



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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Testimony COMMENTING on SB2751
RELATING TO HEALTH.

SENATOR JARRETT KEOHOKALOLE, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Hearing Date: February 3, 2022

Room Number: Videoconference

- 1 **Fiscal Implications:** Unspecified general fund appropriation.
- 2 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health (DOH) supports the intent of this measure
3 but advises that this draft may have unintended consequences, including duplication of effort and
4 competition for the same resources.
- 5 DOH is currently working with the University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine
6 (JABSOM) on the [Hawaii State Loan Repayment Program](#) (HSLRP) that leverages matching
7 federal funds. DOH respectfully recommends that JABSOM continue to provide leadership for
8 the existing HSLRP, and we defer to their testimony, in particular their need for matching funds
9 next fiscal year.
- 10 The Hawaii Health Corps Program (HHCP)/Hawaii Rural Health Care Provider Loan
11 Repayment Program was enacted as Act 187, SLH 2012 but was never funded. The same year,
12 JABSOM was awarded a grant from the US Health Resources & Services Administration for the
13 HSLRP, a successful program that is still active today. Although similar in purpose and goals,
14 HSLRP has been active with proven results under JABSOM's leadership:
- 15 • A total of 64 recipients have received loan repayment since 2012
 - 16 ○ 55 of these through the federal program

- 1 ○ The other recipients are solo/small practice loan repayment recipients who
2 received state and private funding (no federal funding but administered in the
3 same way).
- 4 • The number of active contracts is 25.
 - 5 • Of the 36 (58%) past SLRP ‘graduates’ to date, 21 are still working in the sites where
6 they performed their loan repayment commitment
 - 7 • Psychologists and social workers are currently eligible and have received program
8 moneys for years
 - 9 • 26 (72%) of program graduates are working in areas of need in Hawaii.
10 ○ This is superior to National Health Service Corps that reports 25% retention.
 - 11 • Over half of the current HSLRP recipients are teaching students and all HSLRP
12 recipients have been offered continuing education and mentoring.
- 13 DOH is already a partner on HSLRP with several other entities, and no value would be created
14 by shifting any loan repayment program to DOH.
- 15 Thank you for the opportunity to testify
- 16 **Offered Amendments:** N/A.
- 17



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Health
Friday, February 4, 2022 at 1:00 p.m.

By

Jerris Hedges, MD, Dean And
Kelley Withy, MD, Professor, Department of Family Medicine and Community Health,
Hawai'i/Pacific Basin Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Director
John A. Burns School of Medicine
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and
Michael Bruno, PhD
Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 2751 – RELATING TO HEALTH

Chair Keohokalole, Vice Chair Baker, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today. The John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) supports the concept outlined in SB 2751 of creating more opportunities for bringing health care providers to underserved areas of Hawai'i. The Educational Loan Repayment Program is a proven method of addressing Hawaii's health care shortage by supporting recruitment and retention of providers for medically underserved areas.

We are concerned regarding the impact which a second loan repayment program would have on the State Loan Repayment Program administered by JABSOM and the matching funds it receives from the State. Another bill (SB2597) introduced this session, requests state funds to match the federal grant money received through JABSOM's loan repayment program. The program administered by JABSOM covers many health care providers, including psychologists and social workers.

JABSOM has successfully administered the Hawai'i State Loan Repayment program since 2012. The program is underwritten by a federal grant through the National Health Service Corps which matches, dollar-for-dollar, the state funds JABSOM receives from the state. In the past several years, we have engaged in partnership with the Department of Health, enabling JABSOM to continue the loan repayment program on behalf of Hawai'i. To date, the program has supported 64 health care providers in exchange for work commitments in medically underserved areas. We now have 25 active providers receiving loan repayment and an additional 7 on the waiting list. Of the 36 loan recipients who have completed the program, 21 remain at the sites where they served their work commitments and 26 have stayed in Hawai'i.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Hawai'i Psychological Association

For a Healthy Hawai'i

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Phone: (808) 521-8995

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair

Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Vice Chair

Friday, February 4, 2022 - 1:00 pm - Via Videoconference

Testimony in Support of SB2751 RELATING TO TELEHEALTH

The Hawai'i Psychological Association (HPA) supports SB2751, which expands the Hawaii Health Corps Program and the Hawaii Rural Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Program to include incentives for psychologists and social workers.

The pandemic has had devastating effects not only to our public health system and economies, but to our collective mental health. The disruptions COVID created in our personal lives have brought many in our community to the brink of emotional collapse. The need for mental health services could not be more apparent or pressing – especially in our rural areas where telehealth services don't always reach residents due to broadband limitations.

