

STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
P. O. Box 3378  
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378  
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony COMMENTING on HB2544  
RELATING TO MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION.**

REP. DELLA BELATTI, CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HOMELESSNESS

Hearing Date: February 9, 2024

Room Number: 325

1 **Fiscal Implications:** Undetermined general fund appropriation amount required to implement.

2 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health (DOH) provides comments on HB2544  
3 regarding its feasibility, information on other regulatory tools to improve rural access, and  
4 refinements to the concept as drafted.

5 Current Status

6 Private sector airlines offer a number of roundtrip flights on a daily basis. Specifically, they  
7 operate three roundtrip flights per day from Lanai to Maui, eleven roundtrip flights from  
8 Molokai to Maui, four to five roundtrip flights from Lanai to Molokai, seven roundtrip flights  
9 from Lanai to Oahu, and ten roundtrip flights from Molokai to Oahu. These flights are available  
10 seven days a week, with more flights on holidays and weekends.

11 Many factors contribute to this bill's premise of inconsistent and undependable air transportation  
12 services that include last-minute changes, cancellations, and lengthy delays, such as  
13 maintenance, the weather, and market forces. This proposed pilot may only mitigate market  
14 forces, e.g., cancellation due to unsold seats, to an extent.

15 Feasibility

16 DOH has no experience or expertise with airline operations, and would require additional staff to  
17 implement, even if contracted out, due to the complexity of health insurance, airlines schedules

1 and policies, federal regulations, etc. An additional 2.0 FTE is requested: 1 x program specialist  
2 and 1 x accountant if DOH contacts the project out, and a total of 5.0 FTE if implemented by  
3 department staff.

4 It is uncertain what entity would respond to competitive procurement, such as a travel agency,  
5 case management agency, or an airline given the modest volume. An airline monetizing fallow  
6 aircraft is most likely but this amounts to a taxpayer subsidy to a for-profit private enterprise.

#### 7 Network Adequacy

8 A pilot program funded by general funds for medical transportation is a direct subsidy to health  
9 insurance company revenue at taxpayer expense. The proposal to “allow insurance companies to  
10 reserve and pay for seats” (page 2, line 11) is not necessary since health insurance companies  
11 may do this of their own accord. This inappropriately and inefficiently shifts the burden to  
12 assure access to healthcare to the State when there are existing legal standards for health  
13 insurance company network adequacy.

14 Hawaii Revised Statutes require that a “health carrier providing a network plan shall maintain a  
15 network that is sufficient in numbers and appropriate types of providers, including those that  
16 serve predominantly low-income, medically underserved individuals, to assure that all covered  
17 benefits will be accessible without unreasonable travel or delay...”

18 Although the project shall seek reimbursement from insurers, pilot project costs will not be  
19 recovered due to the lack of negotiated contracts and the nature of health insurance billing and  
20 will not create any new value that could otherwise be created under current circumstances.

21 It should be noted that Medicaid health plans already cover medically necessary transportation  
22 for individuals covered by Medicaid.

#### 23 Potential Remedies

24 Should the Legislature move forward with this concept, DOH recommends three concepts for  
25 consideration which may be implemented individually or in unison.

1 Concept #1 – Health plan requirement: Enact statute that requires contractors with the State for  
2 health insurance coverage, as a requirement of that contract or as specified in law, to establish  
3 and meet standards for timely off-island healthcare access for members in rural counties. The  
4 private sector may respond by enhancing rates for travelling providers or contracting with  
5 airlines for reserved seatings or flights, with medical appointment and flight arrangement  
6 coordinated by internal case management.

7 This is the least burdensome and resource-intensive option for the State of Hawaii, and leverages  
8 existing contractual relationships.

9 Concept #2 – State standby reservations: A variation of the pilot proposed in HB2544 is to enact  
10 statute to implement elements of Concept #1 but overseen by the State, which is to appropriate  
11 funds for a health plan, provider, or authorized third-party entity to book medical appointment-  
12 related flights through a specified corporate account with participating airlines for a minimum  
13 number of seats for a certain number of days per week. This requires competitive procurement.

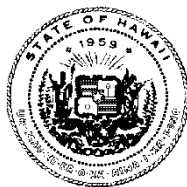
14 These seats are reserved for program participants and the airlines will be paid whether or not the  
15 seat is filled for that flight at a negotiated rate. Reservations may be made by the patient  
16 themselves, with a provider referral or health plan prior authorization, or coordinated by health  
17 plan case management staff.

18 This is the most burdensome regarding State funds already expended on health plan benefits, as  
19 well as civil servant FTE counts.

20 Concept #3 – Task force: Establish a task force via concurrent resolution to consist of health  
21 plans, airline representatives, and patient advocates to identify market-based and regulatory  
22 recommendations to address the shortcoming of commercial airline service to certain islands.

23 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



**CATHY BETTS**  
DIRECTOR  
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

**JOSEPH CAMPOS II**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

**TRISTA SPEER**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

**STATE OF HAWAII**  
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I  
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**  
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA  
Office of the Director  
P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

February 7, 2024

**TO:** The Honorable Representative Della Ay Belatti, Chair  
House Committee on Health and Homelessness

**FROM:** Cathy Betts, Director

**SUBJECT:** **HB 2544- RELATING TO MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION.**

Hearing: February 9, 2024, 8:30 a.m.  
Conference Room 329 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) provides comments on this measure.

**PURPOSE:** This measure establishes within the Department of Health a 2-year pilot project to charter flights from rural islands to an urban island to provide rural island residents with reliable transportation to medical care on urban islands and to transport medical service providers from an urban island to a rural island. Declares that the general fund appropriation will breach the expenditure ceiling. Appropriates funds. Declares that the appropriation exceeds the state general fund expenditure ceiling for 2024-2025.

For the committee's information, Medicaid health plans already cover medically necessary transportation for individuals covered by Medicaid.

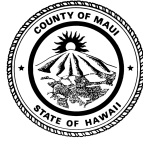
Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.

Council Chair  
Alice L. Lee

Vice-Chair  
Yuki Lei K. Sugimura

Presiding Officer Pro Tempore  
Tasha Kama

Councilmembers  
Tom Cook  
Gabe Johnson  
Tamara Paltin  
Keani N.W. Rawlins-Fernandez  
Shane M. Sinenci  
Nohelani U'u-Hodgins



Director of Council Services  
Traci N. T. Fujita, Esq.

Deputy Director of Council Services  
David M. Raatz, Jr., Esq.

## COUNTY COUNCIL

COUNTY OF MAUI  
200 S. HIGH STREET  
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793  
[www.MauiCounty.us](http://www.MauiCounty.us)

February 8, 2024

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HOMELESSNESS  
Rep. Della Au Belatti, Chair • Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES  
Rep. Lisa Marten, Chair • Rep. Terez Amato, Vice Chair  
Friday, February 9, 2024  
8:30 AM

### **SUBJECT: STRONG SUPPORT OF HB 2544, RELATING TO MEDICAL TRANSPORT**

Aloha e Chairs, Vice Chairs, and honorable committee members,

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in *strong support* of HB2544, which would establish a 2-year pilot project to charter flights from rural islands to an urban island to provide rural island residents with reliable transportation to medical care on urban islands and to transport medical service providers from an urban island to a rural island.

As stated within the bill, the Molokai and Lānaʻi communities have been plagued with inconsistent, undependable, and costly air transportation services, including frequent and last-minute flight changes, cancellations, lengthy delays, without any help from Mokulele with accommodations when this happens. Our community members are left on Oʻahu to figure out and pay for transportation and lodging on their own.

It has been a nightmare for so many of us. Our community members could submit thousands of horrifying stories illustrating our plight. I have attached an article from *Ka Wai Ola* that captures small part of it. Mahalo for your consideration of this measure to help our communities and for the opportunity to testify in *strong support* of HB2544.

Me ke aloha,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keani Rawlins-Fernandez".

Keani Rawlins-Fernandez  
Councilmember

cc: Fernandez-Akamine, Puanani. (2023, July 1). "Transportation Tribulation." *Ka Wai Ola*, 40(7), 16-18. <https://kawaiola.news/cover/transportation-tribulation/>

# TRANSPORTATION TRIBULATION

**POST-PANDEMIC, TRAVEL TO AND FROM MOLOKA'I HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY FRUSTRATING FOR RESIDENTS WITH JUST ONE AIRLINE SERVICING THE ISLAND AND NO OTHER TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS**

BY PUANANI FERNANDEZ-AKAMINE

**A**la Haliniak-Kali of Mana'e, Moloka'i, is expecting her third baby in late July.

Considered "higher risk" because she is over 35, Haliniak-Kali goes to a fetal diagnostics center in downtown Honolulu once a month to monitor her baby's development. It's just a 10-minute appointment but getting to O'ahu from Moloka'i and back home again is not always easy.

