



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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WRITTEN
TESTIMONY ONLY

**Testimony COMMENTING on S.B. 759 S.D. 1
RELATING TO HEALTH**

SENATOR DONOVAN M. DELA CRUZ, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Hearing Date: 02/28/23

Room Number: CR 211

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The proposed measure appropriates funds out of the general revenues of
2 the State for fiscal year 2023-2024 and fiscal year 2024-2025 to create a permanent full-time
3 equivalent (1.0 FTE) Program Specialist IV and to develop a pilot program to be established and
4 administered by the Department of Health (DOH), Office of Primary Care and Rural Health
5 (OPCRH), to collaboratively address the health and wellness needs of Hawai'i County's most
6 underserved residents. The Department defers to the Governor's Executive Biennium Budget
7 Request for appropriation priorities.

8 **Department Testimony:** The DOH respectfully offers comments on S.B. 759 S.D. 1. The
9 Department appreciates the intent of this measure, and currently has projects in place with its
10 community partners, including the Hawai'i State Rural Health Association, to help communities
11 statewide develop plans to address the issues identified in the Access to Care (ATC) needs
12 assessment. Social determinants of health are complex and cross-cutting issues requiring the
13 participation and coordination of several state departments and nonprofit community partners.

14 The current focus of this bill is on creating a pilot program for Hawai'i County only
15 instead of supporting the efforts that are currently underway, not only in Hawai'i County, but
16 also in rural counties across the state. Creating a new pilot program in addition to the community
17 activities creates an unnecessary duplication of efforts or, worse, undercuts the work of the
18 community to address their needs.

1 The rural counties across the state are currently developing their plans to address their
2 most profound needs from the ATC needs assessment. We believe that those groups should be
3 allowed to continue with the development of their plans with the OPCRH maintaining a
4 supportive role rather than a leadership role. This allows the communities to have ownership and
5 a vested interest in the success of their plans.

6 The DOH appreciates the establishment of a position to oversee the development of
7 community plans and to coordinate efforts across departments and nonprofit community
8 partners. The current OPCRH staff and programs are funded through specific federal project
9 grants. These federal grants generally do not allow the OPCRH staff to work on projects that are
10 outside the terms and conditions of the grant.

11 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

12 **Offered Amendments:** Change Section 1, Subsection (1), Page 3 to read: “Require the office of
13 primary care and rural health to ~~[establish and administer a pilot program]~~ oversee and support
14 the community efforts to collaboratively address the health and wellness needs of [~~Hawai‘i~~
15 ~~county’s]~~ the state’s most underserved rural residents and facilitate discussions between key
16 [~~Hawai‘i county]~~ community health and social service organizations to develop [~~a 2030 one~~
17 ~~shared health vision plan for Hawai‘i county]~~ plans to address community needs highlighted by
18 the ATC needs assessment; and”

19 Change Section 2, Subsection (a), Page 3–4 to read: “The office of primary care and rural health
20 shall ~~[establish and administer a pilot program]~~ oversee and support the community efforts to
21 collaboratively address the health and wellness needs of [~~Hawai‘i county’s]~~ the state’s most
22 underserved rural residents and facilitate discussions between key [~~Hawai‘i county]~~ community
23 health and social service organizations to develop [~~a 2030 one shared health vision plan]~~ plans
24 [~~for Hawai‘i county]~~ that align[s] with appropriate providers’ goals and objectives.”

25 Change Section 2, Subsection (b), Page 4 to read: “The office of primary care and rural health
26 shall [~~submit the 2030 one shared health vision plan required by subsection (a), including any~~

1 ~~proposed long-term legislative grant-in-aid requests, to the legislature no later than twenty days~~
2 ~~prior to the convening of the regular session of 2024]~~ include a one-time summary of community
3 plans addressing the ATC needs assessment with the 2024 legislative report requirement
4 pursuant to Section 321-1.5, Hawai‘i Revised Statutes, requiring the department of health to
5 submit an annual report on recommended primary health care incentives, strategies, and
6 implementation.”

Chair Donovan M. Dela Cruz
Vice Chair Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Tuesday, February 28, 2023
10:00 AM

TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SB759 SD1 RELATING TO HEALTH

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means,

The Hawai‘i State Youth Commission was first created through Act 106 in 2018, “to advise the governor and legislature on the effects of legislative policies, needs, assessments, priorities, programs, and budgets concerning the youth of the State.” The Hawai‘i State Youth Commission’s Public Health legislative committee is in **strong support** of **SB759 SD1**.

As mentioned in the bill, one of the most critical issues in Hawaii’s current public health situation is inaccessibility and its effects on disadvantaged communities. It is an issue that has been overlooked for too long. While healthcare services are ubiquitous in the urban centers of O‘ahu, many rural and low-income communities are unable to access them. Such differences in the accessibility and quality of care can significantly impact the health outcomes of patients.¹ In

¹<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8538109/>

some cases, it is the difference between life and death. This is a critical gap in Hawaii's public health system that should be addressed with utmost priority. We should work to ensure that a patient from a neighboring island receives the same quality care as another in O'ahu, regardless of their location, socioeconomic background, race and ethnicity, cultural background, educational level, or other factors. To do this, we must aim to expand outreach efforts and healthcare resources to the communities that need them the most. Establishing a pilot program in Hawaii county, along with a comprehensive 2030 shared health vision plan, is a crucial step toward making Hawaii's public health system more accessible and equitable.

