

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator David Ige, Chair

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

Supporting SB 665: 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 665, 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 the Physician Workforce Assessment Project that was issued by the John A. Burns School of Medicine. Most of that shortage is in the area of primary care. That number will 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.



Community Alliance for Mental Health

Board of Directors

Anne Chipchase
President

Robert Scott Wall
Vice President

Crystal Aguinaldo
Secretary

William Lennox
Treasurer

Sunny Algosio

Jessica Carroll

Randolph Hack

Gina Hungerford

Susan King

To: The Hawai'i State Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Re: SB 665

To: The Honorable Senator Ige and the members of the committee.

Aloha,

The Community Alliance for Mental Health along with United Self Help supports SB 665 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.

Mahalo,
Robert Scott Wall
Vice-President