



**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Health
Monday, February 8, 2021; 1:00 p.m.
Via Videoconference**

RE: SENATE BILL NO. 1117, MAKING AN EMERGENCY APPROPRIATIONS TO THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR RELATING TO COVID-19 EXPENDITURES.

Chair Keohokalole, Vice Chair Baker, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Primary Care Association (HPCA) is a 501(c)(3) organization established to advocate for, expand access to, and sustain high quality care through the statewide network of Community Health Centers throughout the State of Hawaii. The HPCA **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill No. 1117, MAKING AN EMERGENCY APPROPRIATION TO THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR RELATING TO COVID-19 EXPENDITURES.

The bill, as received by your Committee, is part of the Administration's Package, and would appropriate \$20,000,000 in general funds for fiscal year 2020-2021, to be used as a contingency fund by the Office of the Governor to supplement the continuation of COVID-19 response related programs and activities.

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

Ever since COVID-19 hit Hawaii's shores, FQHCs have worked with our partner health care providers and the State Department of Health, the Counties of Hawaii, Kauai, and Maui, and the City and County of Honolulu to plan and implement the enormous task of immunizing Hawaii's citizens. The federal government has helped enormously by fast-tracking the vaccine and paying for the hundreds of millions of doses that will need to be distributed throughout our Nation. However, the federal government is not paying for the administrative costs of delivering this medication to citizens. This includes, among other things, the purchase of needles, syringes, personal protection equipment, as well as the time of health care professionals away from their normal duties to perform this added responsibility.

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Because these costs were not previously budgeted, the Administration has had to scramble to find resources within existing budgets to, among other things, start the immunizations of first responders and health care providers. That they had gotten us this far, the Administration should be commended for their creativity and willingness to work with the providers.

FQHCs have done our part as well. We have searched within our limited resources to make the plan work. This has forced us and our partner organizations to make sacrifices for the benefit of our patients and communities. We gladly do this but to continue these efforts, we will need help.

For these reasons, the HPCA urges your favorable consideration of this important measure.

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