

**PRESENTATION OF THE  
HAWAII MEDICAL BOARD**

TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE  
Regular Session of 2014

Monday, March 17, 2014  
1:45 p.m.

**TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL NO. 1880, H.D. 2, RELATING TO PODIATRISTS.**

TO THE HONORABLE JOSH GREEN, CHAIR,  
AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

My name is Ahlani Quiogue, and I am one of the Executive Officers of the Hawaii Medical Board ("Board"). The Board has no objections to this bill.

The companion bill, S.B. No. 2467, was heard by the Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection on March 7, 2014, and passed with an S.D. 1 that incorporates language from this House measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill No. 1880, H.D. 2, Relating to Podiatrists.



## HAWAII MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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TO:

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Senator Josh Green, Chair

Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Vice Chair

DATE: Monday, March 17, 2014

TIME: 1:45PM

PLACE: Conference Room 229

FROM: Hawaii Medical Association

Dr. Walton Shim, MD, President

Dr. Linda Rasmussen, MD, Legislative Co-Chair

Dr. Ron Kienitz, DO, Legislative Co-Chair

Dr. Christopher Flanders, DO, Executive Director

Lauren Zirbel, Community and Government Relations

Re: HB 1880

Position: Support

HMA reached an agreement with the Hawaii Podiatric Medical Association. HMA supports this legislation due to the following amendments that were already added to the bill:

A podiatric physician may perform ankle fracture surgery if board qualified or board certified in reconstructive rearfoot ankle surgery by the American Board of Podiatric Surgery and completed a 36 month podiatric surgical residency.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

*Officers*

*President - Walton Shim, MD President-Elect – Robert Sloan, MD  
Secretary - Thomas Kosasa, MD Immediate Past President – Stephen Kemble, MD  
Treasurer – Brandon Lee, MD Executive Director – Christopher Flanders, DO*

Testimony to: Senator Josh Green, M.D., Chair  
Senate Committee on Health  
Subject: HB1880-Relating to Podiatrists  
3/17/14 1:45pm  
Presented by: Dr. Robert LaReaux

Chair Dr. Green and Members of the Committee:

I am Dr. Robert LaReaux, President of the Hawaii Podiatric Medical Association and we support this bill.

**Currently, 45 states** allow podiatrists full ankle privileges.

**In Hawaii podiatrists already operate on the ankle.** We are asking to include ankle fractures in our scope of practice. The training of Hawaii podiatrists has been in the 45 states that include ankle fractures in the scope of practice. Unfortunately, this restriction has contributed to a shortage of podiatrists in Hawaii. We have half the number of podiatrists we should have in Hawaii. Hawaii has the worst amputation in the country. Podiatrists save limbs.

There is an overall **physician shortage in Hawaii** and it is projected to worsen over the next 6 years. On the neighbor islands, patients have had to fly over to Oahu to have surgical repair of their ankle fractures. Several years ago at my hospital (Castle Medical Center), orthopedic trauma cases including ankle fractures had to be diverted to Queens due to a lack of orthopedic coverage.

Podiatric surgical training is beyond criticism. Compare orthopedist surgical training to podiatric surgical training: The average number of **foot and ankle surgeries** an **orthopedic surgical resident** performs is about **110**. **Podiatry residents** perform about **1100 foot and ankle surgeries**.

All nine colleges of **podiatric medicine** are part of **large health universities**. Typically, courses taken in the first 2 years are the same; anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, etc. The last two years focus on the foot and ankle. Residency is now 36 months for all podiatrists and includes rotations through applicable specialties.

We have worked with the Hawaii Medical Association to amend the bill. We are very happy to have gained their support.

Thank you

Senator Josh Green and the Committee on Health:

I am Linda Ho, practicing podiatrist, and I support this bill. I was born and raised here, a proud graduate of Pearl City High School Class of 2002, and I studied in the mainland, always with the intent of going home to bring back and contribute what I was able to find as my purpose in life back home. As fate would have it, the path led to podiatric medicine. Podiatric medicine is a profession that is an untapped resource whose potential can only bring benefit to the people of Hawaii. With Hawaii's population of growing diabetic patients, Hawaii's population of increasingly active seniors with the baby boomers, our generalized population of proudly barefooted walkers, it is our profession that helps keep our nation healthy and on their feet. These two bills HB 1880 and SB 2467 will assist with fortifying our profession's goal to uphold the quality of care that Hawaii's people deserve to keep them on their feet: to ensure that qualified and trained podiatrists can fully demonstrate what we were trained to do from an either 24 month or 36 month residency. I have colleagues who are also Kama'aina who are training in the mainland, with the intention to return home to indeed serve our home. I am hopeful that these bills will enable them to fill the constant brain drain that this state is suffering from.

