

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



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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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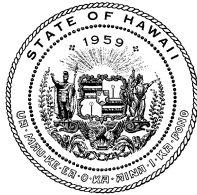
**Testimony COMMENTING on SB959
RELATING TO HEALTH.**

SENATOR JOY SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Hearing Date/Time: February 10, 2025; 1:20 PM

Room Number: 225

- 1 **Fiscal Implications:** Appropriates general funds for the Health Information Technology
- 2 Infrastructure Grant Program.
- 3 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health (DOH) supports this bill provided that its
- 4 passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in our Executive Budget. DOH
- 5 recognizes that significant resources are needed to support a certified, hosted, and maintained
- 6 health information technology infrastructure and implement interoperable health information
- 7 technologies.
- 8 **Offered Amendments:** N/A
- 9 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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

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ADMINISTRATOR

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February 7, 2025

To: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair;
Senator Henry JC Aquino, Vice Chair; and
Honorable Members

From: John C (Jack) Lewin MD, Administrator, SHPDA

Re: HB 959 Relating to Health: Establishing the Health Infrastructure Grant Program
within the Department of Health to be administered by the SHPDA

Testimony:

It is critically important to provide electronic interoperability for care coordination, administrative and clinical efficiency, and quality improvement for those health care entities in Hawai'i that lack such capabilities today, and which hampers their ability for improvement of population health, health outcomes, and health care services, and for coordination of care with the rest of the health sector providers. This is a statewide problem, but more acute in rural areas and on neighbor islands. Only 25% of providers have not been able to adopt a modern EHR system, and they are the most financially disadvantaged providers.

Over 75% of Hawaii's hospitals, clinics, and physician practices statewide have adopted a common electronic health record system statewide called EPIC, but federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), rural health clinics, Ryan White HIV centers, Native Hawaiian health centers, some critical access hospitals (CAHs), and other rural providers lack resources to stay abreast of the interoperable health technologies available and in use by others. SHPDA is not promoting the EPIC EHR brand, but given its broad penetration here, and noting it is the number one EHR product in use on the mainland, our rural and safety net providers would like to adopt its use.

Financial assistance is needed on a one-time basis to allow these critical services to become available to all providers, but particularly those providing care to less advantaged patients and communities and rural areas. There are specialized firms which have developed lower cost but fully compatible electronic health record (EHR)

systems for safety net and rural health providers which can assist in producing these improvements here, making these services far more affordable now.

This bill establishes the Health Infrastructure Grant Program (HIGP) to fund these necessary improvements to our safety net and rural providers. SHPDA is prepared to implement and oversee the program and believes it is essential to improving our health care services here.

The HIGP will require state assistance to realize and perform its essential purposes on behalf of rural and neighbor island beneficiaries. We are in the process of developing the budget and implementation plan expeditiously for the HIGP to be included in the bill as it hopefully proceeds on or before February 10 to be included before the proposal proceeds further, but we are clear that the cost of implementing this essential upgrade will exceed \$20 million as a one-time statewide expense. Critical access hospitals that have not already been able to purchase EPIC, should be included. The facilities and clinics will be able to maintain this service once it is installed and established for them.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify,

Jack Lewin MD, Administrator SHPDA



February 10, 2025 at 1:20 pm
Conference Room 225

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

To: Chair Joy A. San Buenaventura
Vice Chair Henry J.C. Aquino

From: Hilton R. Raethel
President and CEO
Healthcare Association of Hawaii

Re: **Support**
SB 959, Relating to Health

The Healthcare Association of Hawaii (HAH), established in 1939, serves as the leading voice of healthcare on behalf of 170 member organizations who represent almost every aspect of the health care continuum in Hawaii. Members include acute care hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, home health agencies, hospices, assisted living facilities and durable medical equipment suppliers. In addition to providing access to appropriate, affordable, high-quality care to all of Hawaii's residents, our members contribute significantly to Hawaii's economy by employing over 30,000 people statewide.

Thank you for the opportunity to **support** this measure, which would establish a grant program within the Department of Health to promote and enhance health information technology (IT) infrastructure across our state. This initiative seeks to modernize healthcare delivery and coordination and help to ensure equitable access to high-quality care for all residents of Hawaii.

