



To: The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
The Honorable Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair
Members, Committee on Ways and Means

From: Gerard Akaka, MD, Vice President, Native Hawaiian Affairs and Clinical Support, The Queen's Health Systems

Date: February 27, 2018

Hrg: Senate Committee on Ways and Means Decision Making; Wednesday, February 28, 2018 at 11:00 A.M. in Room 211

Re: **Support for SB 2320, SD1, Relating to an Undergraduate Health Sciences Academy**

My name is Gerard Akaka, and I am a Vice President at The Queen's Health Systems (QHS). I would like to express my support for SB 2320, SD1, relating to an Undergraduate Health Sciences Academy. This bill would establish an undergraduate health sciences academy to be administered by the University of Hawai'i West O'ahu to increase recruitment and retention of Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and first generation college students. The measure would also require a report to be submitted to the legislature on the educational outcomes of the program.

For over 150 years, QHS has been committed to the mission of providing quality health care services in perpetuity to Native Hawaiians as well as all the people of Hawai'i. As an organization founded by Queen Emma and King Kamehameha IV in 1859, we are committed to supporting and working with community-based stakeholders to address the health disparities of the Native Hawaiian people. For the state of Hawai'i, Native Hawaiians are over 2 times as likely to experience diabetes compared to the white population and have the highest rates of deaths due to cancer compared to any other ethnic group. While QHS continues to invest in education and community projects across the state to promote Native Hawaiian health, there are still unmet needs for health services.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue.



LATE

To: The Honorable Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
The Honorable Gilbert Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: Trish La Chica, Policy and Advocacy Director, Hawai'i Public Health Institute

Re: **Support for SB 2320 SD1, Relating to an Undergraduate Health Sciences Academy**

Hrg: February 28, 2018 at 11:00 am at Conference Room 211

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of SB 2320 SD1 which establishes an undergraduate health sciences academy to be administered by the University of Hawai'i at West O'ahu to increase recruitment and retention of Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and first generation college students.

The Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI) supports and promotes policy efforts to create a healthy Hawai'i. HIPHI weaves silos into working relationships as an effective network, ensuring that we come together across sectors to advance collaboration and innovation in public health and work towards making Hawai'i the healthiest place on earth.

SB 2320 SD1 is a legislative priority of the Native Hawaiian Health Task Force (NHHTF), formed by the State Legislature in 2014 (SR 60) to improve the health of indigenous people and of all people in Hawai'i. The NHHTF has completed its mandates activities and has reconvened as the Native Hawaiian Health Coalition.

Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders have among the highest rates of obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease in the state. Native Hawaiians also have higher morbidity rates in diabetes, heart disease and cancer compared to other ethnic groups in Hawaii. In addition, Native Hawaiians are less likely to attend college than other ethnic groups partly due to low levels of preparation and inadequate finances. The development of a Health Sciences Academy with a focus on Native Hawaiian student recruitment and retention would benefit population health and help to address health disparities among NHPs.

SB 2320 SD1 provides the necessary resources for an undergraduate program that can target the recruitment and retention of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students. HIPHI is in support of this measure and we respectfully ask you to pass this measure out of committee.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Trish'.

Trish La Chica
Policy and Advocacy Director