HPA thus greatly appreciates this creative way to provide much-needed services. Psychologists typically go into enormous debt to finance their training - often the equivalent of a mortgage. It may be many years before a psychologist's salary is high enough to make payments to cover debts well over tens of thousands of dollars. This measure also supports a pipeline of diverse psychologists in Hawaii who may come from more modest means. Without incentives like this, the profession of psychology will be restricted to the privileged and affluent. Patients who are minorities or economically disadvantaged will be less likely to find psychologists with similar backgrounds. In such cases, treatment outcomes are not as good.

HPA, however, provides the following comments to achieve parity between psychologists and the other professions included in the program. First, a representative from the psychology profession should be included in the group that makes the selections. The proposal also does not specify the training program requirements of the psychology applicants except that they shall have graduated from a duly accredited medical school, nursing school or social work program. This list should also include the academic criteria required for psychology.

With these small amendments, HPA stands in strong support of this measure that promotes access to care in our hardest to reach areas.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this important bill.

Sincerely,



Alex Lichton, Ph.D.

Chair, HPA Legislative Action Committee



**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Health
Friday, February 4, 2022; 1:00 p.m.
Via Videoconference**

RE: SENATE BILL NO. 2751, RELATING TO HEALTH.

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. 2751, RELATING TO HEALTH.

By way of background, the HPCA represents Hawaii's 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.

This bill, as received by your Committee, would expand the Hawaii Health Corps Program (Health Corp) and the Rural Health Care Provider Loan Program (Program) to encourage psychologists, and social workers to serve in counties having shortages. Specifically, this bill would:

- (1) Require the Health Corp to identify and designate areas experiencing shortages of psychologists and social workers;
- (2) Transfer management of the Program from the University of Hawaii to the Department of Health; and
- (3) Direct the Program to identify loan payment amounts and recipients employed as psychologists and social workers employed in shortage areas.

The State of Hawaii is experiencing a severe shortage of health care professionals in the workforce, especially in rural areas. Recent studies note that the current shortage of physicians is at 20% of the total full-time equivalent positions throughout the State. The shortage is especially severe in the fields of primary care, infectious diseases, colorectal surgery, pathology, general surgery, pulmonology, neurology, neurosurgery, orthopedic surgery, family medicine, cardiothoracic surgery,

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Friday, February 4,, 2022; 1:00 p.m.
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rheumatology, cardiology, hematology/oncology, and pediatric subspecialties of endocrinology, cardiology, neurology, hematology/oncology, and gastroenterology.

Physicians are not the only professionals in high demand. The same also applies to psychologists and social workers.

This bill would create a financial incentive to enhance the quality and stock of Hawaii's future healthcare workforce. Accordingly we commend this effort and wish to participate in any and all discussions concerning workforce development.

For this reason, the HPCA supports this bill.

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.



SB2751 Rural Health Provider Loan for Psychologists and Social Workers

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair

Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Vice Chair

Friday, Feb 4 2022: 1:00 pm : Videoconference

Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition Supports SB2751:

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.

The healthcare shortage is getting worse everywhere, but it is most devastating in rural areas.

The reasons are mostly:

1. low rates from state and Medicaid,
2. heavy administrative burdens from the state,
3. high educational loans,
4. stressful long hours
5. health risk to themselves and family.

Despite these challenges, a healthcare job can be highly rewarding for helping other people.

A loan repayment program is a good start to help motivate people to choose a rewarding career in healthcare.

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

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair

Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Vice Chair

DATE: February 4, 2022 1:00 P.M. - VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE

Testimony in Strong Support with Comments on SB2751 RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

The National Association of Social Workers – Hawai'i (NASW- HI) strongly supports SB2751 which expands the Hawaii Health Corps Program and the Hawaii Rural Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Program to include incentives for psychologists and social workers.

NASW applauds the effort to create an affordable pathway for the development of more mental health providers. The combined costs of undergraduate and graduate school are skyrocketing, which is limiting the pool of potential social workers. It also creates a system where people from more affluent backgrounds are over-represented in the profession, BIPOC are under-represented in the field.

The collective experiences of COVID have led to more people than ever seeking mental health services and the need to support the development of more social workers is real and now.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony in support.

Sincerely,

 , MSW, LCSW

Sonja Bigalke-Bannan, MSW, LCSW

Executive Director,

National Association of Social Workers- Hawai'i Chapter