On more than one occasion, Haliniak-Kali has found herself stranded on O'ahu unable to get a flight home after her appointment. "It's because there's no more flights or no more seats." She said that her insurance provider, AlohaCare, does not always schedule her travel far enough in advance and seats on Mokulele Air, the only carrier currently serving Moloka'i, are limited and fill up quickly.

Haliniak-Kali described taking a 9:00 a.m. flight to Honolulu for a 2:45 p.m. appointment and then having to wait until 5:30 p.m. the following day to get on a flight home. "It's a struggle for me every month," she said.

Post-pandemic, travel to and from their island has become a serious pain point for Moloka'i residents. And at the center of the controversy is Mokulele Air.

Prior to the pandemic, Mokulele Air was one of three airlines serving Moloka'i. Founded in 1994 by Rebecca Kawehi Inaba, Mokulele is the first airline founded by a Native Hawaiian woman. She sold the airline in 2005 and over the next 14 years it navigated a series of agreements, owners and partnerships until February 2019 when it was acquired by Florida-based Southern Airways, one of America's leading commuter airlines.

The merger was completed in February 2020, a month



A crowd of Mokulele passengers wait to board their flight in Honolulu. Ongoing problems with flight delays, cancellations and limited capacity has vexed the Moloka'i community. Since the pandemic abated, Mokulele is the only airline still serving the island of Moloka'i. - Photo: Gayla Haliniak

prior to the worldwide COVID-19 lockdown. Four months later, Southern Airways announced the merger of Mokulele Air with competitor Makani Kai Air. The third carrier, 'Ohana by Hawaiian, halted its passenger service in early 2021 and ceased operations altogether in May 2021, citing "the severe decline in Neighbor Island

travel demand resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic."

As Hawai'i emerged from the pandemic and inter-island commuter traffic resumed, having just one airline to serve Moloka'i – when previously there were three – has been a difficult adjustment. For most residents, the affordability, availability and reliability of air travel to and from their island has become a major concern.

This is especially true for people, like Haliniak-Kali, who must travel to O'ahu or Maui for specialized medical appointments or treatment.

For residents, the need for reliable air service for medical care has never been greater. Late last year Moloka'i suffered the unexpected loss of two long-time resident physicians - Dr. Noa Emmett Aluli and Dr. William Kāneloa Thomas. Their passing, within months of one another, left 60% of Moloka'i residents without a primary care physician (see related story on page 15).

But trying to get doctors to Moloka'i – or get the residents to their doctors – is an ordeal made exponentially more difficult when air service is considered unreliable. Patients and doctors alike cite delayed or canceled flights as one of the biggest obstacles to getting Moloka'i people the medical care they need.

"A lot of our community members wait. I mean, dentist and doctor appointments – they wait months and months to even get these appointments. And then when they finally get it, their flight gets canceled, or delayed to where they miss their appointments. I've had it happen to my family," said community advocate Hawai'iloa Mowat.

In early May, Dr. Ka'ohimanu Akiona, a Hawai'i Island-based family physician opened a clinic on Moloka'i in an effort to help fill the void. And in the process, she has experienced first-hand the travel challenges that Moloka'i residents face.



“Every week I lose about four to six hours in delays, just sitting at airports,” Akiona said. Factoring in flight cancellations and delays, Akiona spends an estimated 10-12 hours traveling each week to maintain clinic hours on Moloka‘i from Monday to Wednesday, and clinic hours on Hawai‘i Island from Thursday to Saturday.

Currently, Mokulele only offers Moloka‘i travelers direct flights to/from Maui and O‘ahu.

For now, Akiona is willing to accept the inconveniences associated with traveling to Moloka‘i each week. Her greater concern, however, is the impact that the unreliability of flights to and from the island has had on some of her patients.

“They’re choosing not to take [off-island] appointments with specialists because it’s ‘humbug’ and they could potentially be stuck on another island.” Akiona said that one kupuna whom she tried to refer to an off-island specialist refused telling her, “Nah, that’s okay. More better I die maybe.”

“That really bothered me,” said Akiona. “Even if they’re kidding, somewhere in there is a grain of truth about how they feel.”

There are many anecdotes about residents getting stranded off-island for hours or even days.

Maui County Councilmember Keani Rawlins-Fernandez, who represents Moloka‘i, shared that recently her 7-year-old niece had to travel to O‘ahu for outpatient ear surgery. “She was traveling with my mom. Their return flight was at 2:00 p.m. [but] they were delayed until 10:00 that night. They waited at the O‘ahu terminal for eight hours! It started getting cold and because their flight was supposed to be at 2:00 they hadn’t packed jackets. And there’s no food at that terminal. Just vending machines.”

Rawlins-Fernandez, who commutes to Maui for work, says that in order to make a 9:00 a.m. meeting she normally flies to Maui the night before to avoid being late or missing her meeting entirely. “I don’t want to do that because it means I have less time to spend with my family [but] I can’t trust that Mokulele won’t change my flight time on me. But not everyone has that kind of



With just one airline serving Moloka‘i, some residents are using their own boats to get them and their families to Maui for work or medical appointments. - Photo: Gayla Haliniak

flexibility or opportunity to accommodate Mokulele’s unreliable schedule,” she added.

Mowat says that the airline’s customer communication could use improvement. He and others describe arriving at the airport only to learn that their flight has been canceled or rescheduled. Sometimes they get text messages or calls ahead of time. Sometimes they don’t.

Hawai‘i State Sen. Lynn Pualani DeCoite (who represents Hāna, East and Upcountry Maui, Moloka‘i and Lāna‘i) lives on Moloka‘i and commutes to O‘ahu. She has also experienced numerous airline delays and cancellations and shares the frustrations of her community.

During the 2023 legislative session DeCoite introduced a bill to create an airline subsidy program designed to provide \$1 million to airlines operating out of Moloka‘i and Lāna‘i. Although DeCoite’s Bill had support in the Senate, it was killed in the House.

DeCoite said that the bill was an effort to address complaints about high prices. “We were trying to offset the cost of airfare and [give] other airlines the opportunity to step into the market and provide competition and options for our residents.”

Although the bill died, DeCoite was able to get the Senate to pass a resolution urging the Department of Transportation to establish a working group to evaluate options to provide additional air service to remote and

underserved communities.

“I put the reso in because although it doesn’t have much teeth, I wanted to keep the conversation going for us to look at other options for transportation,” DeCoite said.

There is a perception that having just one airline serving Moloka‘i has created a monopoly for Mokulele with residents paying the price.

“Reliability is the biggest problem, but the salt in the wound really is the cost,” said Rawlins-Fernandez. “When you pay a lot you expect good quality in return, right? But we’re paying high prices for very low quality service.”

“I think the most immediate fix would be another airline for another option,” Mowat said. Competition just brings better prices. It brings better service, you know? Yes, it’ll take business away from Mokulele, but it’s also gonna take pressure off of them because they obviously don’t have enough working planes to service our island the way we need to be serviced.”

But Mokulele Air Chief of Staff Keith Sisson said there is not enough business on Moloka‘i for two airlines.

“Two airlines would mean that neither would be profitable. Mokulele is able to remain viable on Moloka‘i due to the volume of business, not the airfare that we charge. If passenger volume were to decrease we would need to raise fares to offset the revenue loss and we would be forced to reallocate assets (like aircraft) to other markets.”

Despite the desire of Moloka‘i residents for a second carrier to service their island, it is unlikely that will happen any time soon.

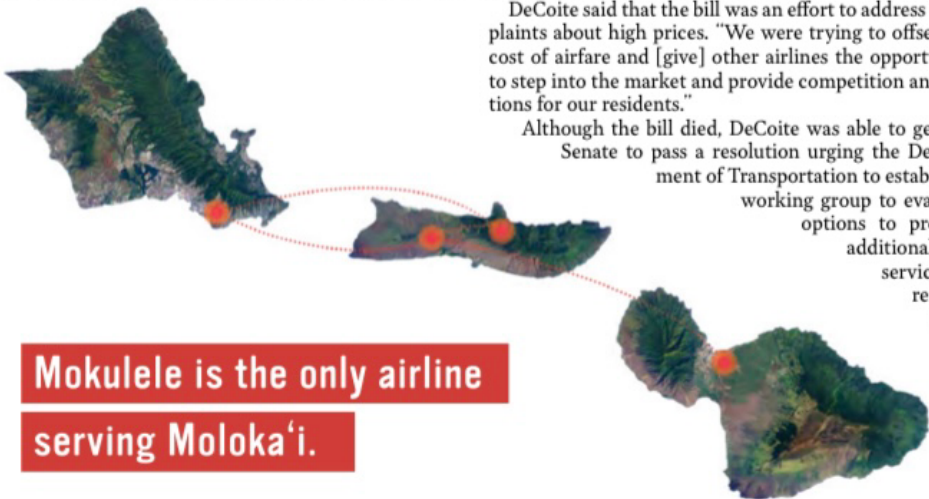
“I’ve reached out to just about every airline – Hawaiian, United, Delta, Alaska, Southwest – most of them responded that they don’t have [small enough] planes for the size of our runway,” DeCoite said. Several airline executives told her that the length of the runway at Moloka‘i Airport would need to be extended before they would consider servicing the island.

