



## DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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1010 Richards Street, Room 118 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813  
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V) • Fax (808) 586-8129

April 6, 2022

### TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Senate Bill 2624, Senate Draft 2, House Draft 2 – Relating to Health

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports Senate Bill 2624, Senate Draft 2, House Draft 2, Relating to Health. The bill would require the Department of Health to implement a telehealth pilot project and publish an evaluation report on the telehealth pilot project outcomes.

Telehealth is a valuable option for people with disabilities. Telehealth appointments assist patients with mobility disabilities who may have transportation difficulties to attend in-person appointments. Patients with disabilities who have certain underlying conditions may be at a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 and will have an option to schedule telehealth appointments.

Please consider in the pilot project to track the number of requests for auxiliary aids/services and to determine whether the delivery of healthcare utilizing such services via telehealth was satisfactory.

DCAB supports the rural health care pilot project to assist Maui – Hana district, Molokai and Lanai residents.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRBY L. SHAW  
Executive Director



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Finance  
Wednesday, April 6, 2022 at 2:45 p.m.

By  
Jerris Hedges, MD  
Professor & Dean and  
Lee Buenconsejo-Lum, MD, FAAFP  
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs & DIO, UH JABSOM  
John A. Burns School of Medicine  
And  
Michael Bruno, PhD, Provost  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 2624 SD2 HD2 – RELATING TO HEALTH

Chair Luke, Vice Chair Yamashita, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT of SB 2624 SD2 HD2** which requires the Department of Health (DOH) to implement and administer a rural healthcare pilot project to provide physicians serving selected rural areas with an availability fee and reimbursement for certain expenses. The DOH must also submit a report on the outcomes of the pilot project.

The proposed telehealth pilot is welcome and sorely needed in rural and remote communities, as well as communities with little access to medical, mental health, and oral health services. According to the 2016 Hawai'i Primary Care Needs Assessment Data Book, most rural communities in O'ahu, as well as on the neighbor islands have higher percentages of populations receiving public assistance (health care covered by Quest or Medicaid FFS) compared to the State average. Per capita household income is lower and may contribute to the numerous transportation barriers seen in rural communities. Rural communities and underserved communities throughout Hawai'i have higher rates of obesity, heavy drinking, diabetes, and blood pressure compared to more affluent or urban communities. Death from heart disease, cancer, and stroke also tend to be higher in all neighbor islands, as well as rural O'ahu communities. Hospital admissions for substance-related disorders and mood disorders are also higher than Honolulu-county or statewide rates. In September 2021, a special issue of the Hawai'i Journal of Health and Social Welfare included reports on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health and social welfare of the people in Hawai'i. Many of the challenges noted across the state, as well as for Native Hawaiian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander populations, support the need for improved access, health, and digital literacy.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Buenconsejo-Lum LE, Qureshi K, et al. (2021). A report on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health and social welfare in the state of Hawai'i. *Hawai'i J Health Soc Welf.* 2021; 80(9 suppl 1): 12-23. The entire issue, including reports specific to each island and to NH, PI, Filipino groups can be downloaded at [https://hawaiijournalhealth.org/past\\_issues/80.09.suppl1.htm/](https://hawaiijournalhealth.org/past_issues/80.09.suppl1.htm/)

Many of the highest-risk patients reside in Medically Underserved Areas (MUA), are part of Medically Underserved Populations (MUP), or reside in federally-designated health professional shortage areas. Telehealth would benefit many in these communities. Elderly, as well as medically- and socially-complex patients often face transportation barriers and difficulty navigating our collective system of health care. These determinants of health, as well as social or cultural isolation can often impede seeking care or follow-up after a doctor's appointment or hospitalization. Being able to provide telehealth services at community health centers or in the home has tremendous potential for improving the health of patients, their families, as well as providing cost-savings to the entire health system by avoiding emergency department or hospitalization costs.

