



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
April 4, 2013

by

Dr. Winona Mesiona Lee MD
Director, The 'Imi Ho'ola Post-baccalaureate Program
and on behalf of

Dr. Keawe Kaholokula, PhD.
Chair, Department of Native Hawaiian Health

Dr. Allen Hixon, MD
Chair, Department of Family Medicine and Community Health
and

Jerris Hedges, MD
Dean, John A. Burns School of Medicine
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 665 SD1 HD1 – Relating to Health

Aloha and thank you for allowing us to testify today. The John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) supports the intent of SB 665 SD1 HD1, which would support our Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence, expand education to train primary care physicians, and fund an educational loan repayment program to attract and retain rural health care providers.

Native Hawaiian Health and Primary Care

To ensure the future health of Hawai'i's people, JABSOM is committed to producing a diverse health care workforce dedicated to meeting the health needs of all people of Hawai'i and the Pacific.

Native Hawaiians continue to suffer high rates of diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and obesity while remaining severely under-represented in all health professions. Only 4% of licensed physicians in Hawai'i are of Native Hawaiian descent, even though 26.2% of the population is of that ancestry. The good news: Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander health care providers are more likely than others to return to serve their home communities and provide services to those populations most in need.

Specifically, SB 665 SD1 HD1 would support the sustainability of the 'Imi Ho'ola Program, a post-baccalaureate, labor-intensive pre-medical school preparatory program for disadvantaged students, and the Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence (NHCOE), which help the medical school produce more primary care providers while simultaneously boosting the numbers of Native Hawaiians in the health professions.

The Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence (NHCOE) creates paths for Native Hawaiian students to succeed in health careers. Through community and educational

collaborations (i.e. Na Pua No'eau-Center for Gifted and Talented Native Hawaiian Children, and Ahahui O Na Kauka-Association of Native Hawaiian Physicians), NHCOE is able to extend its reach annually to over 2,500 students spanning K-12, undergraduate, and post-baccalaureate. NHCOE's Native Hawaiian Student Pathway to Medicine program works with promising Native Hawaiian students to become competitive applicants to health professions schools, such as JABSOM. Due to NHCOE's pipeline efforts, nearly 25% of 'Imi Ho'ōla applicants for the 2013 entering class are Native Hawaiians.

The 'Imi Ho'ōla program, whose students have been generously supported by The Queen's Health Systems, provides educational opportunities to aspiring MDs from disadvantaged backgrounds who demonstrate a commitment to underserved communities of Hawai'i. Students who complete the program automatically earn enrollment in the next JABSOM MD Class. To date, 226 'Imi Ho'ōla alumni have successfully graduated from JABSOM. Of these graduates, 38% are Native Hawaiian, 85% are providing primary care services, and 96% are practicing in underserved and/or disadvantaged populations.

Supporting Primary Care Graduate Medical (Post-MD) Education

SB 665 SD1 HD1 would allow JABSOM's existing Family Medicine Residency-Program to expand faculty and increase its number of training positions.

Residency trainees are newly minted physicians working under our faculty's supervision in order to prepare for their licensure and board certification. They are the closest step in the educational pipeline to the point where they may become full-fledged doctors.

Currently, Hawai'i produces only six board-eligible Family Medicine Physicians per year. A comprehensive approach to address the physician workforce shortage is needed.

A robust primary care workforce is associated with improved population health outcomes and lower overall health care costs. As the Legislature knows by funding JABSOM's Hawai'i Health Workforce Assessment, our State's own physician shortage is worsened by the fact that a large percentage of doctors practicing in Hawai'i are reaching retirement age.