DeCoite added that Mokulele executives have told her that part of the problem is that they’ve been challenged to find and keep employees because their pilots and mechanics are being recruited to work at larger airlines offering higher salaries and signing bonuses. “And if it’s not that, it’s weather challenges or mechanical breakdowns.”

“With all the horror stories and the delays and cancellations, no matter what they tell the community nobody believes them already. We need consistency from Mokulele. And the consistency is not there.”

In response to criticism about Mokulele’s consistency and reliability, Sisson said the company has recently made considerable improvements. “One of the most impactful things that we have done is that we increased the ground time between flights and lengthened the flight time of each flight. This means if we get behind early in the day, we can get back on schedule. Even on our bad days, most of our flights operate on time. I think it takes quite a while for people to forget about a delayed flight that disrupted their plans.”

He also noted that, recently, all inter-island carriers





## TRANSPORTATION TRIBULATION

Continued from page 17



Passengers bound for Moloka'i board one of Mokulele's nine-seater Cessnas at the Honolulu Airport. - Photo: Mokulele Airlines

have experienced delays due to runway construction in Honolulu.

According to Sisson, Mokulele is investing in Moloka'i to keep fares stable and provide more seats during peak demand times. That includes adding planes to their original fleet of nine-passenger Cessnas. Two Saab 340 turboprop aircraft with capacity for 30-36 passengers have already been added and a third Saab is on schedule to arrive in late summer. In addition, the company has also acquired three 11-seat Tecnam P2012 Travellers that should arrive from Guåhan (Guam) sometime this month.

Although residents looked forward to Mokulele's acquisition of the larger Saab aircraft, there were several mechanical failures early on – including a frightening incident on May 2 when a Saab carrying the Moloka'i High School Robotics Team to O'ahu lost an engine mid-flight over the Ka'iwi Channel. Fortunately no one was injured but the event did not generate community confidence.

"I do see Mokulele trying to improve," Mowat said. "But when they said they brought in new airplanes, we found out that wasn't brand new airplanes, those are older airplanes. So that's why they're getting all these problems."

"They buy used planes. There's a risk whenever you buy a used car – are you buying a lemon? If you're not buying brand new, I would expect them to have a pretty reliable team of mechanics," Rawlins-Fernandez said.

Meanwhile, some Moloka'i commuters have simply given up on airplanes.

Kawika Pua'a lives on Moloka'i but works on Maui Monday through Friday, returning home to his 'ohana on the weekends. Last March, after too many delayed or canceled flights left him stranded, he started taking his boat to work.

"It was just really hard. I was either getting stuck on Maui and not able to come back home, or stuck at home and not able to go back to Maui for work."

It takes Pua'a about an hour to cross the Pailolo Channel to Maui, and gas costs him about \$250 for the roundtrip. "Roundtrip airfare on Mokulele costs about the same," he said. "Like for me, I would rather pay that \$250 for my fuel so I can go when I want to go, and get home when I want to get home."

Because his 'ohana and friends know he is traveling to Maui and back each week, they sometimes ask him for help if they can't get a flight off the island. "Friends and family are like, 'Hey, can we jump on? We need to get to a doctor's appointment and they're not flying out.' I'm just going to work, and people are jumping on [the boat] with me."

In an effort to give the people of Moloka'i another transportation option, the Maui County Council is considering a creative solution – the purchase of a ferry service.

Councilmember Gabe Johnson, who represents Lāna'i, is spearheading the county's acquisition of Expeditions, a ferry service currently providing transportation between Lāna'i and Maui.

"The council unanimously supported a feasibility study for the county to own Expeditions," explained Rawlins-Fernandez. "There's a federal grant [available] for small municipalities owning ferry services so we're going to explore that idea for the county to own Expeditions and expand the service to Moloka'i."

Rawlins-Fernandez is optimistic about the initiative, but cautions that it could take several years to complete the process since federal funding is involved. "When U.S. Rep. Jill Tokuda came to Moloka'i in May for her Town Hall, Councilmember Johnson spoke to her about the idea and she sounded supportive. If we can secure some federal funding I think there's support to move forward."

The current situation for those traveling to and from Moloka'i is not ideal, and the relationship between Mokulele Air and the Moloka'i community has been tested many times – and no doubt will continue to be tested. Still, despite their frustration, most people are realistic about the fact that Mokulele hasn't refused to service their island like other air carriers.

"It's a hard line to walk to criticize them, but at the same time, be grateful that they're even flying to Moloka'i. No one else is. Honestly, I don't know what government would do if Mokulele said, 'we're not going to fly to Moloka'i anymore.' What would happen? I don't know," Rawlins-Fernandez said.

"I think, as a community, Moloka'i, is super thankful that we still have airline service," reflected Mowat. "Because you know, if Mokulele Airlines disappears then what will we do? I gotta sometimes remind people, hey, you guys are paying good money. And this is a service. And these guys are making money off of our community, and so it's okay to bring up your gripes sometimes, so that things can get fixed." ■



Friday, February 9, 2024; 3:00 pm  
Conference Room 329 & Videoconference

**House Committee on Health and Homelessness**

To: Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

From: Michael Robinson  
Vice President, Government Relations & Community Affairs

Re: **Testimony in Support of HB 2544  
Relating To Medical Transportation**

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My name is Michael Robinson and I am the Vice President of Government Relations & Community Affairs at Hawai'i Pacific Health (HPH). Hawai'i Pacific Health is a not-for-profit health care system comprised of its four medical centers – Kapi'olani, Pali Momi, Straub and Wilcox and over 70 locations statewide with a mission of creating a healthier Hawai'i.

**I write in support of HB 2544** which establishes a 2-year pilot project within the Department of Health (DOH) to charter flights from rural islands to an urban island to provide rural inland residents with reliable air transportation to medical care on urban islands. The bill also proposes to transport medical service providers from an urban island to a rural island through chartered flights.

Receiving appropriate and timely medical treatment are key determinants of positive outcomes for patients. For residents living on the neighbor islands, access to care is hindered by the increasing shortage of doctors and other health care providers in those communities. The segmented nature of Hawai'i is another factor that impacts access to care. The reality remains that frequently neighbor island residents must fly to Oahu for treatment which is not available on their island.

Based on the challenges involved with air travel, chartering flights could be an idea worth considering.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



February 9, 2024

The Honorable Della Au Belatti, Chair  
The Honorable Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Health & Homelessness

The Honorable Lisa Marten, Chair  
The Honorable Terez Amato, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Human Services

Re: HB 2544 – Relating to Medical Transportation

Dear Chair Belatti, Chair Marten, Vice Chair Takenouchi, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committees:

Hawaii Medical Service Association (HMSA) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2544, which establishes within the Department of Health a 2-year pilot project to charter flights from rural islands to an urban island to provide rural island residents with reliable transportation to medical care on urban islands and to transport medical service providers from an urban island to a rural island.

Ensuring that our members in Molokai, Lanai, and neighbor islands have adequate access to healthcare is one of our top priorities. We appreciate the legislature's efforts to address this growing need across the state and look forward to participating with this project.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2544.

Sincerely,

Dawn Kurisu  
Assistant Vice President  
Community and Government Relations

To: The Honorable Della Au Belatti, Chair  
The Honorable Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Health & Homelessness

From: Paula Arcena, External Affairs Vice President  
Mike Nguyen, Public Policy Manager

Hearing: Friday, February 9, 2024, 8:30 AM, Conference Room 329

RE: **HB2544 Relating to Medical Transportation**

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AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of the intent of HB2544**. This measure establishes within the Department of Health the Essential Rural Medical Air Transport pilot project to provide residents in rural islands with increased access to medical care.

Founded in 1994 by Hawai'i's community health centers, AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan serving over 84,000 Medicaid and dual-eligible health plan members on all islands. Approximately 40 percent of our members are keiki. We are Hawai'i's only health plan exclusively dedicated to serving Medicaid and Medicaid-Medicare dually-eligible beneficiaries. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for access to quality, whole-person care for all.