Telehealth to rural areas has been demonstrated to reduce hospital bed-days and hospital admissions in the VA population (Slabodkin, 2016)<sup>2</sup>. HI-EMA convened a working group, coordinated by the University of Hawai'i to conduct a statewide telemedicine needs assessment in May 2020<sup>3</sup>. Lessons from telehealth strategies implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic can help build better systems of care, including services that address many social determinants of health<sup>4</sup>. Additional successful telehealth pilots focusing on medically underserved areas with an FQHC or rural health clinic have the potential to improve patient follow-up post-hospitalization (and prevent additional emergency department or hospital visits), provide closer monitoring of patients who would most benefit from multi-disciplinary team-based care, especially if periodically coupled with home visits by trained nurses, community health workers, or physicians. Given the targeted rural areas proposed in SB 2624, partnering with the local health system(s) that have a network(s) of affiliated specialists and complex care management infrastructures will more rapidly provide care to the rural areas. This builds a coordinated telehealth provider network across the State.

Hawai'i's Medicaid and Quest plans pay for telehealth visits as a covered benefit under Act 226 (SLH, 2016) - including reimbursement for behavioral health, primary care, specialty care that is provided by physicians, advanced practice registered nurses, psychologists, mental health providers, dentists, and other oral health providers. In Hawai'i, telepsychiatry helps to address the mental health needs of children on most neighbor islands, as well as students in home- and school-based settings on the islands of Kaua'i, Maui, Moloka'i, and Lāna'i and O'ahu. Conditions treated in the schools, home, and in the Department of Health's mental health clinics include developmental disabilities and severe mental illness.

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<sup>2</sup> Slabodkin, G. (2016). VA expanding telehealth to meet growing needs of veterans. Health Data Management. Retrieved from <https://www.healthdatamanagement.com/news/va-expanding-telehealth-to-meet-growing-needs-of-veterans>.

<sup>3</sup> Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency State Emergency Support Function #8. (2020) Statewide Telemedicine Needs Assessment. Retrieved from <https://uhealthy.hawaii.edu/telemedicine-needs-assessment/>

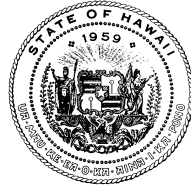
<sup>4</sup> <https://health.hawaii.gov/news/newsroom/department-of-health-to-bring-health-digital-navigators-and-telehealth-support-services-to-underserved-communities/>

Several clinical departments at JABSOM provide telehealth services to remote areas of Hawai'i and the US Pacific. We continue to partner with the Hawai'i State Department of Health in the development of the Hawai'i State Telehealth Plan and participate in the Telehealth Hui (coordinated by the UH Pacific Basin Telehealth Resource Center) and the Broadband Hui.

JABSOM, as part of the fabric of Hawai'i, looks forward to working with many partners in support of *Maika'i Loa: Attain Lasting Optimal Health for All* (ALOHA).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



ELIZABETH A. CHAR, M.D.  
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
STATE COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH  
P.O. Box 3378, Room 256  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96801-3378

WRITTEN  
TESTIMONY  
ONLY

HAWAII STATE COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH  
Testimony to the House Committee on Finance  
COMMENTING on S.B. 2624 S.D. 2 H.D.2  
RELATING TO HEALTH

Wednesday, April 6, 2022 at 2:45 p.m.

CHAIRPERSON  
Richard I. Ries Psy.D., M.S.Ed.

1<sup>st</sup> VICE CHAIRPERSON  
Tara Reed, BSW

2<sup>nd</sup> VICE CHAIRPERSON  
Katherine Aumer, Ph.D.

SECRETARY  
Eileen Lau-James, DVM

MEMBERS:

Antonino Beninato

Charlene "Naomi" Crozier

Jon Fujii

Heidi Ilyavi

Christopher Knightsbridge,  
MAIR, MACL

Beatrice "Kau'i" Martinez

Kathleen Rhoads Merriam, LCSW,  
CSAC

Jennifer Renfro

EX-OFFICIO:

Marian Tsuji,  
Deputy Director, Behavioral  
Health Administration

Chair Luke, Vice-Chair Yamashita and Members of the House Finance Committee:

In alignment with §334-10, HRS, the State Council on Mental Health (SCMH) is a 21-member Council responsible for advising, reviewing and monitoring the provision of mental health services statewide. SCMH members from diverse backgrounds serve as volunteers, collectively representing mental health service recipients, students and youth, parents and family members, providers, and state agencies including the Hawaii Department of Health, Department of Human Services, and the Judiciary.

