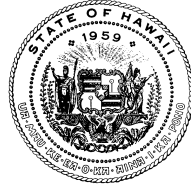


JOSH B. GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII  
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA  
MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I



KATHERINE AUMER, PhD  
COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON  
LUNA HO'OMALU O KA PAPA

STATE OF HAWAI'I  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO  
STATE COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH  
P.O. Box 3378, Room 256  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96801-3378

**WRITTEN  
TESTIMONY  
ONLY**

**STATE COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH**  
**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs and**  
**Committee on Health and Human Services**  
**COMMENTING on S.B. 263**  
**RELATING TO THE STATE COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH**

**CHAIRPERSON**

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**CHAIRPERSON:**

Richard I. Ries PsyD, MSEd

**EX-OFFICIO:**

Marian Tsuji, Deputy Director

Behavioral Health Administration

**WEBSITE:**

scmh.hawaii.gov

**EMAIL ADDRESS:**

doh.scmhchairperson@

doh.hawaii.gov

**February 13, 2024 at 1:00 p.m., CR224 and Videoconference**

Chairs Shimabukuro and San Buenaventura, Vice-Chairs Fevella and Aquino, and Members of the Committees:

Hawaii law, HRS §334-10, established the State Council on Mental Health (SCMH) as a 21-member body to advise on the allocation of resources, statewide needs, and programs affecting more than one county as well as to advocate for adults with serious mental illness, children with serious emotional disturbances, individuals with mental illness or emotional problems, including those with co-occurring substance abuse disorders. Members are residents from diverse backgrounds representing mental health service providers and recipients, students and youth, parents, and family members. Members include representatives of state agencies on mental health, criminal justice, housing, Medicaid, social services, vocational rehabilitation, and education. Members include representatives from the Hawaii advisory commission on drug abuse and controlled substances and county service area boards on mental health and substance abuse.

SCMH members unanimously support the intent of this measure, and shares the following comments, and offers amendments:

- The SCMH strongly supports increasing diversity within the SCMH and increasing services to marginalized groups within our state.
- The SCMH recognizes the significance of diversity and equity in addressing access to treatment and support services.
- The SCMH is concerned that, as worded, this measure excludes a number of highly qualified members of the Native Hawaiian community.
- Of note, similar requirements are not stipulated for other individuals who apply for and are nominated by the Governor to serve as an SCMH member.

- To increase the pool of applications for the SCMH, this measure may benefit from eliminating items in 1 through 5, including the elimination of work and experience requirements.
- SCMH respectfully submits the following proposed amendments:

~~At least \_\_\_ members of the council shall have demonstrated knowledge of or work experience involving native Hawaiian concepts of well-being, culturally grounded mental health methodologies, or traditional healing and health practices, as evidenced by:~~

~~(1) A college or university degree in a relevant field, such as (Psychology), (B) Social Work; (C) Public health; (D) Nursing; (E) Hawaiian studies; (F) Health administration; or (G) Medicine.~~

~~With a focus on native Hawaiian and indigenous health, transgenerational trauma, or traditional health and health practices including hooponono, laau lapaau, or lomilomi;~~

~~(2) A work history that demonstrates an appropriate level of knowledge of or involvement in native Hawaiian and indigenous health, transgenerational trauma, or traditional healing and health practices including hooponono, laau lapaau, or lomilomi;~~

~~(3) A history of health, social, or advocacy work addressing native Hawaiian inequities; or~~

~~(4) Substantial community experience as a native Hawaiian traditional and customary practitioner offering healing treatments, techniques, services, or practices.~~

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please contact us at [DOH.SCMHChairperson@doh.hawaii.gov](mailto:DOH.SCMHChairperson@doh.hawaii.gov).

VISION: A Hawaii where people of all ages with mental health challenges can enjoy recovery in the community of their choice.

MISSION: To advocate for a Hawaii where all persons affected by mental illness can access necessary treatment and support to live full lives in the community of their choice.



## THE QUEEN'S HEALTH SYSTEM

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To: The Honorable Maile S.L. Shimabukuro, Chair  
The Honorable Kurt Fevella, Vice Chair  
Member, Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs

The Honorable Joy San Buenaventura, Chair  
The Honorable Henry Aquino, Vice Chair  
Members, Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

From: Jacce Mikulanec, Director, Government Relations, The Queen's Health System

Date: February 13, 2024

Re: Support for SB263 – Relating to the State Council on Mental Health

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The Queen's Health System (Queen's) is a nonprofit 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, and more than 10,000 affiliated physicians, caregivers, and dedicated medical staff 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 provide testimony in support of SB263, 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 SB263 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.

*The mission of The Queen's Health System 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-263**

Submitted on: 2/10/2024 3:27:04 PM

Testimony for HWN on 2/13/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Caroline Kunitake	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Shimabukuro, Vice Chair Fevella, Committee on Hawaiian Affairs Members, Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee on Health and Human Services Members.

Mahalo for allowing this opportunity to share this testimony in SUPPORT of SB263.

