



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO  
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**Testimony COMMENTING on H.B. 2182  
RELATING TO COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS**

REP. DELLA AU BELATTI, CHAIR  
REP. JENNA TAKENOUCI, VICE CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HOMELESSNESS

Hearing Date: 02/09/2024

Room Number: CR 329

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The proposed measure appropriates funds out of the general revenues of the State  
2 for fiscal year 2024-2025 for a Ka'u community health worker (CHW) pilot program. The Department  
3 defers to the Governor's Executive Biennium Budget Request appropriation priorities.

4 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health (DOH) respectfully offers comments on H.B. 2182  
5 to establish a three-year CHW pilot program. The DOH does not have the legal authority to "authorize"  
6 CHWs to provide outreach, education, training, and navigation of services. Also, the DOH does not have  
7 the existing personnel to assign the administrative and fiscal responsibilities of the pilot program. If the  
8 bill passes, it will most likely be assigned to the Office of Primary Care & Rural Health (OPCRH). The  
9 current OPCRH staff and programs are funded through specific federal project grants. These federal  
10 grants generally do not allow the OPCRH staff to work on projects that are outside their approved work  
11 plans and the terms and conditions of the grant.

12 This measure creates a stand-alone pilot program for the Ka'u community only and may result in the  
13 duplication of efforts among organizations with similar responsibilities. The University of Hawaii,  
14 Kapiolani Community College offers a 16-credit CHW online certificate program available to CHW's  
15 statewide. Tuition waivers and other materials are provided at no charge for those with financial need.  
16 Additionally, the Hawaii Community Health Worker Association (HCHWA) was established to identify  
17 tools of support, education, and collaboration needed to assist fellow CHWs across the state. This  
18 member-driven organization also serves as a statewide hub for resources, events, employment, and  
19 training.

20 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

1 **Offered Amendments:** None



**HB2182**  
RELATING TO COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS  
House Committee on Health & Homelessness

February 9, 2024

8:30 am

Conference Room 329

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) provides testimony in **SUPPORT** SB2483 and respectfully **REQUESTS AMENDMENTS** for HB2182 which proposes the establishment of a three-year Ka‘ū Community Health Worker Pilot Program. **This initiative is crucial for addressing the unique health needs of our community, especially in rural and underserved areas.**

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) recognizes the importance of community health workers in bridging the gap between residents and essential health care and social services. As the principal public agency in the State responsible for the performance, development, and coordination of programs and activities relating to Native Hawaiians,<sup>1</sup> we believe that the proposed pilot program aligns with the values of community empowerment, capacity building, and collaborative partnerships that are integral to the well-being of our communities.

The Ka‘ū Community Health Worker Pilot Program outlined in SB2483 acknowledges the unique challenges faced by residents in Ka‘ū, where access to health education, resources, and job opportunities is limited. Native Hawaiians experience health disparities at a greater rate than any other ethnic group in Hawai‘i.<sup>2</sup> This disparity gap only widens more for our rural Native Hawaiian communities.<sup>3</sup> By providing health education, outreach, and individual support, community health workers can significantly impact disease prevention, healthy lifestyle practices, and improved health outcomes.

OHA respectfully requests this committee consider to the legislation incorporating specific provisions addressing the unique health needs of Native Hawaiians in Ka‘ū. This

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<sup>1</sup> Haw. Rev. Stat. §10-3(1) and (2).

<sup>2</sup> Mokuau, Noreen; De Leon, Patrick H.; Kaholokula, Joseph Keawe‘aimoku, et al., Challenges and Promise of Health Equity for Native Hawaiians. In: National Academy of Medicine; Alexander C, Murry VMB, Bogard K, editors. Perspectives on Health Equity and Social Determinants of Health. Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US); 2017. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Id.



**HB 2182**  
RELATING TO COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS  
House Committee on Health & Homelessness

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could include culturally tailored health education programs, outreach initiatives that respect and integrate traditional healing practices, and services that consider the cultural diversity within our community. OHA would also like to emphasize reinforcing cultural competency requirements for community health workers participating in the Ka‘ū pilot program. Community Health Workers should undergo training that enhances their understanding of Native Hawaiian customs, values, and beliefs, ensuring respectful and effective interactions with diverse populations within our community.

We offer the following language to add to section 2 (d) with regard to the qualifications of the contractor:

(4) The capacity to provide culturally competent training and services.

HB2182 represents a significant step towards improving the health and well-being of the Ka‘ū community. OHA wholeheartedly supports this legislation while urging the incorporation of culturally sensitive provisions to address the specific health needs of Native Hawaiians.

OHA appreciates the opportunity to testify on HB2181 and urges the Committee to **PASS HB2181 and consider making amendments to ensure cultural competency.** Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.



