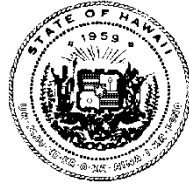


JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



CATHY BETTS  
DIRECTOR  
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

TRISTA SPEER  
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 19, 2024

TO: The Honorable Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: [SCR94/SR80](#) - REQUESTING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TELEHEALTH WORKING GROUP TO EXAMINE THE IMPACT OF WIDESPREAD TELEHEALTH ADOPTION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND IDENTIFY PUBLIC POLICY INITIATIVES AT THE FEDERAL AND STATE LEVEL TO OPTIMIZE TELEHEALTH UTILIZATION AS THE STATE TRANSITIONS OUT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

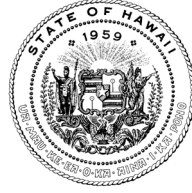
Hearing: March 22, 2024, 1:00 PM  
Conference Room 225 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services supports this resolution.

**PURPOSE:** This resolution requests the establishment of a telehealth working group to examine the impact of widespread telehealth adoption during the COVID-19 pandemic and identify public policy initiatives at the federal and state levels to optimize telehealth utilization as the state transitions out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

DHS supports the review of telehealth adoption during and since the COVID-19 pandemic and looks forward to having the Med-QUEST Administrator or the Administrator's designee participate in this workgroup.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this resolution.



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS  
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DEAN I HAZAMA  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR | KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

## Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

Before the  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Friday, March 22, 2024  
1:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 329 and Videoconference

On the following measure:

**S.C.R. 94 REQUESTING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TELEHEALTH WORKING GROUP TO EXAMINE THE IMPACT OF WIDESPREAD TELEHEALTH ADOPTION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND IDENTIFY PUBLIC POLICY INITIATIVES AT THE FEDERAL AND STATE LEVEL TO OPTIMIZE TELEHEALTH UTILIZATION AS THE STATE TRANSITIONS OUT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.**

Chair San Buenaventura and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ahlani Quiogue, and I am the Licensing Administrator of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (Department) Professional and Vocational Licensing Division. The Department appreciates the intent of and offers comments on this measure.

The purposes of this resolution are to establish the Telehealth Working Group to:

- (1) evaluate the impact of telehealth adoption in the State on safety, utilization, total cost of care, and patient and provider satisfaction to determine how best to integrate telehealth into in-person practice as the State transitions out of the COVID-19 pandemic and provide the State with greater insight into existing telehealth challenges and benefits;
- (2) examine the impact of telehealth adoption during the COVID-19 pandemic

and identify public policy initiatives at the federal and state level to optimize telehealth utilization as the State transitions out of the COVID-19 pandemic; and (3) submit a report of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2025.

The Department understands the importance of the working group to identify the impacts of telehealth initiatives and the utilization of this modality to provide health care services. The Department respectfully requests that page 3, item (6), be amended to allow the Licensing Administrator of the Professional and Vocational Licensing Division to appoint/name a designee similar to the authority provided to the Insurance Commissioner on page 2, item (4).

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



## THE QUEEN'S HEALTH SYSTEM

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

From: Dr. Matthew Koenig, Medical Director, Virtual Care, The Queen's Health System  
Jace Mikulanec, Director, Government Relations, The Queen's Health System

Date: March 22, 2024

Re: In Support of SCR94: REQUESTING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TELEHEALTH WORKING GROUP TO EXAMINE THE IMPACT OF WIDESPREAD TELEHEALTH ADOPTION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND IDENTIFY PUBLIC POLICY INITIATIVES AT THE FEDERAL AND STATE LEVEL TO OPTIMIZE TELEHEALTH UTILIZATION AS THE STATE TRANSITIONS OUT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

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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 SCR 94, which requests the establishment of a telehealth working group to examine the impact of widespread telehealth adoption during the COVID-19 pandemic and identify public policy initiatives at the federal and state levels to optimize telehealth utilization as the state transitions out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, Hawai'i experienced a 65-fold increase in video telehealth adoption so patients could seek medical care for low acuity conditions during the "lock down" phase of the pandemic response without risking contraction of COVID-19 in medical facilities. Since 2020, robust telehealth adoption has continued statewide and most visits occur with the patient at home using a consumer video device such as a smart phone or home computer. The persistently high volume of telehealth visits likely reflects consumer and provider satisfaction with these technologies but very little is known about the clinical impact on health-related outcomes, safety, and cost of care. In many ways, widespread adoption of direct-to-consumer telehealth in the home has been an "experiment" in Hawai'i but we have not yet analyzed the results. The continued adoption of telehealth in Hawai'i has been supported by progressive state laws that were enacted in 2017 as well as temporary federal waivers for Medicare beneficiaries that have been in place since 2020.

