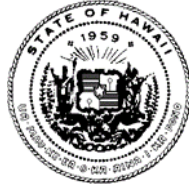


JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



CATHY BETTS  
DIRECTOR  
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII  
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I  
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**  
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA  
Office of the Director  
P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

March 22, 2023

TO: The Honorable John M. Mizuno, Chair  
House Committee on Human Services

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **HCR 199/ HR 203 – REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO STUDY PROVIDING CERTAIN HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR ALL CHILDREN AND PREGNANT PERSONS WHO WOULD OTHERWISE QUALIFY FOR COVERAGE IF NOT FOR THEIR IMMIGRATION STATUS.**

Hearing: March 23, 2023, 9:00 a.m.  
Conference Room 329 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of this resolution and offers comments.

**PURPOSE:** This resolution requests that DHS study options to provide health insurance coverage for all children and pregnant persons who would otherwise qualify for coverage if not for their immigration status and submit a report including proposed legislation by October 2023.

DHS appreciates the commitment of the Legislature to improve access to health insurance for all children and pregnant persons regardless of immigration status. DHS can research the care opportunities, resources, and costs relating to providing such coverage to this specified group and engage applicable stakeholders in the study, including immigrant health care providers, social service providers, and advocacy groups.

However, given the very short time frame for the legislative report, October 31, 2023, which is to include engaging applicable stakeholders, the study findings, and drafting of proposed legislation, the report will likely be abbreviated and high level.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.



[www.hicir.org](http://www.hicir.org) | Instagram @hicir  
hicoalitionforimmigrantrights@gmail.com

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HCR 199 / HR 203  
REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO STUDY PROVIDING  
CERTAIN HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR ALL CHILDREN AND  
PREGNANT PERSONS WHO WOULD OTHERWISE QUALIFY FOR COVERAGE IF  
NOT FOR THEIR IMMIGRATION STATUS  
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

Rep. John M. Mizuno, Chair  
Rep. Terez Amato, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 23, 2023

Dear Chair Mizuno, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights is in full support of HCR 199 / HR 203, which requests the Department of Human Services to study the costs and program opportunities for providing health care coverage to pregnant persons and children who would otherwise qualify for coverage if not for their immigration status.

Access to quality healthcare is a fundamental right that should not be denied to anyone, regardless of their immigration status. HCR 199 / HR 203 is an essential step aimed at addressing the persistent challenges faced by low-income immigrants in accessing affordable health care. Denial of access to health care creates a cycle of disadvantage, leading to poorer health outcomes and greater economic hardships for our immigrant families. They contribute so much to our State and Federal government, yet are unable to access the health care they need. As we witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic, all of our community's health is bound up together. If we allow some populations to go without services or care, it will eventually impact the collective health of the whole state. There are approximately many who may be impacted by this resolution. The State is home to an estimated 41, 246 undocumented persons.

Hawai'i has made significant strides in reducing our uninsured population but there remain vulnerable children and pregnant persons who are unable to access MedQUEST or the healthcare connector. This study is an investment in preventative care that will save the state dollars that would otherwise be spent in the much more costly Emergency Room. We cannot stop folks from all injury or illness- but getting them care as soon as it is needed is cheaper than more extensive measures later.

I urge you to pass HCR 199 / HR 203 and help our immigrant communities break the cycle of disadvantage and provide them with the opportunity to lead healthier, more productive lives.

Thank you for your support and consideration,

Catherine Chen

Co-Coordinator/Refounder, Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights



*Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.*

To: House Committee on Human Services  
Re: **HCR 199 / HR 203 – Requesting the Department of Human Services to Study Providing Certain Health Insurance Coverage for All Children and Pregnant Persons Who Would Otherwise Qualify for Coverage if not for Their Immigration Status**  
Hawai'i State Capitol and Via Videoconference  
March 23, 2023, 9:00 AM

Dear Chair Mizuno, Vice Chair Amato, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HCR 199 / HR 203**, which requests the Department of Human Services to study the extension of health insurance coverage to children and pregnant people who would otherwise qualify if not for their immigration status.