We need a strong and active State Council on Mental Health that will identify and address the mental health needs of all people in Hawaii.

The painful reality is that our Native Hawaiian people do not have equitable access to affordable healthcare and mental health services. These issues are exacerbated by a wide array of disparities that hinder and harm many other minority groups.

We can convene our most capable and passionate leaders to address these mental health issues. To ensure that the Native Hawaiian people are not left out, these leaders need an awareness of Native Hawaiian cultural practices, language, and medicinal practices.

This legislation will require 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. Required annual trainings on topics related to Native Hawaiian healing and health will help the council to ask more specific questions to make well informed decisions.

Please support SB263. Thank you for taking the time to read this testimony. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony.

Mahalo,

Caroline Kunitake

Tuesday, February 13, 2024

Senator Maile Shimabukuro, Chair

Senator Kurt Favella, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs (HWN)

From: Kekuawela Tauala

Subject: Written Testimony regarding SB 263, Relating to State Council on Mental Health

Aloha mai kākou, my name is Kekuawela Tauala. I am an undergraduate student at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. I **support** SB 263 because it is important that the members of the State Council on Mental Health understand the importance of Native Hawaiian healing practices, apply their knowledge of traditional practices to help the targeted population, and listen attentively to the Native Hawaiian community when they have concerns about mental health issues. Today, many Native Hawaiians face mental health issues and crises and are unable to receive adequate treatment and interventions due to various reasons. Some people may prefer a traditional approach to healing. In order to implement more mental health services that can provide Native Hawaiian healing practices, we must have people knowledgeable about these rituals in the State Council of Mental Health. Native Hawaiian healing practices are beneficial to the mental, spiritual, and physical health of the community. Lomilomi is the practice of massaging the body. This was a practice that could help extract negative energy from the body and heal the body from pain such as cramps, strained muscles, and body aches. The practice of la‘au lapa‘au is also common in the local community. Many plants such as noni, ‘ōlena, and kukui have medicinal properties. Acknowledging the cultural healing traditions of Native

Hawaiians is also a progressive step towards having mental health programs implement cultural-based interventions. Ho‘oponopono is an ancient practice used in a family setting when harm or a form of wrongdoing has been done within the family. Being able to use this practice can allow families to participate in a non-western form of therapy. Many marginalized communities have experienced trauma from medical facilities, and having these Native Hawaiian traditions available will allow them to explore other options that may benefit them. I have witnessed too many friends and family members who are Native Hawaiian suffer from mental illnesses. My hope is that with SB 263 being approved, my friends and family members will know that there are other options out there and that there are people who will support them. We are in an age, where indigenous people can openly practice their culture and traditions. We must promote this way of living so that our culture can thrive and support the lāhui. It starts with having leaders whom we can trust and rely on to understand our needs. It is imperative that the State Council on Mental Health include members who have knowledge of Native Hawaiian healing practices and receive annual training on these practices. Thank you for your consideration.

Mahalo nui loa,

Kekuawela Tauala

## Resources

Williams, I. L., Rezendes, W. C., Ehia, A. W., & Makini, G. K. (2021). Native Hawaiian healing to treat substance misuse: history through the looking glass. *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions, 21*(3), 207–234. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1533256X.2021.1933844>

**SB-263**

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 2:30:35 PM

Testimony for HWN on 2/13/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Shana Wailana Kukila	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

RE: SB263 Relating to the State Council on Mental Health

POSITION: Support

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

In full support of having members of the Council on Mental Health be those with traditional Hawaiian healing practices and providing training for all their members.

Traditional Hawaiian healing practices should be the foundation of all healthcare in Hawai'i: caring for the people of these islands requires us all to look to our ancestral knowledge for healing wisdom and resources that we have right here in our own home.

The voice of our ancestors live on in these practices that carry us in the form of ho'oponopono (family and group style therapies), lā'au lapa'au (personal medicinal therapies), ho'ohānau (attended home childbirth supports), and other traditional practices now at risk of being silenced due to current laws on the books. These laws are restrictive, impeding access to culturally-appropriate healthcare.

These barriers to our traditional modes of care do not best serve the Hawaiian community in our own home.

Please support this bill which allows for the healing voices of our ancestors to be heard through the voices of the practitioners who have carried their wisdom forward for our benefit today. The overall health of all people starts with spiritual and mental health, which is the foundation of traditional Hawaiian healing practices, and therefore representatives should be present on the Council on Mental Health to enlighten them to the many forms of healing they can provide and support for Hawaiians and all those in need, no matter what their race or ethnicity.

As a collective of many races and ethnicities, we should also welcome the various traditional forms of healing practices from all our island community to add to any mental health delivery and strategic plans.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.



Shana W. Kukila

Hilo, HI

**SB-263**

Submitted on: 2/13/2024 11:31:22 AM

Testimony for HWN on 2/13/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Chachie Abara	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this SB263 RELATING TO THE STATE COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH.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. Requires council members to receive annual training on topics related to native Hawaiian healing and health.

Thank you for your considerations,

Chachie Abara