Investing in health IT infrastructure is particularly difficult for smaller practices and providers serving rural areas, which often face financial and technical barriers to implementing advanced health IT solutions. This grant program would help level the playing field, enabling those providers to adopt tools such as electronic health records (EHRs) and telehealth platforms that would allow them to better share critical patient information securely, streamline workflows, and coordinate care more effectively. This functionality is especially important for managing complex cases and chronic conditions, where collaboration between primary care providers, specialists, and hospitals is key to better outcomes.

This proposed grant program can help to provide more equity and access for underserved and rural communities by ensuring that all healthcare providers, regardless of size or location, have the tools they need to deliver excellent care to our residents. We appreciate the legislature's continued commitment to ensuring access to high-quality care, and the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.



Submitted via electronic email

The Honorable Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Henry Aquino, Vice Chair
Committee on Health and Human Services

February 10, 2025; 1:20 p.m.
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

Re: STRONG SUPPORT OF SB 959, RELATING TO HEALTH

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and members of the committee,

On behalf of OCHIN, we extend our strong support of SB 959, Relating to Health. This critical legislation will ensure that all communities and their providers in rural and underserved communities are not left behind in the digital age as it would fund essential health IT infrastructure. Providers and their patients facing a deepening digital divide will be able to instead harness the power of interoperability to improve care coordination, trauma informed care, and disaster readiness with essential technology tools. This infrastructure is the prerequisite to building a resilient, interoperable healthcare ecosystem that is ready to leverage innovations like artificial intelligence (AI) and drive transitions to value-based pay while responding to natural disasters. This bill will provide essential investments in Hawaii's healthcare providers in underserved and rural areas to meet the demands of today while preparing for the promises and risks of tomorrow.

OCHIN is a nonprofit health IT innovation and research network comprised of federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), rural health clinics, critical access hospitals, local public health agencies, and other community-based providers. For over 20 years, OCHIN has worked tirelessly to advance equitable health care solutions, leveraging our network's unique data and collective expertise to deliver scalable, innovative health technology to rural and underserved areas, including to over 2,000 patients in Hawaii with over 4,100 annual visits. Our member, Kahuku Medical Center, is a not-for-profit critical access hospital and rural health clinic providing quality health care in the community in a culturally sensitive and financially responsible manner, whose offerings include family and internal medical, pediatrics, dental, mental health, and telemedicine. Despite our progress in supporting clinics like Kahuku, many health care providers lack access to hosted and maintained certified health IT systems, which stymies interoperability, leaves them vulnerable to cyberattacks, hinders their ability to comply with evolving regulations, and prevents them from leveraging transformative technologies like AI.

SB 959 invests in a grant program targeted to FQHCs, Rural Health Clinics, Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Centers, and Native Hawaiian clinics. This investment will enable eligible providers to procure and implement certified, hosted, and maintained health IT systems to ensure that their technology is secure, up to date, and in compliance with federal and state regulations around critical components like cybersecurity and interoperability.

When disasters strike, lives depend on providers' ability to quickly access and share accurate patient data. The recent wildfires in Maui are a sobering reminder of why this investment is urgently needed. Outdated systems are not just an inconvenience—they are a liability. Interoperable systems are critical to ensure continuity of care and enable providers to access up-to-date patient information and

coordinate seamlessly with emergency response teams. SB 959 addresses this gap by ensuring that providers have the health IT systems in place to respond effectively in emergencies while safeguarding sensitive health information.

Hawaii's rural and underserved communities have long been a beacon of strength and resilience. Time and again, they have weathered the storms—both literal and figurative—that threaten their well-being. However, these struggles leave visible scares as well as invisible scars on our communities where survivors struggle with trauma, grief, and long-term recovery. Interoperable health IT systems will support individuals who have experienced trauma by ensuring that health care providers can access their history without repeatedly asking for sensitive information.

Hawaii is already a trailblazer in healthcare innovation, exemplified by its recent approval to participate in the CMS AHEAD Model, which will use a new value-based payment model to reduce health care costs while improving public health. However, for Hawaii to lead the charge in this national transformation, our health care providers must have robust, modernized IT systems to securely collect, analyze, and share data. The TECH Act is the key to ensuring the success of this model.

By modernizing health IT systems, the TECH Act strengthens Hawaii's ability to respond to crises while addressing systemic health disparities. It ensures that no community—no matter its location—is left behind. We urge you to support the TECH Act and help secure a future where Hawaii's health care providers are equipped not just to survive but to thrive. Together, we can build a healthcare system that honors the resilience of its people and rises to meet the challenges of an ever-changing world.