**HCAN Speaks! Board  
of Directors**

Liza Ryan Gill  
*President*

Nick Kacprowski, J.D.  
*Treasurer*

Mandy Fernandes  
*Secretary*

Teri Keliipuleole  
Jasmine Slovak  
Erica Yamauchi

Of the estimated 15,000 foreign-born children in Hawai'i who are income-eligible for Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), it is estimated that 4,000 (or 29%) are barred from those federal programs as a result of their immigration status.<sup>1</sup>

Currently eleven states plus the District of Columbia allow income-eligible children to enroll in Medicaid or CHIP regardless of their immigration status.<sup>2</sup> Hawai'i should join the growing number of states that are considering such coverage.

Extending coverage is both compassionate and smart. It is hard to accept that some children are deprived of health care in the Aloha State. In addition, the pandemic has taught us the important public health lesson that having a healthy population, regardless of people's immigration status, is a benefit to the entire state and economy.

Keiki with health insurance coverage have better health outcomes compared to those without coverage. Poor health can adversely affect children's academic achievement, which in turn can undermine their health and financial security into adulthood.<sup>3</sup>

Extending health coverage to low-income keiki also helps their families have greater financial security. When children have health insurance, their parents can use more of their income on other basic needs, such as food and housing. Extending coverage to pregnant people can lead to improved parental health, which strengthens their ability to care for their children.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please pass these resolutions.

Thank you,

Nicole Woo, Director of Research and Economic Policy

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/mpi\\_chip-immigrants-brief\\_final.pdf](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/mpi_chip-immigrants-brief_final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2022/12/06/more-states-offer-health-coverage-to-immigrant-children>

<sup>3</sup> <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/updates/show/316-health-insurance-2021>



**TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF H.C.R. 199 and H.R. 203**

Thursday, March 23, 9:00 AM  
Conference Room 309 & Videoconference

To: Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair  
Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair

From: The Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights  
Co-Chairs Amy Agbayani and Pat McManaman

The Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights works to achieve equity, justice, inclusion, uphold civil rights, and eliminate discrimination.

We stand in **Strong Support of H.C.R. 199 and H.R. 203**. These measures request the Department of Human Services to study and report back to the Legislature on programming alternatives, feasibility, and estimated costs of providing Medicaid or Medicaid-like healthcare services for income-qualified pregnant persons and children not otherwise eligible for federally funded Medicaid due to their immigration status.

Expanded access to health care insurance through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the Hawai'i Prepaid Health Care Act, which assures coverage to all qualified persons, regardless of immigration status, has contributed to low rates of uninsured persons in Hawai'i when compared to other states. Despite the low rates of uninsured Hawai'i residents, low-income, undocumented immigrants are barred from accessing health care insurance through Medicaid and ACA exchanges.

Long-established medical consensus holds that prenatal care is fundamental to reproductive and infant health. The lack of access to prenatal care increases the risk of premature birth and low birth weight and is a factor in a range of poor health outcomes experienced by undocumented pregnant women and their babies, including higher rates of labor and delivery complications and premature births. Many of these negative outcomes pose long-term development risks to newborn U.S. citizen children and could be avoided with full access to prenatal care.

Long-standing medical consensus also holds that healthcare services for children are fundamental to their well-being and development. Nevertheless, even in bona fide emergencies, undocumented immigrants in Hawai'i hesitate to utilize emergency rooms to access healthcare for their undocumented immigrant children. Their fears that they and their uninsured children may be reported to the United States are not unfounded. During the years that I practiced immigration law, I assisted several undocumented children and families whose status was reported to immigration officials while accessing emergency services. In one of those cases, the child had been diagnosed with leukemia.

Currently, twenty-five states provide or will soon provide health care coverage for income-qualified pregnant persons regardless of their immigration status, and eleven states provide or will soon provide health care coverage for children regardless of their immigration status.

