



## THE QUEEN'S HEALTH SYSTEMS

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To: The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair  
The Honorable Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair  
Members, Senate Committee on Judiciary

From: Dr. Gerard Akaka, Vice-President, Native Hawaiian Affairs & Clinical Support, The Queen's Health Systems

Colette Masunaga, Director, Government Relations & External Affairs, The Queen's Health Systems

Date: March 2, 2021

Re: Support for SB905: Relating to the State Council on Mental Health

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The Queen's Health Systems (Queen's) is a not-for-profit 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, 66 health care centers and labs, and more than 1,600 physicians 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 testify in support of SB905, which requires the state council on mental health to include an unspecified number of members with demonstrated knowledge of or work experience involving native Hawaiian health practices. We concur with goals of SB905 to expand and deepen the focus of the State Council on Mental Health on the significant mental health disparities facing Native Hawaiians (and other Pacific Islanders). This bill compliments the Queen's Native Hawaiian Health program and our mission to provide quality health care services to Native Hawaiians.

Thank you for allowing The Queen's Health Systems to testify in support of SB905.

*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.*

**SB-905**

Submitted on: 2/26/2021 8:48:23 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/2/2021 9:35:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Leimomi Khan	Individual	Support	No

## Comments:

Support, especially recognizing the acute needs of Native Hawaiians with mental health issues. Knowledge of or work experience involving Native Hawaiian health practices will help as the State Council on Mental Health makes informed decisions on policies, programs, and services.



**SB905**  
RELATING TO THE STATE COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH  
Ke Kōmike ‘Aha Kenekoa o ka Ho‘okolokolo  
Senate Committee on Judiciary

Malaki 2, 2021

9:35 a.m.

Hālāwai Keleka‘a‘ike

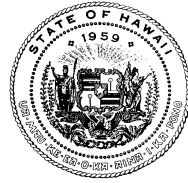
The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** SB905, a measure that would ensure that the Hawai‘i State Council on Mental Health includes a member or members who have a background in Native Hawaiian cultural concepts or practices relating to mental health. **By providing for representation from those familiar with the benefits and effectiveness of culturally-grounded mental health programs and interventions, this bill will serve as a critical stepping stone toward reducing Native Hawaiian mental health-associated disparities through targeted and systemic relief.**

Unfortunately, statistics have revealed that Native Hawaiians are alarmingly overrepresented in a range of negative mental health-associated statistics. Suicide, substance abuse, self-harm, depression, chronic disease, homelessness, poverty, and incarceration are acutely present among Native Hawaiians. For example, Native Hawaiian youth suicide ideation, attempts, and deaths far outpace that of their non-Native Hawaiian peers; meanwhile, Native Hawaiian adults have the highest rates of self-reporting their physical and mental health as “not good,” and the Depressive Disorder rate among Native Hawaiian kūpuna is much higher than the state average. These disparate negative mental health-associated outcomes can have a deleterious effect not only on affected individuals, but also on their families and the larger community as a whole. Accordingly, targeted and systemic action must be taken to address these mental health-associated disparities, and better protect and uplift the health and vitality of the Native Hawaiian lāhui.

**Providing for a member or members of the Hawai‘i State Council on Mental Health to possess experience or expertise in Native Hawaiian health and healing values and practices may be critical to providing targeted and systemic relief for Native Hawaiian mental health-associated disparities across the islands.** As a body, the Hawai‘i State Mental Health Council advises, monitors, reviews, and evaluates the provision of mental health services throughout the islands. Members with “knowledge of or work experience involving Native Hawaiian concepts of well-being, culturally-grounded mental health methodologies, or traditional healing or health practices” would not only help the Council to more consciously consider the mental health needs of the Native Hawaiian community, but also understand the unique relief that culturally grounded mental health approaches may provide for Native Hawaiians struggling with mental health challenges. Such consideration and understanding would in turn assist the Council in

ensuring greater and more consistent opportunities for Native Hawaiians and others to participate in culturally grounded programs and services that can foster positive mental health outcomes far more effectively than purely Western approaches. Accordingly, this measure serves as a critical step towards systemically addressing the Native Hawaiian community's mental health-associated disparities.

Therefore, OHA urges the Committee to **PASS** SB905. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
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**WRITTEN  
TESTIMONY ONLY**

**Testimony in SUPPORT of S.B. 905  
RELATING TO THE STATE COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH**

SENATOR KARL RHOADS, CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Hearing Date: 3/2/2021

Hearing Time: 9:35 a.m.

1 **Department Position:** The Department of Health (“Department”) strongly supports this  
2 measure and offers comments.

3 **Department Testimony:** The subject matter of this measure intersects with the scope of the  
4 Department’s Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) whose statutory mandate is to assure a  
5 comprehensive statewide behavioral health care system by leveraging and coordinating public,  
6 private and community resources. Through the BHA, the Department is committed to carrying  
7 out this mandate by reducing silos, ensuring behavioral health care is readily accessible, and  
8 person-centered.

9 The SCMH was created in 1984 (ACT 218, Hawaii State Legislature). In its advisory  
10 capacity, the SCMH advocates for Hawaii adolescents, adults, and their families and provides  
11 recommendations to the Department on community issues related to mental health and  
12 substance abuse. The SCMH is a federally mandated advisory board.

13 Applicants for SCMH membership are processed through the Hawaii State Boards and  
14 Commissions office based on general applicant criteria and specific criteria for the composition  
15 of the council as outlined in §3334-10, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

1           The Department recognizes that diversity within the SCMH broadens the SCMH  
2 membership. Data and research have linked Native Hawaiians and those with Hawaiian  
3 ancestry with an increased risk for mental health issues.

4           Committed advocates with knowledge and understanding can make a big difference. It  
5 may be that expanding the SCMH membership to include individuals who possess  
6 demonstrated knowledge or work experience involving Native Hawaiian concepts of well-being,  
7 culturally grounded mental health methodologies, or traditional healing or health practices  
8 promotes recovery and more effective services for mental health service recipients.

9           We look forward to the potential that members of the SCMH, under this measure,  
10 would bring to the Department's awareness of mental health needs in our community by  
11 having Native Hawaiian representation on the council.

12           The Department also encourages that the State Council on Mental Health be actively  
13 included in the discussion of its membership as the advocating body.

14           **Offered Amendments:** None.

15           Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

16           **Fiscal Implications:** Undetermined.



# Hawai'i Psychological Association

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COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY  
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Tuesday, March 2, 2021 - 9:35 am - Videoconference

**Support for SB905  
RELATING TO THE STATE COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH**

HPA supports SB905 which requires an unspecified number of members of the State Council on Mental Health have knowledge or work experience involving Native Hawaiian concepts of well-being, culturally informed mental health treatment and traditional healing and health practices. **HPA recommends that at least two members of the Council demonstrate knowledge or work experience with Hawaiian culture.**

It is necessary that initiatives or actions taken by the State Council on Mental Health reflect an underlying understanding of how culture influences the experience of distress, dysfunction, strength and resilience. Despite the best of intentions, a lack of this understanding may unintentionally interfere with the development of quality mental health programs, the building of effective alliances between stakeholder groups, and may undermine the delivery of effective multi-culturally competent services.

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

Sincerely,

Alex Lichton, Ph.D.

Chair, HPA Legislative Action Committee