The mission of the SCMH is to advocate for a Hawaii where all persons affected by mental illness can access treatment and support necessary to live a full life in the community of their choice.

The majority of SCMH members provide the following **COMMENTS** on this measure:

- Generally, we are supportive of using telehealth as an additional tool to communicate with people seeking health care services.
- Many who live in rural areas are dramatically underserved. We applaud this pilot project and the efforts to meet the health needs of those living in rural areas.
- As drafted, the inclusion of psychiatry as a behavioral health specialty (page 5, line 11) acknowledges our requested amendment from prior testimony.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you want to contact us in the future, please e-mail [DOH.SCMHChairperson@doh.hawaii.gov](mailto:DOH.SCMHChairperson@doh.hawaii.gov).

**SB-2624-HD-2**

Submitted on: 4/5/2022 11:11:48 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/6/2022 2:45:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Department of Health	Department of Health	Support	In Person

Comments:



**Written Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Finance  
Wednesday, April 6, 2022 at 2:45 p.m.**

**by  
Laura Reichhardt, MS, AGNP-C, APRN  
Director, Hawai'i State Center for Nursing  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

**Comments on SB 2624, SD2, HD2**

Chair Luke, Vice Chair Yamashita, and members of the House Committee on Finance, thank you for the opportunity for the Hawai'i State Center for Nursing to provide comments on SB 2624, SD2, HD2.

In Hawai'i, health care professionals are in high demand yet in low supply, particularly on the neighbor islands and in rural and underserved areas of our state. This includes all of Hawai'i and Kaua'i Counties as well as most of Maui County, including the Hāna district and the islands of Moloka'i and Lāna'i. Telehealth is an important tool to increase access to care for residents of these communities.

In its great wisdom, the Hawai'i State Legislature recognized by Act 169, SLH 2009, that Advance Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs), which include nurse practitioners, may serve as primary care providers, and by Act 110, SLH 2011, that all Hawai'i hospitals should allow APRNs to practice the full scope of practice allowed under the Hawai'i Nurse Practice Act and granted APRNs full prescriptive authority. The Center for Nursing (2021) finds that since 2011, Hawai'i has seen 75% increase in APRNs statewide with 30% of total APRNs residing on a neighbor island. In addition, 92% of nurse practitioners have been granted prescriptive authority. The Legislature also enabled APRNs to practice and be reimbursed for telehealth services through Act 159, SLH 2014. This law has enabled APRNs to broaden their reach and impact by providing telehealth services to people across the Hawaiian Islands.

We commend the State Legislature for identifying solutions to address access to care challenges in our state and pilot models that can innovate and accelerate healthcare delivery improvements. Thank you for providing opportunities to comment on this measure.

*The mission of the Hawai'i State Center for Nursing is that through collaborative partnerships, the Center provides accurate nursing workforce data for planning, disseminates nursing knowledge to support excellence in practice and leadership development; promotes a diverse workforce; and advocates for sound health policy to serve the changing health care needs of the people of Hawai'i.*

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR



CRAIG K. HIRAI  
DIRECTOR

GLORIA CHANG  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM  
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND  
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE**  
P.O. BOX 150  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE  
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND  
MANAGEMENT DIVISION  
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION  
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT (OFAM)

**WRITTEN ONLY**  
TESTIMONY BY CRAIG K. HIRAI  
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE  
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
ON  
SENATE BILL NO. 2624, S.D. 2, H.D. 2

**April 6, 2022**  
**2:45 p.m.**  
**Room 308 and Videoconference**

RELATING TO HEALTH

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

Senate Bill No. 2624, S.D. 2, H.D. 2, requires the Department of Health (DOH) to implement a telehealth pilot project; requires DOH to publish an evaluation report on telehealth pilot project outcomes; requires DOH to implement and administer a rural health care pilot project; requires DOH to contract with eligible physicians and hospitals for the rural health care pilot project; requires DOH to submit an evaluation report on rural health care pilot project outcomes to the Legislature; and appropriates unspecified amounts in general funds in FY 23 to DOH for the telehealth and rural health care pilot projects.

