



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
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**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB1157**  
**MAKING EMERGENCY APPROPRIATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF**  
**HEALTH RELATING TO COVID-19 EXPENDITURES.**

SENATOR JARRETT KEOHOKALOOLE, CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Hearing Date: February 8, 2021

Room Number: N/A

1 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health (DOH) supports this measure to assure  
2 sufficient resources to sustain and enhance the State's pandemic response. Critical factors  
3 continue to evolve and change over time, such as levels of federal support, medical and public  
4 health guidance, mutations of the virus, vaccine supply, and the beliefs and behaviors of  
5 community members. As a result, it is not possible at this time to provide an accurate estimate of  
6 how much more funds will be necessary to achieve the Recovery and New Normal impact levels  
7 in the State's Reopening Strategy.

8 DOH looks forward to this ongoing conversation with the Legislature and other key  
9 stakeholders.

10 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

11 **Offered Amendments:** N/A.

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

**RE: SENATE BILL NO. 1157, MAKING AN EMERGENCY APPROPRIATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH 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. 1157, MAKING AN EMERGENCY APPROPRIATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RELATING TO COVID-19 EXPENDITURES.

The bill, as received by your Committee, is part of the Administration's Package, and would appropriate \$28,000,000 in general funds for fiscal year 2020-2021, for statewide COVID-19 related medical surge staffing, and \$2,000,000 in general funds for fiscal year 2020-2021 for implementation and administration of vaccine and immunization plans and logistics.

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 Department of Health (DOH) has had to scramble to find resources within its existing budget to start the immunizations of first responders and health care providers. That they had gotten us this far, the DOH and 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.

This bill would appropriate funds for the previous fiscal year to offset the deficits experienced in other DOH programs that were caused by the decision to immunize our citizens.

For this reason, 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](mailto:eabe@hawaiiipca.net).