



LATE

February 6, 2016

The Honorable Rosalyn Baker, Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health

The Honorable Michelle Kidani, Vice-Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health

Re: SB 3010 – Relating to Health

Dear Chair Baker, Vice-Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Medical Service Association (HMSA) appreciates the opportunity to submit comments supporting the intent of SB 3010, which establishes the Hospice and Palliative Care and Quality of Life Advisory Council within the Department of Health and expands palliative care services for insured individuals.

HMSA recognizes the ongoing and growing need for earlier and better coordination of care for patients with an advanced illness. Our focus on palliative care services for our members is evidenced through our support of Kokua Mau which received funding for a two-year Palliative Care Capacity Building Project from the HMSA Foundation to train health care professionals in palliative care and to stimulate the development of palliative care programs in local hospitals. In addition, HMSA received funding from Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to conduct a pilot program on palliative care coordination for Federal Plan 87 members. The main goal of the program was to expand and improve quality of care for patients with an advanced or terminal illness.

We appreciate the Committee highlighting the need for increased attention on palliative services in SB 3010, however, we would like to highlight the following issues:

- Ensuring our members receive quality and coordinated care from providers is of utmost concern – especially with regard to serious illness or end-of-life care. We have concerns that, as written, SB 3010 would no longer require an insured person to obtain a referral from a primary care provider or other physician prior to receiving hospice care and palliative care services.
- Currently palliative care is not a Medicare benefit; therefore, if these services are to be covered there would need to be discussion around, or further details pertaining to the specific services to be covered, expected costs, and funding.

These and other considerations could be addressed by the Hospice and Palliative Care and Quality of Life Advisory Council which would be created if SB 3010 is enacted into law. HMSA would encourage the Committee to consider requiring a representative(s) from the health plan community as part of the advisory council.

Thank you for allowing us to testify on SB 3010.

Sincerely,



An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JD", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jennifer Diesman
Vice President, Government Relations

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