B&F notes that, with respect to the general fund appropriations in this bill, the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act requires that states receiving Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) II funds and Governor's Emergency Education Relief II funds must maintain state support for:



- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

Further, the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act requires that states receiving ARP ESSER funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

The U.S. Department of Education has issued rules governing how these maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements are to be administered. B&F will be working with the money committees of the Legislature to ensure that the State of Hawai'i complies with these ESSER MOE requirements.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



ELIZABETH A. CHAR, M.D.  
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

**STATE OF HAWAII**  
STATE COUNCIL  
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES  
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TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808)  
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April 6, 2022

The Honorable Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair House  
Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce The  
Thirty-First Legislature  
State Capitol  
State of Hawai'i  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Representative Luke and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: SB2624 SD2 HD2 Relating to Health

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities **SUPPORTS SB2624 SD1 HD2**, which requires the Department of Health to implement a telehealth pilot project and publish an evaluation report on the telehealth pilot project outcomes. Requires the Department to implement and administer a rural health care pilot project to provide physicians and nurse practitioners serving selected rural areas with an availability fee and reimbursements for certain expenses and submit to the legislature an evaluation report on the rural health care pilot project outcomes.

COVID has shown that our Intellectual and Developmental Disability (I/DD) community members must turn more and more to telehealth and Zoom-based services. COVID proved that many individuals within our I/DD community are part of a high-risk group that needed to rely on staying at home and using telehealth services more so than the average citizen. Many of our I/DD community members live in rural areas of our state and struggle to find doctors willing to take them on as patients due to the high demand for doctors and low accessibility of these rural areas. Many of our individuals cannot travel out of their rural areas easily and rely heavily on telehealth services for all of their health needs. The Council supports this measure for the pilot project that seeks to incentivize doctors to serve our state's rural areas and underserved populations via telehealth.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of SB2624 SD2 HD1. HD2**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daintry Bartoldus".

Daintry Bartoldus  
Executive Administrator



## **SB2624 SD2 HD2 Telehealth Pilot Project**

### COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Rep. Sylvia Luke, Chair

Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Vice Chair

Wednesday, Apr 6, 2022: 2:45 : Videoconference

## **Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition supports SB2624 SD2 HD2:**

*ALOHA CHAIR, VICE CHAIR AND DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE MEMBERS. My name is Alan Johnson. I am the current chair of the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition (HSAC), a statewide organization for substance use disorder and co-occurring mental health disorder treatment and prevention agencies.*

## **A pilot Telehealth project makes sense because:**

**With access to Telehealth, rural communities, elderly, and highly chronic patients** with mobility issues could use telehealth to get the care they need without delays due to time, money and opportunity.

- **Having broadband is essential** because when a community doesn't have access to broadband, local healthcare providers will be less likely to adopt telehealth in the first place.

While telehealth doesn't replace the efficacy of face to face, especially for those who have more chronic conditions, it **certainly allows us to treat more people who need services** that otherwise would not have access to services.

**U.S. Congress has recently stated that preliminary evaluations have demonstrated that telehealth practices does save money and improves care,** especially for the elderly and behavioral health, as well as specialty care/primary care checkups. People with chronic conditions who have limited access to care need follow-up Telehealth and if not available, telephonic care to prevent ER and hospital care.

In many cases, it's a **more efficient use of time** for those care givers and patients who could benefit well from the use of Telehealth.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and are available for questions.



