



**HPCA**

HAWAII PRIMARY CARE ASSOCIATION



**Senate Committee on Ways and Means**

Senator David Y. Ige, Chair

Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2235**

**Relating to Education**

**Submitted by Robert Hirokawa, Chief Executive Officer**

**February 19, 2014, 9:25 am, Room 211**

The Hawaii Primary Care Association (HPCA), which represents the federally qualified health centers/community health centers in Hawaii, supports the intent of House Bill 1776 House Draft 1, requiring the Board of Education to establish a pilot program in one complex area under which children are required to undergo a physical examination within six months of attending kindergarten, sixth grade, and ninth grade.

In Hawaii, public education is student centered and grounded in a commitment to equity. Part of that equity depends squarely on ensuring all children having the opportunity to pursue, and excel in, their education. The number one cause most often provided by parents of children experiencing chronic absenteeism from our public schools is healthcare. As a community, we must do more to ensure our students have access to health care, and utilize that access through wellness checkups and preventive visits so they can reduce their incidents of chronic absenteeism by identifying and addressing health issues early-on. Asthma, vision, hearing, depression, and many other health issues can be identified through screenings and physical examinations. If you can't see clearly, if you can't breathe well, or if you're experiencing depression...it can be overwhelming, perhaps impossible, for a child to succeed in school. A child's health undeniably affects their ability to attend and thrive at school. In addition, people in Hawaii with a high school degree or less are TWICE as likely to be OBESE and THREE times as likely to SMOKE. For the sake of our health and our future, our kids must stay in school . . . and in order to stay in school, our kids must have their health.

We ask the committee to consider amending this measure to create a program that requires a physical examination during the seventh grade year (currently immunizations are required in seventh grade.) In addition, the program should commence at the end of a student's sixth grade year with educating parents and students on: 1) the physical examination requirement for grade seven; 2) provider options; and 3) wellness visits and screenings as a health insurance covered benefit under the Affordable Care Act. Community stakeholders, including providers and health insurance plans, may be able to assist with the sixth grade educational component of the program in addition to implementation.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to testify.

