

To: The Honorable Chris Todd, Chair
The Honorable Darius K. Kila, Vice Chair
Committee on Transportation

From: Paula Arcena, External Affairs Vice President
Mike Nguyen, Public Policy Manager

Hearing: Thursday, March 21, 2024, 10:30 AM, Conference Room 312

RE: **HCR157/HR136 - Urging the United States and the State to recognize and address the air transportation crisis on Moloka'i and Lāna'i.**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of HCR157 and HR136**. These measures urge the United States and the State to recognize and address the air transportation crisis on Moloka'i and Lāna'i.

Founded in 1994 by Hawai'i's community health centers, AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan serving over 84,000 Medicaid and dual-eligible health plan members on all islands. Approximately 40 percent of our members are keiki. We are Hawai'i's only health plan exclusively dedicated to serving Medicaid and Medicaid-Medicare dually-eligible beneficiaries. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for access to quality, whole-person care for all.

AlohaCare is committed to improving access to care and strengthening the Medicaid program. As you may know, Medicaid enrollment in our State has grown by over 46% from 327,000 enrollees in March 2020 to 476,000 in January 2024. This tremendous growth has put a further strain on our State's already challenged provider capacity, especially in rural areas. The Hawai'i Physician Workforce Assessment Project Report¹ indicates that Hawai'i is in need of at least 750 doctors, with the greatest statewide shortage being in primary care specialties. The proportional need is greatest on the neighbor islands, with both Maui and Hawai'i County experiencing a physician shortage of 40%.

Hawai'i residents in rural and remote communities have long been accustomed to travelling to urban areas to access specialized care and routine treatment. Residents of Moloka'i and Lāna'i rely on air travel to access emergency and, oftentimes, routine medical care. Pregnant persons on Lāna'i must travel to give birth while those on Moloka'i can only deliver for low-risk pregnancies without an epidural.

¹ <https://www.ahec.hawaii.edu/workforce-page/>



Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the two airlines that used to serve Lānaʻi and Molokaʻi ceased operations, leaving residents with only one airline today. This remaining airline is a vital means for medical travel. However, it has experienced significant challenges and disruptions causing many residents to miss medical appointments.

AlohaCare provides medically necessary travel for our members. These challenges and disruptions have affected our members and providers. We have been actively engaged with the airline, our transportation coordination vendor, and legislators to proactively support a better solution and experience for our members and providers.

AlohaCare supports HCR157 and HR136 because the air transportation crisis for Molokaʻi and Lānaʻi residents, especially for those traveling for medical care, requires state and federal actors to collectively recognize the challenges and work together on solutions.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support of HCR157 and HR136.**

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Director of Council Services
David M. Raatz, Jr., Esq.

Deputy Director of Council Services
Richelle K. Kawasaki, Esq.

COUNTY COUNCIL

COUNTY OF MAUI
200 S. HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
www.MauiCounty.us

March 20, 2024

TO: The Honorable Chris Todd, Chair, and
Members of the Committee on Transportation

FROM: Alice L. Lee
Council Chair

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Alice L. Lee", is written over the printed name and title.

SUBJECT: **HEARING OF MARCH 21, 2024; TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF
HCR157/HR136, RELATING TO AIR TRANSPORTATION ON MOLOKAI
AND LANAI**

I **support** these measures to urge the Federal and State governments to address the ongoing air-transport crisis for Molokai and Lanai residents.

I am providing this testimony in my capacity as an individual member of the Maui County Council.

I support these measures for the following reasons:

1. Residents on Molokai and Lanai rely on air transportation for health care, business, and personal needs.
2. Air transportation to and from those islands is expensive and unreliable.
3. Ensuring consistent and affordable air transportation is vital to maintaining residents' well-being.

Thank you for your consideration.

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