**Testimony to the House Committee on Finance  
Wednesday, April 6, 2022; 2:45 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 308  
Via Videoconference**

**RE: SENATE BILL NO. 2624, HOUSE DRAFT 2, RELATING TO HEALTH.**

Chair Johanson, Vice Chair Kitagawa, 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 offers **COMMENTS** on Senate Bill No. 2624, House Draft 1, RELATING TO HEALTH.

By way of background, the HPCA represents Hawaii's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). FQHCs provide desperately needed medical services at the frontlines to over 150,000 patients each year who live 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.

This bill, as received by your Committee, would establish the Telehealth and Rural Healthcare Pilot Project (Project), and appropriate an unspecified amount of general funds for fiscal year 2022-2023 for the Project.

The bill would take effect on July 1, 2050.

At the outset, the HPCA has consistently supported any and all efforts to expand telehealth in the State. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how important this mode of communication has been to ensure that our citizens receive essential primary care services when the circumstances prevent or restrict access to face-to-face interaction with health care professionals. While the HPCA supports measures that would expand access to telehealth in rural communities, we have serious concerns about this bill as it is presently written.

**Testimony on Senate Bill No. 2624, House Draft 2**  
**Wednesday, April 6, 2022; 2:45 p.m.**  
**Page 2**

As we see it, the largest barrier to telehealth expansion has been the lack of broadband service in rural and isolated communities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of broadband coverage has forced many of our patients to have to rely on land-based telephone communication as their only link to primary care.

The HPCA asserts that the best care is local care that is fully integrated with specialists. **It would be a serious disservice to patients and entire communities if a program that is intended to attract service providers to underserved communities ultimately leads to the diminishment of services to those same patients and communities.**

The HPCA continues to work with the Department of Health to ensure that telehealth services currently being provided by FQHCs are not irreparably harmed by the Program proposed by this bill. It is our hope that sufficient safeguards can be placed within the bill to ensure that intended goals may be met without any negative ramifications.

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).

## TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF HAWAII PSYCHIATRIC MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

To: Chair Sylvia Luke, Vice Chair Kyle Yamashita  
Members of the House Committee on Finance

From: Dr. Denis Mee-Lee, Chair, Legislative Committee, Hawaii Psychiatric Medical Association

Time: 2:45 p.m., April 6, 2022

Re: SB 2624 SD2 HD2 RELATING TO HEALTH

Position: **SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Luke , Vice-Chair Yamashita and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

The Hawaii Psychiatric Medical Association (HPMA) appreciates this opportunity to testify in support of SB 2624 SD2 HD2, Relating to Health. This bill requires the department of health to implement a telehealth pilot project and publish an evaluation report on the telehealth pilot project outcomes.

HPMA represents between 100 and 200 Physicians, who, after four years of medical school, receive a minimum of four (4) additional years of specialty training in Psychiatry.

Telemedicine in psychiatry, using video conferencing, is a validated and effective practice of medicine that increases access to care. The American Psychiatric Association and the Hawaii Psychiatric Medical Association support the use of telemedicine as a legitimate component of a mental health delivery system to the extent that its use is for the benefit of the patient, protects patient autonomy, confidentiality, and privacy; and when used consistent with APA policies on medical ethics and applicable governing law.

As this measure advances, **respectfully requesting consideration that HPMA be named as a participant in the telehealth project.**

Thank you for allowing HPMA the opportunity to testify on this important measure.



## THE QUEEN'S HEALTH SYSTEMS

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To: The Honorable Sylvia Luke, Chair  
The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Vice Chair  
Members, House Committee on Finance

From: Jacce Mikulanec, Director, Government Relations, The Queen's Health Systems

Date: April 6, 2022

Re: Support for SB 2624 SD2 HD2 – Relating to Health

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The Queen's Health Systems (Queen's) is a nonprofit corporation that provides expanded health care capabilities to the people of Hawai'i and the Pacific Basin. Since the founding of the first Queen's hospital in 1859 by Queen Emma and King Kamehameha IV, it has been our mission to provide quality health care services in perpetuity for Native Hawaiians and all of the people of Hawai'i. Over the years, the organization has grown to four hospitals, and more than 1,500 affiliated physicians and providers statewide. As the preeminent health care system in Hawai'i, Queen's strives to provide superior patient care that is constantly advancing through education and research.