The opportunity that these bills offer is to increase the chance for newly trained podiatrists to demonstrate what further training and skills that have been developed to improve the care of the people of Hawaii. Innovation brings the SINGLE chance of improvement and change...fear and apathy established with the status quo promises no offer of change and improvement. If it is the opinion that the current foot care for the people of Hawaii is of contention, closing the doors on bringing new talent only fosters this negative attitude. It is not an issue of self interest that I offer this testimony: rather it is from bearing witness to multiple hands other than mine that offer the skill and care that we all want for our community. I want to give that opportunity to those I've seen heal, and I don't want the people of Hawaii to be robbed of that opportunity.

Thank you for your consideration,

Linda Ho DPM

Chair Josh Green, Senate Committee on Health

Re: Relating to Podiatry: HB 1880

Position: Support

Healthcare is changing. Medical care has become more specialized and focused in order to create and maintain a level of care that is required to continually deliver the highest quality care to every patient.

Podiatrists have become the primary providers of foot and ankle surgery. Training has changed over the past 20 years to create an environment where podiatrists are an essential part of a well-rounded healthcare team. The ever increasing diabetes population relies on the specialized foot and ankle care that podiatrists provide to ensure comprehensive care for hospital and outpatient care.

I moved back home to Kauai in 1999 and joined Kauai Medical Clinic and became a part of the Allied Healthcare Staff at Wilcox Memorial Hospital. After establishing myself to be an essential part of the healthcare team, hospital policy was revised to allow podiatrists to become part of the medical staff of Wilcox Memorial Hospital. Together with several orthopedic surgeons and a physiatrist, in 2004 we established the Bone and Joint Center at Kauai Medical Clinic to provide comprehensive care for the people of Kauai as well as our large visitor population.

Current Hawaii state law does not reflect the current standard of training and ability of podiatrists. Current law restricts podiatrists from doing “any amputation, except for digital amputation”. Obviously, this law is outdated and does not reflect the current standard for the rest of the country. I know that I am the best trained and qualified to treat my diabetic patients, and I believe my colleagues on the medical staff at Wilcox Memorial Hospital know that no one is more passionate about healing these complicated wounds than myself.

The proposed bills allow podiatrists to perform to the level of the foot and ankle as they are trained. In fact, 45 states allow podiatrists to provide comprehensive foot and ankle care. In the esteemed orthopedic journal, Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery America in 2012, Augusto Sarmiento, MD from the University of Miami School of Medicine wrote:

*“...podiatrists, who for generations had limited their work to minor surgeries of the toes, managed, over a very short period of time, to become doctors/surgeons who currently care for patients with all types of musculoskeletal conditions below the knee. They treat traumatic injuries as well as degenerative, infectious, and congenital diseases with clinical and surgical means. They perform internal fixation of fractures of the tibia, ankle, os calcis, hindfoot, and forefoot. In addition, they perform total ankle arthroplasties and tendon transfers. In the process, they have become experts in the field to the point that it is ludicrous to argue that their qualifications do not allow them to cover such a wide territory.”*

I am the only full time resident podiatrist on Kauai and I have an overwhelming population of patients in need of care. It is not unusual for a patient with foot pain to wait 3 months for a consultation. I would like to have a skilled surgical foot and ankle partner, but the best trained podiatrists find the Hawaii state law to be prohibitive and restrictive. In fact, my group has tried for several years to hire an orthopedist interested in the foot and ankle, but that has proved very difficult.

I have dedicated my professional life to providing the best podiatric foot and ankle care to the residents and visitors of Kauai. I was raised on Kauai and graduated from Kauai High School. Coming home to serve the people of Kauai has been wonderful, and I plan to continue to work to keep medical care on Kauai and in Hawaii up to the standards of modern medicine in 2014.

Hawaii is one of the last 5 states restricting the ability of skilled podiatrists to care for patients appropriately, and it is time to revise our state standards.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Tyler Akira Chihara, DPM, FACFAS

Bone and Joint Center at Wilcox Health  
Medical Staff, Wilcox Memorial Hospital  
Treasurer, Hawaii Podiatric Medical Association