

# HMSA



An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

February 1, 2013

The Honorable Josh Green, M.D., Chair  
The Honorable Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair  
Senate Committees on Health and Commerce and Consumer Protection

**Re: SB 650 – Relating to Health**

Dear Chair Green, Chair Baker and Members of the Committees:

The Hawaii Medical Service Association (HMSA) appreciates the opportunity to testify on SB 650 which would limit the ability of providers and pharmacists working in emergency rooms from prescribing and refilling prescriptions for opioid painkillers that have been lost, stolen, or destroyed. HMSA supports this Bill.

Prescription drug abuse and misuse is a growing epidemic throughout the United States, and more and more emergency physicians are encountering drug-seeking patients in daily practice. And, there is growing concern that drug abusers are seeking prescription drugs through emergency room (ER) visits. Nationally, drug seeking patients seeking care in an ER account for up to 42 percent of all emergency room visits. These drug-seekers are a difficult group of patients to manage in the ER, often presenting conditions that are difficult to evaluate, and they may also engage in deceptive behaviors in an effort to fool clinicians into giving them additional medications.

A study reported in the January 2012 Journal of Emergency Medicine reviewed 152 drug-seeking patients over a one-year period. They accounted for 2,203 visits to the ER, averaging about 14.5 visits per patient per year. A patient control group accounted for 315 visits to the ER, which is an average of 2.1 visits per patient per year. The drug-seeking patients reported their pain level as 10 out of 10 more often than control group patients.

Such behavior creates concerns for the providers, the facilities, and the health care system, generally. This Bill will help alleviate those concerns.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer our support for SB 650.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JD".

Jennifer Diesman  
Vice President  
Government Relations