Queen's appreciates the opportunity to support the intent of SB 2624 SD2 HD2, which requires the Department of Health to implement and report upon a telehealth pilot project and requires the Department of Health to implement and administer a rural healthcare pilot project to provide physicians and nurse practitioners serving selected rural areas with an availability fee and reimbursements for certain expenses. We appreciate and support the intent of this measure to examine the effectiveness of telemedicine for delivering needed medical services to Hawai'i's rural and neighbor island communities.

Queen's provides a number of telemedicine specialties in areas such as, but not limited to, stroke and neurology, psychiatry, wound care, and critical care. Telehealth programs assist with connecting our four hospitals across the state and allow our health care professionals to provide care to patients in their local communities. Since the start of the COVID19 pandemic, Queen's has made substantial investments in shifting to telehealth as a modality for providing quality care for patients – including those requiring behavioral health services.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 2624 SD2 HD2.

*The mission of The Queen's Health Systems is to fulfill the intent of Queen Emma and King Kamehameha IV to provide in perpetuity quality health care services to improve the well-being of Native Hawaiians and all of the people of Hawai'i.*



**HAWAII MEDICAL ASSOCIATION**

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www.hawaiimedicalassociation.org

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair

Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Vice Chair

Date: April 6th, 2022

From: Hawaii Medical Association

Elizabeth England MD, Vice Chair, HMA Legislative Committee

William Scruggs MD, Member, HMA Legislative Committee

Elizabeth Ann Ignacio MD, Chair, HMA Legislative Committee

**Re: SB2624 SD2 HD2, Relating to Health**

**Position: Support**

To allow for safer and easier patient-provider interactions during COVID-19, there was a dramatic increase in telehealth. Telehealth has provided an alternative method of care that is associated with reduced costs and improved health outcomes when used appropriately<sup>1,2</sup>. These services provide an invaluable means for marginalized populations to receive the healthcare they need. Patients who are elderly, have public insurance, are of Asian, African-American, or Hispanic heritage, and/or of a lower socioeconomic status were more likely to use audio-only communication for medical appointments<sup>3</sup>.

While it is imperative that we work to address the complex socioeconomic factors that lead to health disparities, further research into providing an accessible means for disadvantaged populations to receive care is a step in the right direction. There are legitimate concerns regarding the quality of care delivered via telehealth as well as the potential to paradoxically increase health inequity<sup>4,5</sup>. Due to the potential variance in outcomes, research with objective evidence is needed to ensure that telehealth achieves the goal of improving access to quality care.

Thank you for allowing Hawaii Medical Association to testify in support of this measure.

**HMA OFFICERS**

President – Angela Pratt, MD President-Elect – Elizabeth Ann Ignacio, MD  
Immediate Past President – Michael Champion, MD Treasurer – Nadine Tenn Salle, MD  
Secretary – Thomas Kosasa, MD Executive Director – Marc Alexander





## HAWAII MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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[www.hawaiimedicalassociation.org](http://www.hawaiimedicalassociation.org)