*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.*

Hawai'i has a larger influence on federal telehealth policy since our U.S. Senator Brian Schatz co-chairs the Senate Telehealth Caucus and is the author of the most significant telehealth bill in Congress, the CONNECT for Health Act of 2023 (S.2016). More data are now needed to study the impact of telehealth adoption on patient outcomes, cost of care, and safety outcomes like emergency department visits and hospitalizations. These data will help inform public policy at the state level – including coverage determinations and regulations – and provide additional data to CMS to determine which federal telehealth waivers should be made permanent. Although healthcare systems and payers have all the data that is needed to answer these questions, much of the data are considered confidential and proprietary.

SCR94 is necessary to convene representatives from healthcare organizations and payers to share de-identified data and to obtain epidemiology and biostatistics resources to analyze large data sets. The product of this analysis will be a report to the legislature about the impact of telehealth adoption with recommendations for public policy enhancements to support patient outcomes. We would also ask the Committee to consider an amendment to the resolution to include the Hawai'i Health Information Exchange (HHIE) as a member of the proposed working group.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

March 22, 2024, 1 p.m.  
Hawaii State Capitol  
Conference Room 225 and Videoconference

**To: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services**  
**Sen. Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair**  
**Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice-Chair**

**From: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii**  
**Ted Kefalas, Director of Strategic Campaigns**

COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF SCR94/SR80 — REQUESTING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TELEHEALTH WORKING GROUP TO EXAMINE THE IMPACT OF WIDESPREAD TELEHEALTH ADOPTION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND IDENTIFY PUBLIC POLICY INITIATIVES AT THE FEDERAL AND STATE LEVEL TO OPTIMIZE TELEHEALTH UTILIZATION AS THE STATE TRANSITIONS OUT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Aloha Chair, Vice-Chair and other Committee members,

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii would like to comment in **support** of [SCR94](#) and [SR80](#), which look to establish a telehealth working group.

The purpose of the working group would be to examine the impact of widespread telehealth adoption during the COVID-19 lockdowns and identify policy initiatives that might build on that experience in order to optimize telehealth usage in Hawaii.

Telehealth provides a wonderful opportunity to mitigate the problems related to healthcare access and staffing shortages that have had a significant effect on healthcare in Hawaii.

The COVID-19 crisis was instrumental in showing the potential of telehealth as a way to improve healthcare outcomes. Moreover, the experience of Hawaii and other states under emergency orders related to telehealth demonstrated that removing barriers to out-of-state telehealth access was helpful to both patients and providers.

In an upcoming policy brief, the Grassroot Institute examines ways in which the state could improve outcomes and expand healthcare access by removing regulations that prevent Hawaii patients from receiving telehealth from out-of-state providers.

This is a strategy that has been embraced by other states with great success. Twenty-six states have special license or telehealth registration programs that allow out-of-state doctors to offer telehealth services.

Idaho, for example, allows licensed doctors to offer telehealth care to patients with whom they have an established relationship but are in the state only temporarily.<sup>1</sup>

And Florida recently created a system that allows licensed out-of-state providers to practice telehealth by registering with the state medical board and agreeing to certain conditions such as liability coverage.<sup>2</sup>

Hawaii's geographic challenges make telehealth expansion a necessity. We commend the Legislature for seeking ways to remove barriers to telehealth in Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ted Kefalas  
Director of Strategic Campaigns  
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

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<sup>1</sup> ["Cross State Licensing: Idaho."](#) Center for Connected Health Policy. Feb. 13, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> ["Cross State Licensing: Florida."](#) Center for Connected Health Policy. Feb. 24, 2024.

March 22, 2024

The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
The Honorable Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: SCR 94 / SR 80 – Requesting the establishment of a telehealth working group to examine the impact of widespread telehealth adoption during the COVID-19 pandemic and identify public policy initiatives at the federal and state level to optimize telehealth utilization as the state transitions out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee:

Hawaii Medical Service Association (HMSA) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SCR 94 / SR 80, which requests the establishment of a Telehealth working group to examine the impact of telehealth adoption during the COVID-19 pandemic and identify public policy initiatives at the federal and state level to optimize telehealth utilization as the state transitions out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As an early supporter of telehealth access for our state, we believe in increasing access to health care services in Hawaii, especially for kupuna who may have limited digital literacy and for those living in rural and underprivileged communities where broadband coverage is lacking. With the end of the Public Health Emergency related to COVID-19 and upcoming changes from Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, we think it's critical to better understand the role telehealth has played and the optimal role it will play in the future for Hawaii residents.

We would respectfully request the committee's consideration to include HMSA as a member of the working group.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SCR 94 / SR 80.

Sincerely,



Dawn Kurisu  
Assistant Vice President  
Community and Government Relations