AlohaCare is committed to improving access to care and strengthening the Medicaid program. As you may know, Medicaid enrollment in our State has grown by over 46% from 327,000 enrollees in March 2020 to 476,000 in January 2024. This tremendous growth has put a further strain on our State's already challenged provider capacity. The Hawai'i Physician Workforce Assessment Project Report<sup>1</sup> indicates that Hawai'i is in need of at least 750 doctors, with the greatest statewide shortage being in primary care specialties. The proportional need is greatest on the neighbor islands, with both Maui and Hawai'i County experiencing a physician shortage of 40%.

Hawai'i residents in rural and remote communities have long been accustomed to travelling to urban areas to access specialized care and routine treatment. Residents of Moloka'i and Lāna'i rely on air travel to access emergency and, oftentimes, routine medical care. Pregnant persons on Lāna'i must travel to give birth while those on Moloka'i can only deliver for low-risk pregnancies without an epidural.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ahec.hawaii.edu/workforce-page/>



Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the two airlines that used to serve Lānaʻi and Molokaʻi ceased operations, leaving residents with only one airline today. This remaining airline is a vital means for medical travel. However, it has experienced significant challenges and disruptions causing many residents to miss medical appointments.

AlohaCare provides medically necessary travel for our members. These challenges and disruptions have affected our members and providers. We have been actively engaged with the airline, our transportation coordination vendor, and legislators to proactively support a better solution and experience for our members and providers.

HB 2544 is an innovative proposal to test and evaluate a solution. While we support and appreciate the intent of the bill, we have operational and administrative questions on how this would work and how it would be funded for residents enrolled in the State's Medicaid program.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support of the intent of HB2544.**





**MOLOKA'I DRUGS, INC.**  
**EST. 1935**

February 7, 2024

**Testimony in SUPPORT for HB2554 – Relating to Medical Transportation**

Dear Chair Au Belatti, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee on Health & Homelessness:

As a *rural* healthcare provider, access to comprehensive, high-quality health care services is our mission at Moloka'i Drugs, Inc. On behalf of our employees and patients, I am testifying in favor of HB2554, which “establishes within the Department of Health a two-year pilot project to charter flights from rural islands to an urban island to provide rural island residents with reliable transportation to medical care on urban islands and to transport medical service providers from an urban island to a rural island.”

Every week, our pharmacy staff and I know and talk to Moloka'i residents who have missed cancer treatments, dental cleanings, occupational and/or physical therapy, surgeries, colonoscopies and other specialists' appointments due to the single air carrier cancelling or delaying flights. To plan for the stress of air transportation, hundreds of Moloka'i residents have made thousands of flights *the day before* a medical appointment to guarantee arrival before their sessions. This comes with the added financial burden for many Moloka'i families of car rentals, overnight stays in hotels, and additional meals and incidentals.

For many of our older residents, it is not one roundtrip flight, but, two roundtrip flights—one for the patient *and* one for his/her caregiver. Some of our patients also require portable, travel wheelchairs and rent or buy their durable medical equipment from Moloka'i Drugs.

The inconsistent air transportation has personally affected me for as a caregiver for my “hana'i” mother. This week, I am flying out on Thursday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, for her specialist appointment on Friday, February 9<sup>th</sup>. This medical appointment was made four weeks ago. Other medical appointments in 2023 and 2024 were made six months in advance. I have also cancelled five of her appointments due to cancelled flights.

Moloka'i is a medically underserved area. When our medical providers need to refer their patients, this access to healthcare is often provided by doctors on Maui, O'ahu, and Hawai'i Island. It is critical that we as taxpayers fund a two-year pilot to charter flights from the smaller islands to the larger islands with more medical resources. Therefore, we ask that you please vote in support of HB2554, which will help in increasing access to comprehensive, high-quality healthcare services for our rural residents with more reliable air transport. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Kimberly Mikami Svetin /s/*

Kimberly Mikami Svetin  
President  
Moloka'i Drugs, Inc.  
P.O. Box 558  
Kaunakakai, HI 96748  
Work 808-553-5790

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 6:11:05 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Doris Matsunaga	Indivisible Hawaii Healthcare Team	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

The Indivisible Hawaii Healthcare Team, most of whom are Neighbor Island residents fully supports this bill and the need to assure access to quality health care for all residents during an emergency. Mahalo.



## Hawaii Medical Association

1360 South Beretania Street, Suite 200 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96814  
Phone: 808.536.7702 • Fax: 808.528.2376 • hawaiimedicalassociation.org

### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HOMELESSNESS

Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Representative Lisa Marten, Chair  
Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair

Date: February 9, 2024  
From: Hawaii Medical Association  
Beth England MD, Chair- HMA Public Policy Committee

**RE HB 2544 Relating to Medical Transportation - Essential Rural Medical Air Transport Pilot Project; DOH; Charter Flights; Appropriation; General Fund Expenditure Ceiling Exceeded**

### **Position: Support**

This measure would establish within the Department of Health a 2-year pilot project to charter flights from rural islands to an urban island to provide rural island residents with reliable transportation to medical care on urban islands and to transport medical service providers from an urban island to a rural island.

Along with the natural beauty of our island state there are unique geographic and logistical challenges for our Hawaii patients to receive timely medical care, particularly in our rural areas. Reducing barriers to flight transportation between these areas and urban centers will allow patients to receive prompt quality medical care that they urgently need and reduce the stressful and costly burdens of air travel placed upon them.

We urge our lawmakers to support this measure that will improve healthcare access for rural and underserved communities of Hawaii.

Thank you for allowing the Hawaii Medical Association to testify on this issue.

Continued

### 2024 Hawaii Medical Association Officers

Elizabeth Ann Ignacio, MD, President • Nadine Tenn-Salle, MD, President Elect • Angela Pratt, MD, Immediate Past President  
Jerris Hedges, MD, Treasurer • Thomas Kosasa, MD, Secretary • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

### 2024 Hawaii Medical Association Public Policy Coordination Team

Beth England, MD, Chair  
Linda Rosehill, JD, Government Relations • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

REFERENCES, QUICK LINKS:

Hawaii Air Ambulance and Medical Escort Costs. <https://airambulance.com/locations-served/hawaii-air-ambulance/> Accessed Feb 7, 2024.

Consillio, K. Charges for Medevac Flights Soar in Hawaii. <https://www.hmpgloballearningnetwork.com/site/emsworld/news/12111684/charges-for-medevac-flights-soar-in-hawaii> Accessed Feb 7, 2024.

Hawaii residents complain of high prices for medevac flights. <https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/29981390/hawaii-residents-complain-of-high-prices-for-medevac-flights/> Accessed Feb 7, 2024.

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February 8, 2024

Honorable Della Au Belatti  
House Committee on Health and Homelessness, Chair  
415 South Beretania St., Room 420  
Honolulu, HI 96813

**TRANSMITTED BY ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION**

**RE: HB 2544 (Popoe)– SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Belatti:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) is the largest general aviation membership organization in the United States, representing 300,000 aircraft owners and pilots across the country and several hundred pilots and aircraft owners in Hawaii. We are pleased to offer our support for HB 2544, which seeks to create a pilot program for inter-island medical charters.

Hawaii's unique geography deserves unique methods when addressing critical needs such as healthcare and medical treatment. The aftermath of the Lahaina Fire showcased firsthand the value of airports and the ability of aviation to offer a critical lifeline in the wake of a natural disaster. During the wildfires in California, rural airports up and down the state were used to evacuate people and served as a hub for emergency equipment. In other rural areas across the country, the ability of aviation to serve this important need has shown to be of tremendous value to the communities they serve.

HB 2544 seeks to provide a similar benefit for the outer islands by creating a pilot program for rural island residents. In supporting this measure, I felt it important to highlight the work of Angel Flight West, which is an excellent example of how aviation and healthcare can work collaboratively to meet the transportation needs of rural residents. In the air, Angel Flight West links volunteer pilots and commercial airlines with people whose non-emergency health needs require long-distance travel to access care.

We hope you and your committee will look favorably on this measure and please do not hesitate to contact me to address any questions or concerns.

Respectfully,

  
**JARED YOSHIKI**  
*Western Pacific Regional Manager*

CC: Members, House Committee on Health and the Homeless  
Rep Mahina Poepoe

AIRCRAFT OWNERS AND PILOTS ASSOCIATION

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 5:02:25 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Bridget A. Mowat808	Kapaakea Hawaiian Homestead Association	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Bridget A Mowat and I live on the island of Molokai. I am also the President of Kapaakea Hawaiian Homestead Association. The majority of residents are Kupuna and their children and grandchildren. I am very concerned about the safety of Molokai our people. As you are aware, Molokai General Hospital does not provide emergency surgery, (no anesthesiologist), and is very limited in medical emergency care. All stroke or heart attack patients have to be sent to Oahu via air ambulance. Children with broken bones have to be flown out and this goes on and on. We are an underserved community with only one airline service and one air ambulance. Skin cancer treatment on the island is not available because there is no dermatologist on the island. I have to make appointments according to Mokulele's schedule which is often, very often rescheduled or canceled which does not sit well with the dermatologist. We need your support and we are in strong support of this pilot project. I wish you all well and I pray for your support to pass this measure.

