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March 14, 2021

TO: The Honorable Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **SCR 70/SR 52**-REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO
CONVENE A TASK FORCE TO PLAN THE CERTIFICATION AND TRAINING PROCESS
FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS TO HELP ADDRESS THE SOCIAL
DETERMINANTS OF POOR HEALTH THAT DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECT LOW-
INCOME, MINORITY POPULATIONS.

Hearing: March 16, 2021, 3:00 p.m.
Via Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services appreciates the intent of these resolutions and provides comments.

PURPOSE: These resolutions request the Department of Human Services to convene a task force to plan the certification and training process for community health workers to help address the social determinants of poor health that disproportionately affect low-income, minority populations.

DHS appreciates the work of community healthcare workers and supports the promotion of their use as they are an important service for rural communities or those who face language or cultural barriers and is a step toward addressing a more equitable delivery of health care services.

However, DHS is likely not the appropriate entity to lead such a task force as DHS does not provide programming or resources towards the curriculum, certification, or training of community healthcare workers.

However, we do suggest the entities that have current training or certificate programs, like the Department of Health, UH Community College System or Chaminade University, or other institutions of higher education be invited to participate as members, as well as groups that hire Community Healthcare workers, such as health plans, community health centers and/or other health systems.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to this committee.



**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Human Services
Tuesday, March 16, 2021; 3:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 225
Via Videoconference**

RE: SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 070/SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 052 -- REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO CONVENE A TASK FORCE TO PLAN THE CERTIFICATION AND TRAINING PROCESS FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS TO HELP ADDRESS THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF POOR HEALTH THAT DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECT LOW-INCOME, MINORITY POPULATIONS

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Ihara, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Primary Care Association (HPCA) is a 501(c)(3) organization established to advocate for, expand access to, and sustain high quality care through the statewide network of Community Health Centers throughout the State of Hawaii. The HPCA **SUPPORTS** Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 070 and Senate Resolution No. 052, and **proposes an amendment for your consideration.**

The Resolutions request the Department of Human Services to establish a Community Health Worker Certification Task Force (Task Force) to plan the certification and training process for community health workers, and ask the Task Force to report the status of the certification and training process to the 2022 Legislature.

By way of background, the HPCA represents Hawaii Federally-Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). FQHCs provide desperately needed medical services at the frontlines in rural and underserved communities. Long considered champions for creating a more sustainable, integrated, and wellness-oriented system of health, FQHCs provide a more efficient, more effective and more comprehensive system of healthcare.

Community Health Workers (CHWs) have long been active health care providers in rural and underprivileged communities throughout the State. However, because this profession is not licensed by the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, in accordance with Section 26H-6, Hawaii Revised Statutes, among others, their services are not reimbursable under private nor public insurance. This has greatly diminished the services that they can provide, especially in areas that are experiencing a critical lack of health care professionals to provide basic services for our citizens.

Testimony on Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 070/Senate Resolution No. 052
Tuesday, March 16, 2021; 3:00 p.m.
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The HPCA asserts that CHWs are well skilled professionals that can perform an array of essential services. However, because CHWs are geared to working in communities and areas that FQHCs are situated, and that in all likelihood, FQHCs will continue to be employing CHWs for their services, **we ask that a representative from the HPCA be added to the Task Force.** That way, the HPCA would be able to participate in the discussion moving forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Public Affairs and Policy Director Erik K. Abe at 536-8442, or eabe@hawaiiipca.net.