Please contact me, stollj@ochin.org, if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Stoll
Chief External Affairs Officer



HO'OLA LĀHUI HAWAI'I
P.O. Box 3990; Līhu'e, Hawai'i
Phone: 808.240.0100 Fax: 808.246.9551

February 7, 2025

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

SB 959 Relating to Health

Monday February 10, 2025 –1:20pm

Conference Room 225

Position Support with Amendments

Ho'ola Lahui Hawaii the only Federally Qualified Health Center and Native Hawaiian Health Care System on Kauai is strongly **SUPPORTING** this bill to provide funding to support health information technology infrastructure and implementation of interoperable technologies.

We propose the following amendment to include the Native Hawaiian Health Care Systems defined in the United States Code of Federal Regulation Chapter 42 Section 11711 (6) as an eligible entity to receive funds.

Respectfully,

David Peters

Chief Executive Officer



**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Monday, February 10, 2025; 1:20 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 225
Via Videoconference**

RE: SENATE BILL NO. 0959, RELATING TO HEALTH.

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

The Hawaii Primary Care Association (HPCA) is a 501(c)(3) organization established to advocate for, expand access to, and sustain high quality care through the statewide network of Community Health Centers throughout the State of Hawaii. The HPCA **SUPPORTS THE INTENT** of Senate Bill No. 0959, RELATING TO HEALTH.

By way of background, the HPCA represents Hawaii's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). FQHCs provide desperately needed medical services at the frontlines to over 150,000 patients each year who live in rural and underserved communities. Long considered champions for creating a more sustainable, integrated, and wellness-oriented system of health, FQHCs provide a more efficient, more effective and more comprehensive system of healthcare.

The bill, as received by your Committee, would create a grant program within the Department of Health, to be administered by the State Health Planning and Development Agency, to support a certified, hosted, and maintained health information technology infrastructure and the implementation of interoperable health information technologies for federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), rural health clinics, Ryan White HIV/AIDs program centers, and Native Hawaii health centers in Hawaii.

We believe this bill shines the light on the critical importance and need for State information technology support as it pertains to electronic medical records, population health tools, among other priorities. This infrastructure is vital for organizations such as FQHCs to achieve improved patient outcomes especially when it comes to health disparities and the social determinants of health.

Accordingly, we respectfully urge your favorable consideration of this measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Public Affairs and Policy Director Erik K. Abe at 536-8442, or eabe@hawaiiipca.net.

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Monday, February 10, 2025, 1:20 PM, Room 225

TESTIMONY IN **SUPPORT** OF SB 959 RELATING TO HEALTH

Chair San Buenaventura and members of the Committee:

Thank you for hearing this measure and for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 959. The grant program proposed by this measure would be of benefit to many organizations in our state.

Waikiki Health is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) providing primary care as a core service at multiple clinics in Waikiki, McCully/Moiliili, Kaimuki, and by means of mobile medical unit. We are also a Ryan White Part C program grantee, and have been at the forefront of HIV/AIDS care and prevention services since 1992. Waikiki Health also provides Native Hawaiian healing services directed by an award-winning RN program specialist.

We are acutely aware that creating and maintaining up-to-date health information technology infrastructure is critical to our success, despite the cost challenges this presents for a non-profit community health center. For example, electronic health records have become critical to our operations. Waikiki Health works frequently with other FQHCs, Ryan White program grantees, and Native Hawaiian organizations to share ideas, experiences, and practices, including those related to information technology and interoperability.

Mahalo again for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important measure.



Alexis Charpentier (MPH), Chief Executive Officer

Monday, February 10, 2025 at 1:20 PM
Via Video Conference; Conference Room 225

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

To: Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair

From: Michael Robinson
Vice President, Government Relations & Community Affairs

**Re: Testimony in Support of SB 959
Relating to Health**

My name is Michael Robinson, and I am the Vice President of Government Relations & Community Affairs at Hawai'i Pacific Health. Hawai'i Pacific Health is a not-for-profit health care system comprised of its four medical centers – Kapi'olani, Pali Momi, Straub and Wilcox and over 70 locations statewide with a mission of creating a healthier Hawai'i.

HPH writes in SUPPORT of SB 959 which establishes the Health Infrastructure Grant Program within the Department of Health (DOH), to be administered by the State Health Planning and Development Agency (SHPDA), to support a certified, hosted, and maintained health information technology infrastructure and the implementation of interoperable health information technologies for federally qualified health centers (FQHC), rural health clinics, Ryan White HIV/AIDS program centers and Native Hawaiian health centers in Hawai'i.