Aloha and mahalo,

Bridget A Mowat

PO Box 31

Aloha my name is Austin Johnsen I am born and raised in Kapolei , Oahu. I am a constituent of Representative Garcia. Thank you for hearing my testimony as I am in favor of House Bill 2544. I have seen first hand the long delays to Molokai and Lanai from Honolulu and Kahului. This bill would be a great for the people of Lanai and Molokai to get to their medical appointments.

I have friends from Lanai and Molokai that travel to Oahu the day before their doctors appointment and rent a hotel room to ensure they make their appointment. After their appointment they would attempt to fly back to Lanai and Molokai and would need to stay another night because the flights are delayed to the next day. This is now costing 3 days of work to meet a basic health need.

In Lanai there has been over a dozen deaths potentially due to lack of access to health care. The medical needs must be the first priority. In 2022 after the only medevac provider in Hawaii self grounded after a horrific accident the governor sent the air national guard to medevac patients. Medevac flights are an enormous costs, my grand parents were often medevac'd from Hilo airport to Honolulu before they passed. If a medevac could have been prevented by routine doctors appointments this could potentially save patients thousands.

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 10:44:24 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Malia	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I'm writing and strong support of this bill. As a full-time resident of Molokai, myself, my partner, all my friends and family, and all of my community have suffered from the lack of reliable transportation off the island. I don't know of a single person on Molokai who has not been negatively affected by the lack of reliable flight timetables from Mokulele airlines.

While this is very disruptive for any type of travel, including work, attending conferences, education, attempting to commute for school, visiting family or friends off island, traveling to the mainland, etc., it is the most disruptive and life-threatening when it comes to access to medical care.

Two years ago I was disabled from a severe neck injury from a chiropractor. I was life-flighted off Molokai, completely incapacitated for almost a year, and had to stay on Oahu to reliably access ongoing pain therapies & medical care full-time. I was able to return to Molokai about a year later, but had to fly to Honolulu monthly for ongoing pain injections, monthly follow up with my neurologist & pain specialist, and ongoing diagnostic testings such as MRA, MRI, CT & neurograms.

Despite the seriousness of absolutely needing this care, I had more times than I can count (at least 10) where I had to cancel my diagnostic testing or follow-ups because my flights were cancelled, delayed for hours, or rescheduled. It got to the point where I would have to fly several days prior to my test. Due to my disability, waiting in the airport for hours for delayed flights was excruciatingly painful, as the injury caused me to lose the ability to hold my head up without severe pain. My mom or my partner would have to come with me, and we would make a little bed on the floor in the airport lobby with ice packs, put on my cervical collar, and try to make the best of it. However, this would often create relapses for me that would last weeks.

Had there been reliable air transportation, my family and myself would've been able to get my to my appointments & not miss essential diagnostic testing, pain injections, and specialist follow-ups.

I had a bad relapse earlier in 2023 and we decided it would just be simpler for me to stay on Oahu for several months to receive ongoing care, than try to fly back-and-forth due to the unreliability of flights and the risk of having to wait for hours in the airport for cancelled or rescheduled flights. I have the luxury of having family on Oahu to stay with, but many on Molokai who need medical care do not have this.



This charter is also essential for our providers. I have had multiple doctors unable to see me on Molokai who have been managing my case since I moved home as they are part-time doctors on Molokai, who fly over weekly from Oahu. Our medical providers on Oahu or Maui who commute to Molokai for work are dealing with the same canceled or severely delayed flights & the unreliability of airline timetables, which makes them miss essential appointments with the very population they are trying to show up and serve.

As you can imagine, this makes it hard for us as a community to retain good doctors and providers from off island. The organizations bringing them over still have to pay them, patients miss their appointments, and no doctor ready to serve a community wants to sit in an airport all day time and again, and have that unreliability be not a rare occurrence, but an almost expected one. It wears out even doctors with the best of intentions.

We also need this charter for our veterinary medical providers. The Humane Society funds a veterinarian to come to our community one to two times a month. She provides life-saving surgeries for cancer patients, first aid for injuries and spays and neuters. The last three times that she has tried to show up for surgery, her flights have been outright cancelled, or so delayed or rescheduled so late that she missed her surgery days. But the the nonprofit Humane Society still has to pay Dr, patients suffer or die, and Mokulele will not work with them to prioritize our vet, MDs, NDs, or any medical provider's flights. We would also likely be able to secure more extremely needed and Essential relief veterinarians if we had reliable flights for them.

Just last week we had a severe emergency with our 11 week old puppy that had we been able to see a veterinarian on island, would not have become an emergency. I booked our flight Thursday evening to Honolulu, only to get to the airport and learn that every flight to Honolulu was either going to be delayed 4 hours, or outright canceled, TBD. The woman next to me waiting had melanoma and was trying to get to Oahu in time for her appointment the next day. There was one flight left going to Maui. I was not going to be put on it, but held up the puppy, and the 4 inches of her colon protruding from her tiny body, and the good people at the front desk got me on that plane to Maui.

Were it not for that, I would've had to slowly watch our puppy die overnight. But if we had reliable flights for medical providers, we could get not only more human medical providers on-island, but also more relief veterinarians on Molokai who could've seen our puppy days prior, treated her, and prevented the severe illness from happening.

I also know of friends recovering From cancer who have missed essential chemotherapy and follow ups due to cancelled or rescheduled flights. And another friend on dialysis who can't go to Maui for follow-ups due to the extreme cost of the flights and their unreliability!

This medical charter is an important first step in getting reliable transport for our community. As you can imagine, it is also extremely frustrating to see loads of tourists getting on and off Mokulele flights at the airport, while those of us traveling for necessities such as medical care, work, education, funerals, helping family, or other needed travel sit there waiting. This is why we need a public option that prioritizes local residents in ways private companies are not designed or incentivized to do.

There is no other place in the United States that doesn't have some form of reliable public transport for difficult-to-access communities. Washington has a ferry system for those who live on their northern islands, to drive on & reliably access care in Seattle or Bellingham. Rural communities across the US have buses or trains. Ultimately, we need a public-private partnership to provide local residents with essential and reliable transportation, which prioritizes and serves our LOCAL community over tourists. Securing a medical charter for our medical care, as outlined in this bill and pilot program, is a very essential first step.

Mahalo,

Malia

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 6:50:25 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lu Ann Mahiki Lankford-Faborito	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strongly support, we live this daily having to scramble when flights are changed with the current carrier.

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 4:12:52 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
mary drayer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Molokai and Lanai kūpuna and others are at serious risk of health related problems without access to Maui and Oahu medical treatment...Please help them..mahalo nui,,



**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 5:31:45 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Doris Segal Matsunaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

As a resident of Hawai'i Island, this bill is critical to providing NI residents with timely access to quality health care. When the one medivac company was grounded after a crash, it made clear how vulnerable we are. Mahalo.

Doris Segal Matsunaga

Waimea, Hawai'i

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 6:00:28 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mary Dudoit	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am born and raised on Molokai. This is my home. I raise my children here, and now my children are raising their children here. I am a school teacher and am dedicated to serving the keiki of Molokai and our community.

As both a mother and a teacher, providing a safe environment for those I serve is an absolute priority to me. In my class, I do all I can to provide safety and reliability for my students. As a mom I do anything I can to ensure the well-being of my children. Why? --Because they are in my care and I want what's BEST for them. I want to see the grow and thrive! Likewise, I want our community to grow in health and well-being, and to thrive. However, in order for this to happen, the health and well-being (both physical and mental) of our community members MUST be prioritized. Our people need access to care and peace of mind knowing it is within our reach. Please pass this bill. The health and well-being of an entire community depends on it. I strongly support this bill. Mahalo.

Mary Dudoit

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 7:52:26 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Keoni Shizuma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

I stand in support of HB2544.

Having generations of family members living on Molokai, I've known of the need to fly between the islands for medical treatments and procedures, often flying to Oahu to visit with medical specialists.

I've also known of the lack of consistency of flying on Mokulele Airlines, which is famous for having long delays and sometimes canceled flights. I, and many others, have been victims of this. It is unacceptable for anyone who has an appointment, especially when their health is dependent on these appointments for medical treatments and procedures.

A chartered flight specific to those seeking medical care can possibly provide some consistency and availability for those in need of it, if it means that Molokai and Lanai residents have one less thing to worry about when it comes to their health, then it's the right thing to do.

I hope this bill passes and the pilot program is successful and provides the residents a little relief when it comes to their health.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Keoni Shizuma

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:22:21 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hokulani Alcon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha!