Therefore, the Hawai'i State Youth Commission strongly urges the committee to **PASS SB759 SD1**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

The Hawai'i State Youth Commission
hawaiiistateyc@gmail.com



RE: Testimony in Support of **Senate Bill No. 759**

From: Richard Taaffe, COE

Organization: West Hawaii Community Health Center Inc. (dba) Hawaii Island Community Health Center

Org Address: 75-5751 Kuakini HWY., STE 203, Kailua Kona, HI 96740

Phone: 808-326-3878

Date: 02/24/2023

Hawaii island Community Health Center is in full support of **SB No. 759** which would require the office of Primary Care and Rural Health to establish and administer a pilot program to collaboratively address the health and wellness needs of Hawaii County's most underserved residents and develop a *2030 One Shared Health Vision Plan*.

West Hawaii Community Health Center (WHCHC), doing business as Hawaii Island Community Health Center (HICHC), is a Federally Qualified Community Health Center (FQHC), with 501(c)3 nonprofit status. HICHC provides preventive care, including primary medical, oral health, and mental health/substance use disorder treatment. HICHC provides essential health care services to medically underserved and vulnerable populations, including the uninsured and those living below the poverty level. As an FQHC we provide primary care services to everyone, regardless of their ability to pay. HICHC's service area spans 20 zip codes on Hawaii Island. This service area is home to 175,734 people, 38,072 (or 22%) of whom are registered HICHC patients. HICHC offers primary care services at 14 clinic locations across Hawaii Island.

As a FQHC we are the 'safety net' health care system for the most vulnerable and high-risk members of our communities. We understand and witness the barriers people in our community's face trying to access the health care services every day. The barriers are at times incredibly overwhelming and challenging to navigate. These barriers are compounded by social determinants of health that further exacerbate the challenge of accessing the health care system. Barriers include delays in testing and diagnoses, having to travel long distances to find providers, having to fly off island for basic health needs, not being able to get appointments across the spectrum of care due to provider shortages, and layers of red tape to get referrals or initial appointments. As stated in Community Firsts, "Access to Care – Health for Our Communities" report in 2022, the lack of health care providers results in limited availability of specialty care, resulting in long wait times to get appointments. As bad as the problem currently is, the report indicates the problem will get worse as more providers have indicated they will be exiting the health care system on Hawaii Island for a variety of reasons.

We support SB No. 759 because we urgently need to work together to find solutions to improve the health care delivery system on Hawaii Island. This bill is an important step in the right direction. We kindly request your support for this SB No. 759 and the development of '2030 One Shared Health Vision Plan' for Hawaii Island.



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF
S.B. 759, S.D. 1

One Shared Health Vision Plan

Hon. Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Hon. Gilbert Keith-Agaran, Vice-Chair
and Members
Senate Ways and Means Committee
Hawaii State Legislature

Aloha!

The Hawaii Island Community Health Center, a federally qualified health center with service areas in East and West Hawaii, supports Senate Bill 759, Senate Draft 1 and urges its passage. Effective July 1, 2022, Bay Clinic, Inc. and West Hawaii Community Health Center merged to expand services to individuals residing on the Island of Hawaii under the name of the Hawaii Island Community Health Center. A major objective of the merger is to develop and implement a comprehensive plan that eliminates barriers to care and that provides a patient-centered medical home for all who pass through our doors.

Senate Bill 759, Senate Draft 1 is welcomed because it will help to align and to coordinate the delivery of care in rural communities. We welcome the State's declaration for a "shared health vision plan" and the State's willingness to join the Hawaii Island Community Health Center and other providers on the Island of Hawaii as partners in providing quality care for individuals and families who live on the Island of Hawaii, as is stated in the bill.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Matsukawa", written in a cursive style.

Michael J. Matsukawa
Chair, Board of Directors
Hawaii Island Community Health Center

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair

Date: February 28, 2023

From: Aubrey Olson, MSW student at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, social worker in the West Hawai'i area.

Re: Testimony in Support for S.B. No. 759, Relating to Health

Position: SUPPORT

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and Members of the Committee,

My name is Aubrey Olson, I live in the West Hawai'i region of Hawai'i County and work as a social worker. I am also a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I strongly support S.B. No. 759, Relating to Health.

It is a well-known fact that our state struggles to facilitate equitable health care access, in particular for those residents living in rural areas. Many Hawai'i County residents are particularly vulnerable to this disparity. For example, Ka'ū ranks highest out of all Hawai'i County districts in the 2021 Health Equity Index, indicating a high measure of socioeconomic need which is correlated with poor health outcomes. However, this disparity is evident island-wide, and we cannot ignore the issues of accessibility in creating more equitable healthcare access for our rural communities.

S.B. No. 759 seeks to develop a pilot program, in collaboration with Hawai'i County community health and social service organizations to address the health and wellness needs of our most underserved residents. This island's community clinics and social service agencies are regularly encountering individuals struggling to access appropriate care, and thus can provide essential insights into appropriate solutions. In developing solutions, community input should be gathered when possible in needs-assessment, town hall-style meetings, and through surveys.

I feel that there are effective and appropriate solutions to our healthcare crisis, and the collaboration proposed in this bill will help guide us. We need to encourage this type of

partnership with our community and health/social service providers in order to take steps towards state-wide health equity. I am asking the committee to please support S.B No 759, for the benefit of Hawai'i County.

Mahalo,

Aubrey Olson