## REFERENCES

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2. DeNicola N, Grossman D, Marko K, Sonalkar S, Butler Tobah YS, Ganju N, Witkop CT, Henderson JT, Butler JL, Lowery C. Telehealth Interventions to Improve Obstetric and Gynecologic Health Outcomes: A Systematic Review. *Obstet Gynecol*. 2020 Feb;135(2):371-382. doi: 10.1097/AOG.0000000000003646. PMID: 31977782; PMCID: PMC7012339.
3. Hsiao, V., Chandereng, T., Lankton, R. L., Huebner, J. A., Baltus, J. J., Flood, G. E., Dean, S. M., Tevaarwerk, A. J., & Schneider, D. F. (2021). Disparities in Telemedicine Access: A Cross-Sectional Study of a Newly Established Infrastructure during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Applied Clinical Informatics*, 12(03), 445–458. <https://doi.org/10.1055/s-0041-1730026>
4. *The digital divide: How COVID-19's telemedicine expansion could ...* (n.d.). Retrieved March 21, 2022, from [https://www.jaad.org/article/S0190-9622\(20\)32212-X/fulltext](https://www.jaad.org/article/S0190-9622(20)32212-X/fulltext).
5. *Telemedicine Outpatient Cardiovascular Care During the COVID-19 ...* (n.d.). Retrieved March 21, 2022, from <https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/CIRCULATIONAHA.120.048185>.
6. *Beyond the COVID Pandemic, Telemedicine, and Health Care ...* (n.d.). Retrieved March 21, 2022, from <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/abs/10.1089/tmj.2020.0328>.

## HMA OFFICERS

President – Angela Pratt, MD President-Elect – Elizabeth Ann Ignacio, MD  
Immediate Past President – Michael Champion, MD Treasurer – Nadine Tenn Salle, MD  
Secretary – Thomas Kosasa, MD Executive Director – Marc Alexander



April 6, 2022

Testimony to the House Committee on Finance  
Wednesday, April 6, 2022  
Conference Room 308  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street  
Via Videoconference

**RE: SENATE BILL NO. 2624 SD2, HD2, RELATING TO HEALTH**

Dear Chair Luke, Vice Chair Yamashita, and Members of the Committee:

Molokai Ohana Health Care, Inc., dba Molokai Community Health Center (MCHC) is the only Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) located on Molokai and one of four FQHC's in Maui County. MCHC provides primary care, dental services, mental health services, and care enabling services to patients on Molokai, regardless of their ability to pay for such services. MCHC is in **SUPPORT of and offers COMMENTS on Senate Bill 2624, Senate Draft 2, House Draft 2, Relating to Health.**

This bill requires the department of health to implement a telehealth pilot project and publish an evaluation report on the telehealth pilot project outcomes. Requires the department to implement and administer a rural health care pilot project to provide physicians and nurse practitioners serving selected rural areas with an availability fee and reimbursement for certain expenses and submit to the legislature an evaluation report on the rural health care pilot project outcomes, with an appropriation of funds to support the pilot projects.

Molokai is a rural and medically underserved area. We experience firsthand how the lack of an adequate supply of competent and trained health care professionals in the State has exacerbated the cost and demands we face in providing essential care for patients and requires Providers to work innovatively to ensure access to care. MCHC has leveraged the advancements of technology to help bridge this gap via Telehealth services consistently over the last five years to create greater access to mental health services on Molokai. In 2020, the pandemic required that we extend the same technology and program design into our primary care services, where within three weeks of program launch during the State lockdown period, 30% medical visits were being recouped via telehealth.

Today, MCHC is working to expand our telehealth services to specialty care appointments to be made available in clinic and via our Mobile Medical clinic for our

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to the people of Molokai with respect and aloha.  
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most rural and broadband deficient areas of the community, thereby making both the equipment, care team support, and broadband infrastructure readily available for such telehealth access.

Because of this, we want to thank the introducer, Senator Lynn DeCoite, for initiating this very important proposal to both support and expand access to telehealth services and mitigate workforce challenges faced by our district at large.

***MCHC is committed to assisting this endeavor together with the Department of Health to ensure that the program proposed is a long-term benefit to the community that helps to build upon and integrates with existing, local healthcare provider resources and does not diminish existing health resources.***

For these reasons, MCHC supports SB2624, SD2, HD2 and **respectfully asks that this measure be approved with amendments proposed by the Department of Health.**

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at [hkekalia@molokaichc.org](mailto:hkekalia@molokaichc.org) or 808-660-2630.

Very Truly Yours,

Helen Kekalia Wescoatt  
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Senator Lynn DeCoite

**SB-2624-HD-2**

Submitted on: 4/5/2022 5:28:33 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/6/2022 2:45:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Rosie F Davis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha

I support SB 2524,

Mahalo nui Rosie