My name is Hokulani Alcon and am native of Molokai. First off, Mahalo for allowing the people of both Molokai and Lanai the opportunity to voice our support for this bill and share our reasons why this bill, **WHEN PASSED**, will alleviate a lot of headaches to our people.

I'm 42 years old and have medical issues that require me to see specialists on Oahu a few times a year. But compared to other patients on island, my case is less severe. Our island has a lot of patients who need cancer treatments weekly, We also have cases where our emergency room cannot provide crucial services to patients forcing them advise patients to fly to Oahu or Maui to get the help that they need. But how can our people do that when we only have one airline servicing us? And how can our patients get there in a timely manner when flights are cancelled or delayed? Also how can our patients afford to pay the ridiculous amount of money for a plane ticket, let alone other expenses should they need to go the day before to ensure their health is taken cared of?

I believe that Molokai and Lanai needs the help with this and many other problems that rural communities face. As Dr. Emmett Aluli said, "The health of the land is the health of the people is the health of the nation." But how can this happen when are people are stuck and stranded when it comes to their health. We are already burdened with having to pay for our health insurance and needed medical expenses and to put more burden on our health because we have to now hope and pray and cross our fingers that our flight is on time and not delayed or cancelled adds more stress on the body that it doesn't need. **WHEN YOU DO PASS** this bill and allow the rural communities of Molokai and Lanai to have medical chartered planes to take patients **AND** caregivers to and from our health appointments, I believe our physical and mental health will be managed a lot better. A guaranteed medical chartered plane will alleviate the stress on our bodies. A weight will be lifted off of our shoulders and allow us to focus on our wellbeing 100%.

Those of you who call Oahu, Maui, Kauai, Hawaii Island your home, please take the time to and put yourself in our shoes for a minute. You're a cancer patient needing to get to Oahu or Maui for treatment. Your reservations are made and you have confirmation to leave Molokai or Lanai the morning your treatment starts. You're at home the night before preparing when you get a text at 10:00pm from Mokulele Airlines stating your flight is delayed for 2 hours. They give you the option to call customer service to try to get another flight but you can't because you're supposed

to arrive at 7:30am and be at the hospital at 9:30am to start your chemo. So you call your doctor and they say they'll have to delay your treatment for another week because they can't fit you in. Do you know how much stress this patient is now in because of the delay? Now this patient has to reschedule his/her flight, reschedule their chemo treatment and hope and pray that their cancer stays in the state it is currently in and not spread.

These are the situations that we are faced with on a day to day basis. I cannot tell you the percentage of people at the airport on daily that are people trying to get to Oahu or Maui for their appointments. Some people even going the day before just to make sure they are able to make their appointment and not have to reschedule.

So please find it in your heart to pass this bill to give the people of Molokai and Lanai some sort of peace of mind to know that they will not need to worry about making to their appointments on time and get the much needed care that we need.

Mahalo!



**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:49:14 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Leimana Ritte-Camara	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Mai Kakou!

My name is Leimana Ritte-Camara born and raised on Molokai. I come from a family of 9 and are beloved members of our Molokai community. We lost our father last year May 17 2023. He had an emergency and we waited almost 5 hours for the emergency plane to come get him. He died one hour later in Oahu on the operating table after surgery was complete! His heart stopped. No one can say if he would have survived if he was picked up sooner. But this is our reality and what we have to deal with on molokai with not having emergency services available 24/7 !!! We loose loved ones with no explanations just that no pilot is available?!! Please consider supporting bill 2544 and help save our loved ones! Mahalo

Wednesday February 7, 2024

Written Testimony

**Health and Homelessness Committee**

To: Representative Della Au Bellati, Chair  
Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

From: Chelseamay Pupuhi, RN

Re: **Testimony is Support**  
**HB 2544-Relating to Medical Transportation**

My name is Chelseamay Pupuhi, RN. I am a registered nurse residing on the island of Moloka'i. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **strong support of HB 2544**, which would improve patient access to medical care for the rural and underserved island of Moloka'i. Being that the island is reliant on only one carrier, access to important medical and dental appointments are often missed or forced to be rescheduled to a later date. Some residents of Moloka'i have been having to make their flights one day ahead of time to ensure they are able to make their appointments which causes added expenses in regards to lodging and ground transportation. Adding a greater strain to the already soaring costs of the airfare alone. People are able to fly from Oahu to California for cheaper airfares than the residents of Moloka'i to Oahu which is less than 55 miles. The people of Moloka'i should be taken into consideration because we do not have the same access to care as the rest of the state. We have a sickly population already. Many of the residents of Moloka'i choose to forego their appointment in fear that the flights will be cancelled or rescheduled multiple times. It is very difficult to plan ahead of time with such an undependable airline. Some residents have missed their very important, life-saving chemotherapy treatments, cardiac and kidney procedures, etc.. This is not fair for the people of Moloka'i who deserve health equity. Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2544.

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 1:09:02 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Stefani Bush	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,i am submitting testimony in favor of charter flights for medical reasons for the island of Molokai. We are left here on MOLOKAI with only 1 airlines, which provides travel between MOLOKAI and Oahu and Maui. There are many postponed and cancelled flights, I'm sure mostly for safety reasons but the fact remains that for those of us ( esp us 65-70+ of age) we have missed many appointments and also procedures because of this. Imagine having a scheduled colonoscopy, so you prepare and drink the stuff and cleanse you bowels and the get the email that your flight is postponed long past the time of your scheduled procedure. Well this happened to my husband and it is so frustrating because now he doesn't even want to reschedule which could pose a health risk. That is just 1 example of the many cases here on MOLOKAI and so I humbly ask that you consider this and help us here on MOLOKAI to have an option.

Kealoha pü

Stefani Bush

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 5:22:43 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tina Schonely	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong support for this bill that requests reliable rural air medical transportation for Molokai. We, the people, deserve regular and reliable access to health care and medical services. What we have now, is an unreliable air carrier that raises our out of pocket expenses in an already high cost of living economy due to delayed and/or canceled appointments, and instilled fear that may an emergency situation occur, we may or may not have a way to access specialized care.

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 5:44:23 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Eric Korpi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Molokai and Lanai are in critical need of this service. The exorbitant cost and unreliability of airlines servicing these communities is causing physical harm to the people who live there.

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 7:29:40 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alexa VT Dudoit	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Ka Kou,

My name is Alexa vT Dudoit and my family and I live on Molokai. My family and I are in strong support of HB 2544. We have had to reschedule many doctors, dentists, and orthodontist appointments due to the cancellations, and delays of our current airlines.

It has become normalized that our medical and dentists accept the fact they have to understand our situation. It is so very frustrating for us to wait 2 months to get to our appointment with our providers and then to only have to reschedule it due to unforeseen air transportation issues.

This is such a great Bill, it's long overdue and we are in strong support. Please see that HB2544 passes for the overall health benefit of Molokai and Lanai residents and our Medical providers. Thank you to our representatives who have worked so hard to formalize and follow through on HB2544.

Sincerely,

Alexa VT Dudoit

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 6:08:24 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kilia Purdy-Avelino	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Kilia Purdy-Avelino. I am from Ho'olehua, Molokai. I am in strong support of HB2544 that would establish a 2-year pilot project to charter flights that would provide the needed transportation from rural islands and communities to urban communities for urgent health care. With only one, unreliable airlines on Moloka'i, our residents, many who are kupuna, are challenged with getting decent available flights to make their appointments off island, many times finding themselves having to cancel appointments due to a delayed or cancelled flight, OR, unable to schedule timely appointments due to no available seats. We need this resource for our island and other rural communities.

mahalo,

Kilia Purdy-Avelino



**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 8:01:09 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ruth Walters	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I have lived on Molokai for 48 years and am 77. I have rheumatoid arthritis and degenerative disk syndrome. I had spinal surgery in September of 2023 and have not been able to have surgical follow up or necessary treatment since then. I have tried over 20 times but have not been able to get reasonable flight arrangements. If you are old, in pain and have limited income it is not possible to fly under the current situation. The cost of overnighting and cab fare and food, let alone pain and discomfort make it impossible for me to attempt to see my doctors on Oahu because the current carrier has no moral obligations to adhere to their reservation schedules. I know I can successfully fly, attend my appointments and then fly home but I also know I cannot deal with the insecurities of the present airline. I have Post Mokulele Stress Syndrome and have been captive on Molokai now for a year and a half. This just cannot be right. Please allow qualified carriers to be legal and help me get to my doctors at Queens.

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 9:16:28 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Zhantell Lindo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha , My name is Zhantell Lindo and I am keiki o ka aina of Molokai. Mahalo for the opprotunity to testify in strong support of HB 2544.

I believe this is a positve stide forward in securing access to necessary health care for the residents and ohana of Molokai and other rural island communities. Molokai residents are forced to compete for already limited airlines seats, to get the health care they need. I belive that his bill will help to prove our need for long term, efficent solutions that address the challenges our rural island residents face in regards to medical travel.

