



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education
Tuesday, March 29, 2022, at 3:05 p.m.

By

Erika Lacro

Vice President for Community Colleges
University of Hawai'i System

SCR 182/SR 175 – REQUESTING THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII TO ESTABLISH CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE CURRICULUM TO TRAIN COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS AND TO INCORPORATE DISTANCE-LEARNING FOR NEIGHBOR ISLAND STUDENTS

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Concurrent Resolution (SCR) 182 and Senate Resolution (SR) 175 relating to Community Health Workers. The University of Hawai'i (UH) provides comments.

SCR 182/SR 175 identifies the importance of community health workers in providing a critical service to connecting disadvantaged populations with health care resources in a culturally appropriate manner. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the key role of Community Health Workers—in urban and rural communities—in conducting outreach and serving as trusted navigators for underserved individuals and communities. SCR 182/SR 175 requests that UH establish a culturally appropriate curriculum to train community health workers, incorporate distance learning options for neighbor island students interested in the community health worker profession and identify other methods to align community health worker programs with the needs of the communities they serve.

UH has three campuses offering Community Health Worker courses and/or certificates: Kapi'olani Community College, Maui College, and Windward Community College. Over the last 3 years, UH Community Colleges have awarded 119 Certificates of Competence for Community Health Workers, and many other students have taken coursework that is part of the Community Health Worker program.

Through a contract with the Department of Health (DOH), Kapi'olani Community College has trained more than 100 Community Health Workers to address community needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Kapi'olani program specifically aimed to train Community Health Workers statewide and over 25 percent of those trained under the DOH contract were from the Neighbor Islands: 16 from Hawai'i Island, 11 from Maui County (8 Maui, 2 Lanai, 1 Molokai), and 3 from Kaua'i. These Community Health

Workers support healthcare outreach to identified high-risk populations, serving as community navigators and working in tandem with the clinical healthcare professionals and contact tracers. Many program participants have secured positions in hospital systems, non-profit clinics, and social services, working with the unsheltered, immigrant populations, kupuna, and other priority populations.

Whereas some of the Community Health Worker courses may have been available only in person previously, Kapi'olani Community College, and Maui College are now offering the Community Health Worker courses online, and a student may complete the program online from both colleges. All colleges loan laptops and mobile hotspots for internet access for students who need technology support to participate in online learning.

The Community Health Worker programs, at their core, emphasize cultural sensitivity in training community health workers. All programs were developed with input from community partners and have an advisory board of community partners and practitioners to inform the ongoing review of the curriculum and program effectiveness.

UH is committed to continuing our partnership with employers and other stakeholders to align our Community Health Worker programs with the needs of communities. For example, through the DOH contract, the Kapi'olani Community Health Worker program co-hosted an event with Hawaii Public Health Institute entitled, "Community Health Workers (CHWs): Exploring their Roles and Benefits" on October 26th, 2020 with over 200 participants. This event, and many subsequent meetings and events, sought to educate and collaborate with employers who were interested in employing CHWs and/or hosting them as practicum students.

UH is prepared to share more information about its Community Health Worker programs and are encouraged by the opportunity for our Community Health Worker students to contribute to improving the health of their communities throughout the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



LATE

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Community Health
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COVID-19 Response

Hawai'i Drug & Alcohol Free
Coalitions

Hawai'i Farm to School Hui

Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition

Date: March 29, 2022

To: Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

Re: Support for SCR182, Relating to Community Health Workers

Hrg: March 29, 2022 at 3:05 PM via Videoconference

The Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)¹ is in **support of SCR182** which requests the University of Hawai'i to establish a culturally appropriate curriculum to train Community Health Workers (CHW) and to incorporate distance-learning for neighbor island students.

Since 2017, HIPHI has convened a network of CHWs from across the state and a network of CHW allies dedicated to supporting CHWs. The long-term goal of most CHWs is to have services provided by CHWs to be reimbursable. This would likely provide for more job stability and better pay for CHWs. We believe that providing a culturally appropriate curriculum and distance-learning to train CHWs throughout the state is a necessary step to achieving these stability goals.

We'd also like to note that the University of Hawai'i Systems currently have CHW certificate programs in place and defer to them on further details of the current curriculum.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **SCR182**.

Mahalo nui loa,

Rosilyn Handy
Community Health Worker Liaison

¹ Hawai'i Public Health Institute is a hub for building healthy communities, providing issue-based advocacy, education, and technical assistance through partnerships with government, academia, foundations, business, and community-based organizations.

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SCR-182

Submitted on: 3/28/2022 4:40:20 PM

Testimony for HRE on 3/29/2022 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James E Jones Jr	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is James E. Jones, Jr.

I am a Community Health Worker for United Health Care. I work with the Medicare population. I also received a certificate from Kapi'olani Community College for the Community Health Worker program. The program has been established for quite a few years now and the knowledge I and other graduates have gained from this course has helped us in our daily work as CHWs.

The course is very sound in its principals and provides knowledge in understanding the cultural diversity that the Hawaiian islands have. It provides skills in interviewing, conflict resolution, documentation and a vast array of tools to manage the challenging position of a CHW.

Being that the infrastructure and pipeline is already in place it really does not make much sense economically and systematically to bring in another entity to facilitate the course. University level classes tend to be far more expensive than college and junior college classes. Most of us CHWs make a decent wage but, it is still a struggle to pay for a college level certification course let alone, one that is administered by a university.

I fully oppose SCR182.

Thank you.