Physician and Nurse Practitioner Loan Repayment Program

The average debt our MD students carry upon graduation is \$104,000. Inspired by the Hawai'i State Legislature's creation of a Hawai'i Health Corps, JABSOM sought private funding and Affordable Care Act monies to launch the unfunded health corps program concept. Through the generosity of HMSA and The Queen's Medical Center, and recently Aloha Care, this year we have begun paying back up to \$40,000 a year in educational debt for two physicians and two nurse practitioners who have committed to serve at least two years in rural centers on O'ahu, Maui and Hawai'i Island. Next year, an additional nine loan repayment contracts will be drawn up. With the Legislature's

support, such as that offered in SB 665 SD1 HD1, we hope to increase the number of loan repayment contracts to 50 a year, which would significantly address the shortage of rural-area health care providers.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

HMSA



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April 4, 2013

The Honorable Sylvia Luke, Chair
The Honorable Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
The Honorable Aaron Ling Johanson, Vice Chair

House Committee on Finance

Re: SB 665, SD1, HD1 – Relating to Health

Dear Chair Luke, Vice Chairs Nishimoto and Johanson, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Medical Service Association (HMSA) appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of SB 665, SD1, HD1, which appropriates funding for various programs directed at expanding the primary care workforce. These include funding for the Hawaii Health Corps, the University of Hawaii's John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) and the School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene, JABSOM's Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence, and funding to enhance faculty and infrastructure of the Family Medicine Residence Program and for the development of new accredited family health centers. HMSA supports this Bill.

HMSA is acutely aware of the issue of access to health care, especially in rural areas of the state. Additionally, HMSA has been committed to making the patient-centered medical home the model for Hawaii's health care system. The success of that system will depend on an adequate primary care workforce.

As you may be aware, in the past, HMSA has supported programs to build health care capacity. For example, the HMSA Foundation has provided over \$500,000 to the Rural Family Practice Residency Program in Hilo to help train physicians who will remain in and practice on the Big Island.

The appropriations in this Bill reflect an investment on the part of the State to meet that same goal of enhancing Hawaii's provider workforce.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 665, SD1, HD1.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark K. Oto".

Mark K. Oto
Director
Government Relations



Community Alliance for Mental Health

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To: The Hawai'i State House of Representatives Committee on Finance
Re: SB 665 SD1, HD1

To: The Honorable Representative Luke and the members of the committee.

Aloha,

The Community Alliance for Mental Health along with United Self Help supports SB 665 SD1, HD1 as a critically important step in the transformation of the delivery of health care in these islands. No matter how good our health care system is it is only as good as the doctors who deliver it. Without those doctors we might as well be mailing it in. We know the high cost of living coupled with crippling student loans conspire to keep new doctors away from Hawai'i. Whatever we can do to help draw new talent and fresh blood into the field should and must be attempted. Therefore we strongly support SB 665 SD1, HD1.

Mahalo,
Scott Wall
Vice-President |



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Rep. Sylvia Luke, Chair

April 4, 2013 at 2:17 p.m.
Conference Room 308

Supporting SB 665 SD 1 HD 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, a majority of home health agencies and hospices, as well as long term care facilities and other health care organizations. Our members contribute significantly to Hawaii's economy by employing nearly 20,000 people statewide, delivering quality care to the people of Hawaii.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of SB 665 SD 1 HD 1, which appropriates funds for the Hawaii Health Corps and for the education of primary care physicians.

The Hawaii Health Corps was created by the Legislature through Act 187 in 2012. The program encourages physicians, physicians assistants, and nurse practitioners to serve in counties with shortages of these types of practitioners, particularly in rural areas, by offering them student loan repayments.

Rural areas are particularly affected by shortages because of lower compensation when compared with urban areas. The low compensation is caused by an unfavorable payer mix that is typical of rural areas. The average physician graduates from medical school with about \$150,000 in student loans. With such a large amount to pay back, it is no surprise that most of them seek employment in urban areas rather than rural areas.

Statewide, Hawaii currently faces a shortage of 600 physicians when compared with communities of the same size on the mainland, according to a report of the Physician Workforce Assessment Project of the John A. Burns School of Medicine. Most of that shortage is in the area of primary care. That number is projected to double by 2020 if changes are not made soon. This bill addresses the shortage of physicians and physician extenders in rural areas and the overall shortage of primary care physicians.

For the foregoing reasons, the Healthcare Association of Hawaii supports SB 665 SD 1 HD 1.