With one of the lowest national rates of uninsured persons and a leader in healthcare, Hawai'i has the opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to healthcare for all by passing the proposed resolutions to study program opportunities and costs to provide healthcare coverage for low-income, undocumented children and pregnant persons.



**HR-203**

Submitted on: 3/20/2023 4:40:50 PM

Testimony for HUS on 3/23/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Stacey Kuhn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I submit this information today on behalf of our Hawaii-based Applied Behavior Analysis provider agency. Our agency has been providing evidenced based services in the state of Hawaii since 2016.

This letter is in support of ensuring adequate network capacity and increasing rates for service provision to the population of children and adults impacted by Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Our agency has been demonstrating difficulty in maintaining adequate staffing numbers due to increased cost of living in the state of Hawaii while rates of reimbursement have not shown an equivalent increase, and as such 19% of our staff have relocated to mainland offices, to ensure the ability to maintain a basic standard of living. Those staff have not been able to be replaced in Hawaii, due to inability to offer higher pay scales for our Medicaid clients. Many entry-level staff (RBT) are refusing work in the field outside of DOE based services, which pay at a significantly higher rate. This has directly impacted our ability to serve families located in the State of Hawaii, and has reduced the number of participants we are able to support.

The existing MedQUEST rates have not shown an adjustment since 2015, even as the cost of living in the state and the cost of providing services to these families has increased exponentially. This has caused our agency to implement wait lists for children and families who are in high need of support, which explicitly contradicts the requirements of EPSDT.

Due to these issues, our business has had to decrease its current available treatment openings for individuals in the state of Hawaii, and transition to states such as Utah, Colorado and Wyoming, which offer a more sustainable “rate vs cost of living” fee schedule.



As such, this letter is in support of review and increase of the current state of Hawaii MedQUEST rates for ABA services.

Thank you for your time.

Stacey E Kuhn, MS, BCBA, LBA

Owner – Kuhn Behavioral Consulting Services

**HR-203**

Submitted on: 3/21/2023 7:00:33 PM

Testimony for HUS on 3/23/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Thaddeus Pham	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Mizuno, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee,

As a public health professional and a child of refugees, I write in **UNEQUIVOCAL SUPPORT** of HCR199 and HR203, which request the Department of Human Services to study providing certain health insurance coverage for all children and pregnant persons who would otherwise qualify for coverage if not for their immigration status.

Access to quality healthcare is a fundamental right that should not be denied to anyone, regardless of their immigration status. These resolutions aim to address the persistent challenges faced by low-income immigrants in accessing affordable health care. Denial of access to health care creates a cycle of disadvantage, leading to poorer health outcomes and greater economic hardships for our immigrant families. They contribute so much to our State and Federal government, yet are unable to access the health care they need.

I have witnessed, both professional and personally, how lack of access to healthcare leads to poor health, earlier death, and also economic burden. These impacts not only affect individuals but ripple out to our local communities and populations.

I urge you to pass HCR199 and HR203 and help our immigrant communities break the cycle of disadvantage and provide them with the opportunity to lead healthier, more productive lives.

With thanks,

Thaddeus Pham (he/him)

**HCR-199**

Submitted on: 3/22/2023 10:09:04 PM

Testimony for HUS on 3/23/2023 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alison Kaneshiro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Representatives. I support the HCR no 199/HR no 203. As stated in the documents there are over forty-one thousand immigrants who are undocumented in the state of Hawaii and by spending money on health services for pregnant women and children the state will save money in the long run. I am hopeful that studying this problem will show the importance of promoting well-being and healthy lives of pregnant women, newborns, and children. Equally important in the long term cost saving giving insurance for health care needs of those who would qualify for insurance if they were not immigrants also moves toward some of the aims of the United Nations third sustainable development goal, to reduce maternal, newborn and childhood mortality rates (United Nations, n.d.) Mahalo for your time.

Reference

United Nations. (n.d.) *Health and population. Related SDGS. 3 ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.* <https://sdgs.un.org/topics/health-and-population>