**STATE HEALTH PLANNING  
AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH - KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO

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

**KENNETH S. FINK, MD, MGA, MPH**  
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH  
KA LUNA HO'ŌKELE

**John C. (Jack) Lewin, M.D.**  
ADMINISTRATOR

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**House Committee on Health and Homelessness**

**H.B. 2182 Relating to Community Health Workers**

**Testimony of John C. (Jack) Lewin, M.D.**  
**SHPDA Administrator**

**Friday, February 9, 2024**  
**8:30 a.m.**

1 **Agency's Position: Support**

2 **Fiscal Implications:** None

3 **Purpose and Justification:** Given Hawai'i's shortages, Community Health Workers (CHWs)  
4 can add a "high touch" approach to patient outreach where physician, nurse, social worker,  
5 and health professions shortages are contributing to poor health outcomes due to lack of  
6 access to essential primary care, behavioral health, home health, and other services. CHWs  
7 can be trained to link remote, rural, and homebound patients via telemedicine and remote  
8 patient monitoring technologies to nurses and physicians, including specialists efficiently in  
9 many instances, and particularly for follow-up care for established patents with their  
10 professional caregivers.

11 Ka'u is an ideal location for pilot projects in these regards due to its rural isolation,  
12 workforce shortages and high-risk populations. This kind of high-tech and high-touch  
13 innovation to rural and remote care is being used in the Indian Health Service and in other  
14 health care shortage areas with success. It also offers an entry level job in health care that

1   serve as a career ladder to better and higher paying jobs for Hawai'i's young people and  
2   others seeking rewarding employment.

3           We applaud this DOH proposal and ask that it be funded and supported.



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Nana I Ka Pono Na Ma

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**Committee on Health and Homelessness**

Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair

Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

**Friday, February 9, 2024, 8:30 AM, Conference Room 329 & Videoconference**

**RE: HB 2182 – RELATING TO COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS**

**Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

Papa Ola Lokahi testifies **in support** of HB 2182, which establishes a pilot program for community health workers (CHWs) in Ka‘u, Hawai‘i. Pilot program can allow insights into this area of development for the CHW workforce in Hawai‘i. CHWs can increase health access, education, and more through providing a variety of services, often serving as a “hub” for community members. We support this opportunity to gain insight and health data for the rural community of Ka‘u through a pilot program.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of this critical legislation.

**HB-2182**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 1:59:47 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Claudia Hartz	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Claudia Hartz, and I am a CHW on Hawaii Island. I am submitting a comment, neither opposing nor supporting. My concern is how this pilot program benefits CHWs. Who will oversee the well-being of the CHW? for example, training and compensation? If passed, will this pilot program set the standard for all CHWs in Hawaii?

Claudia Hartz, MSW, CHW



**HB-2182**

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 5:34:55 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/9/2024 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Wai-Yan Kalani Shrestha	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai Kakou,

My name is Jennifer Wai Yan Kalani Shrestha, and I have had the honor of being a doctor in Ka’u for the past 4 years. I would like to give testimony and support for Bill HB2182. I am one of three doctors in the entire district. During the peak of the Covid Pandemic, my clinic staff volunteered nearly every weekend for a year to go into the community and provide vaccines and primary care to our most rural and at risk folks- specifically our Micronesians and Native Hawaiian patients.

Our care would not have been as effective or meaningful without our community health workers who had a pulse on the community, and helped direct our efforts. Understandably a lot of our vulnerable populations, specifically our Marshallese patients were skeptical about medical care. Many told us stories about being turned away by several health care systems because they didn’t know how to read/write or have access to health care insurance. They felt like they were 2nd class citizens, treated less than human. However with our Marshallese Community Health Workers, Lucinda Brokken and David Antiok, they were the key to being able to bridge community trust. They worked with their pastor, Jonithen Jackson, to utilize their Church to provide covid vaccines and primary care services. We got to listen to Marshallese gospel music, while providing vaccines and medical advice, in a safe community space. We vaccinated nearly 5000 patients throughout that year—a majority of which were Pacific Islanders. None of this would have been nearly possible without our community health workers.

CHWs are a lifeline to our rural, marginalized Pacific islander communities. It is also a pivotal program in providing home-grown care, and inspiring a new generation of youth to be the health care providers their communities need. CHWs are our ‘a’ali’i. They root us, and provide us with the strength, resiliency and compassion we need to go above and beyond for our patients. When I hear the phrase “*He ‘a’ali’i kū makani mai au; ‘a’ohe makani nāna e kula’i*”, I am reminded of our CHWs, who tirelessly support our patients, despite the many obstacles that arise to provide health care in Ka’u.