator David Ige, Chair

February 21, 2013 at 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 211

Supporting SB 137 SD 1: Relating to Health

The Healthcare Association of Hawaii advocates for its member organizations that span the entire spectrum of health care, including all acute care hospitals, as well as long term care facilities, home care agencies, and hospices. In addition to providing quality care to all of Hawaii's residents, our members contribute significantly to Hawaii's economy by employing over 40,000 people. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of SB 137 SD 1, which appropriates funds for a position to license home care agencies.

Home care agencies employ workers who assist a growing number of older adults and those with chronic illnesses or disabilities. Home care workers are referred to by a variety of job titles, including certified nursing assistants, care assistants, and home care aides. They make it possible for people with functional limitations to remain at home in a comfortable, familiar environment by providing a wide range of assistance with the Activities of Daily Living. These activities include bathing, dressing, grooming, assisting with ambulation or transferring, toileting, feeding and providing assistance with self-medication. Home care workers also help with the Instrumental Activities of Daily Living, which include shopping, meal preparation, making medical appointments, transportation, laundry and housekeeping.

Since many elderly live alone and their mental functions are declining, home care agencies must provide care with the least amount of risk to their clients. The public must be assured that home care agencies are meeting minimum standards when delivering care. A total of 28 states and the District of Columbia require home care agencies to be licensed.

In the regular session of 2009 the legislature passed SB415 SD2 HD1 CD1, which was enacted as Act 21 in the first special session of 2009. The purpose of Act 21 is to require home care agencies to be licensed. Act 21 designates the Department of Health as the home care licensing agency, and the Department has collaborated with home care agencies, consumer advocates, and other stakeholders to draft the administrative rules needed to implement licensing. Those draft rules are in the last stage of the approval process.

The Department of Health intends that licensing fees charged to home care agencies will cover the administrative costs associated with licensing. However, initial funding is needed to start the licensing process so that fees can be collected. After the first year, licensing fees will cover the administrative costs of licensing.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 137 SD 1.