Mahalo again for the oppportunity to support HB 2544. I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Zhantell Dudoit Lindo - Molokai

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 9:20:16 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
SONYA YUEN	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I wholeheartedly support this bill. Off-island medical care is very essential for our Molokai residents. I've heard of many stories and witnessed myself where flights were cancelled or delayed and the residents were not able to make their appointment. Many times, people need to wait months to get an appointment and when the person isn't able to make the appointment because of flight delays or cancellations, that is totally unacceptable. I can understand if it's a weather issue, but many times it's not weather related. Thank you for your consideration.

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 9:51:47 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
JewelMarie Paleka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support bill HB2544. Relative to the ferry system that is diverse in its passenger load; the air system however should be a chartered system specifically for medical purposes. Federal and insurance companies should also have a part of or a share in the footing/subsidizing of such a service; not just the State. Mahalo.

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 11:02:28 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Henry Lindo Jr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Henry Lindo Jr, I am an Assistant Chief with the Maui Fire Department as well as someone who currently lives on Molokai and commutes to and from Maui each and every week since March 2020 for work. I am submitting testimony in strong support of this bill to provide a pilot project to charter flights for rural residents which would provide reliable air transportation for access to adequate healthcare and medical services. I believe in the critical service it provides residents and see firsthand the hardships and limitations that a single airline especially when weather and mechanical failures occur which I've seen occurs every week. I am truly thankful for Mokulele and the service they have provided me and my family for work as well as medical appointments off island. I truly feel for the older residents and people who have no family or friends when travelling to their medical appointments and then get stuck there with no clue how long they will be on Oahu. Plus the facilities at the airports are inadequate to support these types of delays and people. Another thing that is against residents travelling to appointments is the constant scheduling and rescheduling and the unavailability to be rescheduled for appointments in a timely manner due to the effects of switched or cancelled flights. Anything that you can do to assist this problem would help immensely and support for this initiative is definitely a step in the right direction. I am truly thankful for all your support in so many legislative areas and know you are doing your very best to assist in solving the many issues our state currently has, with travel such as this one of the many. Mahalo for your time and consideration with this bill and I pray that you would fully support it!

Mahalo,

Henry Lindo

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 12:47:35 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Robin Kaye	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Much of our healthcare, especially any requiring specialists, must be sought on the island of O'ahu. Our current air carrier (Mokulele) has been consistently late and/or subject to short-notice cancellations. That unreliability calls for those of us, like my wife and I, living on Lānaʻi to book a flight the day ahead of any medical appointment, and then absorb the cost of a hotel stay so as to keep our appointment. HB2544 will help address this challenge. Please pass this bill.

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 12:50:50 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patty McCartney	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Kakou,

my name is patty mccartney and molokai is my home.

I am in favor of this bill. I believe that there is a working solution that can assist my community and getting medical air transport for necessary doctors appointments, specialty appointments. And procedures off of the island of Molokai

at this time, Molokai has one small airline, attempting to provide transportation services to and from the island of Molokai. The services also include all of our community that needs to go to honolulu to see their specialist to have a procedure at one of our hospitals or clinics, or to do follow up appointments after procedures. It can be extremely frustrating when your airline reservation is delayed,canceled and you don't know whether you're going to be able to make your medical appointment that day. Sometimes it takes months to be able to get a specific medical appointment. People are beginning to go to Honolulu a day early and pay for a hotel , just to make sure they're there in time for their specialty appointments

Often times people who are coming back to Molokai from appointments are unsure if the delayed or canceled flights will get them home on the day that they need to go home.

as part of a medical provider team here on the island of Molokai, I have quite a few stories, horror stories of patients who are dying, stuck in wheelchairs waiting to come home to Molokai waiting at the airport in hopes that they're delayed flight will leave at nine or 10 or 11 o'clock at night.

I have a story of a Kupuna who had emergency evacuation off of Molokai because of needed medical treatment. Kupuna was so debilitated that she could not climb back up the three steps, nor could she sit in a wheelchair to come back on the small plane to Molokai she had to spend 3 1/2 weeks in a rehabilitation hospital to strengthen herself to sit in a wheelchair to come home.she told me that she would never ever do that again and she will just stay here until she dies

I believe the Senate bill is a move in the right direction to find a solution for our medical transportation concerns that we have here for our Kupuna for Keiki,for a whole community.



Please consider voting yes and supporting our representative who loves and supports our community with solution focused plans.

thank you for your time and attention,

patty mccartney, bs, csac

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 12:58:42 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Greg Kahn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Greg Kahn, a resident of Molokai, and I wholeheartedly support HB2544. After having served---until recently terming out--- for 9 years (5 as President) on the Board of Directors of the Molokai Community Health Center, I can assure you that this bill is gravely needed by our community. The continuing deterioration of the lone airline servicing Molokai has created what I would characterize as a healthcare emergency on Molokai. MCHC is the only Federally Qualified Health Center on Molokai, providing service for most of the underserved patients on island. There have been days when almost 50% of our patients with appointments to receive treatment and/or see specialists in Honolulu or on Maui were unable to do so because Mokulele Airlines either delayed or cancelled their flights. This is a horrific situation in which to place our community.

HB2544 has been the only viable solution presented by a State Legislator since this problem began years ago. I look at access to affordable healthcare as a human right, and I look at this bill as a door opener to significantly chip away at a situation that is denying this right to our community.

Mahalo,

Greg Kahn, Molokai

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 1:04:23 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kim Markham	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

A few weeks ago I had a doctors appointment in Honolulu. Mokulele rescheduled my flight from Molokai to Honolulu 4 times on the day of my appointment! Stress! My husband had a checkup in Molokai for his Alzheimers last week but Dr. Barry's flight was cancelled so she didn't come to Molokai. Something needs to be done.

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 1:39:29 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Brandon Jones	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Brandon Jones, and this is my testimony in support of HB2544. I have been a resident of the island of Molokai for more than 20 years. During the covid pandemic, one of two airlines servicing the island could no longer operate and sold to their competitor, Mokulele Airlines. This has created a monopoly of passenger air service for the island. While I'm uncertain of the exact cause or causes, Mokulele Airlines has done a very poor job of reliably executing this critical service, regularly cancelling scheduled flights, bumping people from flights they have booked and constantly delaying flights. Of the last six flights I have recently taken, five of them ran on significant delay. In one case, I had a scheduled appointment with a corneal specialist on Oahu to discuss treatment for a potentially blinding eye condition. I booked my flight well in advance of the appointment, only to find out (while on the phone with them discussing another flight issue) they had rescheduled my flight to arrive after my appointment time. I was able to get them to move me to another earlier flight, only to have that flight time changed the morning of my appointment. In this case I was able to make it to the appointment, barely, but only after significant time and effort, not to mention stress, in sorting it out.

I have spoken with fixed income kupuna recently who told me they always book their flights a day ahead of doctor visits and spend the extra money they can't afford to stay in a hotel because Mokulele is so reliably unreliable. This means our kupuna are having to subsidize the inefficiency and/or incompetence of the only airline we have available.

On top of this, we rely on off island doctors and medical professionals who come to Molokai to serve the people here. I know of one case where a dentist quit his Molokai job because Mokulele was so unreliable and he couldn't make it to his appointments, or back home to Maui with any certainty. This means that medical care even on this island suffers.

Other inconveniences of the poor air service aside, there are serious risks to life and health when important medical appointments can't be made. Please make charter medical flights a priority.

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 1:57:00 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jenny Yagodich	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I write in **STRONG SUPPORT** for HB2544 to establish a pilot project to make chartered plane seats available to patients, medical insurers, and medical service providers to consistently and dependably transport residents of certain medically underserved rural communities.

Mahalo

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 2:00:55 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Vicki R. Belluomini	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair and members of the House Committee on Human Services,

I am testifying in support of HB2544. Our kupuna on Lanai and Molokai struggle to get adequate health care and regularly have to travel to Maui and Oahu for specialist care. This pilot project is a great way to reduce stress on kupuna and their caregivers so they no longer need to depend on unreliable transportation and can make it to important medical appointments. This will also be helpful to medical professionals so they can be on time to their scheduled appointments when traveling to the rural islands.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 2:14:10 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Judy Mertens	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha ... I am a kupuna who travels to Maui for Dr's appointments. I have several specialists I see yearly, and it's a struggle to make sure I can get there , make my appointment and return home on the same day. I have had to cancel several appointments because of delayed flights. I have two surgical appointments in late February and early March. I am hopeful I can make it in one day, but I wait with apprehension for the text that says my flight has been delayed or cancelled. I do not have family there whom I can stay with if delayed. It would be wonderful if we could get some help with our medical appointments. With much aloha, Judy Mertens



**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 2:41:31 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Roxanne Morita	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2544; and I hope you do also in order to provide services to our rural areas kupuna, pregnant mothers or just anyone requiring medical services without having to jump through the hoops of delayed and cancelled flights and months of waiting to even be able to go. Getting to healthcare should NOT be such an obstacle ever. Thank you for your consideration.

Roxanne K.Morita

Lanai City, HI

Aloha e Representative Mahina Poepoe,

Please stress the vital importance and medical necessity for both Molokai and Lānaʻi to have an airplane that serves the medical needs and or transports of patients, travel companions, caregivers, as well as medical doctors.

My podiatrist, Dr. Gary Pitt, flies to Molokai once a month for the general population. I, along with other podiatry patients, have missed much needed appointments due to his flights being moved, cancelled, and or delayed. And I am certain this has happened to other patients and or doctors/specialists.

Secondly, my life partner, Allia, suffers from a medical condition known as proctalgia. He is unable to sit up at all due to this condition. He experiences excruciating knife stabbing spasms in his rectum when any pressure is put by sitting. This condition is a result of hernia mesh complications. Allia has other medical necessities that are not available on Molokai. We have to request for a non emergency medical flight via the air ambulance to take us to specialists on Oʻahu. We get denied regularly and have to fight with the health insurance, causing great emotional distress, and more importantly putting off the much needed medical help my partner is waiting for and needs.

I have spoken with community members how to solve the dilemma of making sure you get to your doctors' appointments off island: majority of Molokai people will fly to Oʻahu the day before, rent a car and hotel, all on their own expense, just to guarantee getting to a crucial appointment. We do not have months to wait for a reschedule. We may be much sicker at that point, or even dead.

Please help advocate for our community that Molokai is an active part of Hawaiʻi and deserves equal access to health care and resources. We need a medical plane to be able to accommodate specialists, patients, including patients with special accommodations such as but not limited to: need to lay flat, pregnancy/delivery/homecoming, difficulty ambulating or fitting into regular flight seats etc.

I am also willing to sit on a planning committee regarding the medical plane and medical needs of our Molokai community

Please take this testimony to support HB2544.

Mahalo for your time, energy, and Aloha.  
Me ka mahalo a aloha haʻahaʻa,  
L.Henohea Linker  
808 213-4356

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 3:16:12 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
sally kaye	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Reliable air transportation to and from Lana`i and Molokai has vastly deteriorated over the past decade. Many Lana`i residents have been forced to obtain health care limited to what is available on Maui, upon reliance on the Expeditions ferry. With the devastation to Lahaina, even that mode of transportation has become curtailed, and some medical services are only available on Oahu. A service such as HB 2544 proposes is sorely needed for both Moloka`i and Lana`i residents.

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 3:34:21 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Cindy Manaois	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in total support of this bill.

I personally had my flight delyed and then cancelled to a doctor's appointment. This is the reason I usually go to my doctor's appointment a day early, which caused me to rent a room and a rental car. This can get very expensive.

Mahalo

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 3:54:26 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Charity Texeira Figuerres	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am in full support of bill HB2544, supporting the efforts to ensure that our community of Lana'i receive the proper medical care they need by providing the dedicated travel means to bring the services to the island! Thank you!

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 8:14:22 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Valerie Janikowski	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I am writing in support of HB2544 - living on Lanai is a choice but it also requires you to choose challenges in accessing healthcare due to travel challenges. People are delaying or avoiding needed healthcare treatments, screenings and/or procedures due to the likelihood of travel challenges and unwarranted expenses due to delays and/or flight changes jeopardizing arrival for scheduled appointment times.

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 9:31:42 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lauren Yun Cook Au	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Medical care is essential and people who live in rural areas should be able to access healthcare in a timely manner. Transportation to receive healthcare should not add additional stress to someone who is seeking essential healthcare.

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 10:08:06 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Courtney-Paige DiMaggio	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai Chair Bellati, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, and the Health & Homelessness Committee,

I am support of HB2544 Relating to Medical Transportation. I am a registered nurse who lives and works on Moloka'i. I have the privilege of serving the community that has helped to raise me. Although there may be goal is to provide accessible and equitable health to all, this goal is quite difficult to achieve on Moloka'i. Many of our residents require the need to travel to Oahu or Maui to seek specialty care as we lack specialty care providers on our island. Many of our residents, specfically those who are 18 years and younger, must also to travel to Oahu or Maui dentist appointments.

Depending on a single airline to provide access for all, has proven to inadequate and works against the goal of providing accessible and equitable health for residents of Moloka'i. The demand for seats on an airline has significantly increased due to having one airline servicing our island and with an increase in post COVID travel. Our residents who are traveling out of necessity for their health, are now competing for seats with those who are traveling for leisure.

All ages seek medical care off-island. We have pregnant women traveling to Oahu for appointments and to give birth. Mommies travel back to Moloka'i with their newborn babies. Patients traveling to receive cancer treatment is an arduous journey, even if the travel time from Moloka'i to Oahu is approximately 30 minutes. We are faced with placing kupuna in long term care facilities off island because Moloka'i has no long-term care beds and has only one community foster care home which is currently at capacity. Traveling is taxing and if there is a delay or cancellation of a flight, it is extremely difficult for some of our most vulnerable populations.

Mahalo for time and consideration.

Ke aloha no,

Courtney-Paige K. DiMaggio, RN, BSN



February 9, 2024

House Committee on Health and Homelessness

To: Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

From: Shirley Samonte, Resident of Lanai  
P.O. Box 631089  
Lanai City, HI 96763

Re: Testimony in Support of HB 2544  
Relating to Medical Transportation

As a resident of a medically underserved rural community, **I write in support of HB 2544.** I cannot express enough gratitude for the invaluable service that will be provided by dependable non-emergency medical transportation. For individuals like myself who require regular intravenous infusion treatments and frequent specialist visits, accessing quality healthcare can often feel like an insurmountable challenge due to limited local resources.

The introduction of chartered flights to seat patients, as well as healthcare providers, is going to be a game-changer. Not only will it ensure timely access to essential medical treatments and procedures, but it will also alleviate the stress and logistical burdens associated with traveling long distances for healthcare.

Having experienced firsthand the challenges of obtaining frequent necessary medical care not available on island, having chartered flights for patients will have a life-changing impact. No longer do I have to worry about missing appointments or compromising my health due to transportation limitations. Instead, I can focus on my well-being, knowing that I will have reliable support to get me to where I need to be.

Living in a rural area often means limited access to specialized healthcare services and providers. It is not uncommon for us to travel long distances to access essential medical treatments or consult with specialists. However, HB 2544 will revolutionize the way we access healthcare.

These flights not only ensure that residents have access to a broader range of healthcare services, but they also attract highly skilled medical professionals to our communities. Knowing that specialists are willing to travel to us speaks volumes about their dedication to providing quality care to all patients, regardless of geographic location.

Moreover, the convenience and efficiency of chartered flights significantly reduce the stress and logistical challenges associated with traveling for healthcare. Patients can now receive timely medical attention without enduring lengthy journeys or facing transportation barriers.

Furthermore, the provision of chartered flights underscores a commitment to inclusivity and equity in healthcare delivery. It recognizes the unique needs of rural communities and strives to bridge the gap between healthcare disparities.

In essence, dependable non-emergency medical transportation, including chartered flights, is not just a convenience—it's a lifeline for those of us living in medically underserved areas. It is a testament to the commitment of healthcare professionals and organizations to ensure equitable access to healthcare services for all, regardless of where we live. It represents hope, accessibility, and dignity in healthcare, as well as improved health outcomes. I am immensely grateful for this invaluable service and the positive impact it will have on our community's well-being.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**HB-2544**

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 7:32:48 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jill Mulholland	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Molokai residents have been inconvenienced and neglected medically due to the erratic cancellations of Mokulele flights for several years now. The promised changes to constant last minute flight cancellations and changes have not come, again and again...

The canceled flight will usually be rescheduled to a flight later than the original scheduled time and thus too late to arrive at the appointment the patient has waited, sometimes months, for.

There are also numerous health care providers that travel to Molokai that have had to reschedule constantly and in some cases have chosen not to serve Molokai anymore due to the constant rescheduling or flight cancellations Mokulele makes.

I cannot imagine there is any resident here that has not been affected by this in some way.

The stress of wondering if your flight will be canceled or changed, and if it is, of having to deal with the rescheduling of long awaited appointments is an added stress that is detrimental to the health of people who are already seeking medical care.

I personally have delayed several medical procedures due to high anxiety of canceled flight and possible stranding on Oahu.

HB2544 is a hopeful tourniquet to stem the consistent flood of traumatic health care delays that the Mokulele flight monopoly creates.

Mahalo Nui for supporting this important bill.