A certified, hosted, and maintained health information technology infrastructure is a basic component of the delivery of appropriate, quality healthcare and is an essential element in the overall operation of the health care system. Additionally, coordination of information through the technology infrastructure enables communities as well as the state to immediately identify emerging health trends and issues, making it possible to provide timely interventions. However, the technology infrastructure is costly and requires a significant financial investment which many health centers serving rural communities and underserved areas are unable to incur. The lack of this infrastructure reduces quality of care and leads to disparities in the delivery of healthcare and outcomes.

The establishment of a grant program to assist qualified health centers in rural and underserved areas of the State in investing in a certified, hosted, and maintained health information technology infrastructure is an innovative means of enabling those health centers to operate on par with and coordinate patient health care with clinics located in

metropolitan areas of the state. It also allows health care providers to have direct access to relevant patient information for the benefit of the communities they serve.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



**WAIANAE COAST
COMPREHENSIVE
HEALTH CENTER**

LATE

Monday, February 10, 2025 at 1:20 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

To: Chair Joy San Buenaventura
Vice Chair Henry Aquino

From: Ian Ross
Public Affairs Director
ianross@wcchc.com | 808-652-3380

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB959 - RELATING TO HEALTH

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

Aloha and mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of Senate Bill 959**, which establishes a Health Information Technology Infrastructure Grant Program.

Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center (WCCHC) is a Federally Qualified Health Center dedicated to improving the health and well-being of the West O'ahu community through accessible and affordable medical and traditional healing services, including outreach to people experiencing homelessness, crucial for our community's wellbeing. With 52 years of service, WCCHC remains committed to providing comprehensive healthcare by addressing social determinants of health.

Senate Bill 959 would provide necessary support for safety-net providers, including federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), rural health clinics, Ryan White HIV/AIDS program centers, and Native Hawaiian health centers, so that they can continue to meet the evolving demands of healthcare delivery and public health readiness.

Hawai'i's healthcare landscape is undergoing rapid changes, driven by advances in technology and the need for systems that promote interoperability, value-based care, and equitable health outcomes. The recent \$12 million AHEAD grant from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) underscores the broad recognition of this situation. By addressing multi-payer alignment and improving care coordination, Hawai'i's Medicaid agency can develop a more advanced, data-driven system that measures value, controls costs, and ensures improved health outcomes. However, achieving these goals requires all providers, particularly safety-net providers, to have the necessary health information technology infrastructure.

Safety-net providers are the backbone of Hawai'i's healthcare system, serving the most vulnerable populations, including Medicaid recipients, uninsured individuals, and those in rural and underserved areas. Unfortunately, these providers often lack the capital to implement and maintain the certified, hosted, and interoperable health information technology systems needed to engage in the next phase of healthcare reform. This creates a disparity in the quality of care and access to innovative payment models, further widening the gap between well-resourced



**WAIANAE COAST
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HEALTH CENTER**

providers and those struggling to meet basic infrastructure needs while providing care to our most vulnerable communities.

Senate Bill 959 addresses this gap by providing critical financial support to safety-net providers, enabling them to:

- Upgrade electronic health record systems to ensure interoperability and compliance with federal standards.
- Invest in cybersecurity and secure patient data systems to build trust and meet regulatory requirements.
- Access technical assistance and workforce development to ensure effective use of these systems.

This measure helps providers including health centers to fully participate in the state's move toward value-based care and Medicaid reform, which is consistent with investment including the CMS AHEAD grant. Without such support, safety-net providers risk falling behind, creating a "Catch-22" situation where the lack of modern infrastructure limits their ability to access resources and implement necessary changes, further perpetuating inequities in care.

As we brace potential shifts in federal Medicaid policies, this bill provides the proactive investment necessary to equip Hawai'i's healthcare system with the tools to adapt to uncertainty. By creating a sustainable infrastructure, our state can enhance care delivery, support critical public health functions, improve patient outcomes, and reduce long-term healthcare costs.

We respectfully urge the Committee to pass Senate Bill 959 to support Hawai'i's safety-net providers and our most vulnerable populations.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this important measure.



LATE

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB959, RELATING TO HEALTH

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

FEBRUARY 10, 2025

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i **SUPPORTS** SB959, RELATING TO HEALTH. Pursuant to the Platform of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i, we advocate for investment in preventive care and public health programs.

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i firmly believes that all people have an inherent right to live a healthy life in a clean and safe environment. Access to high-quality healthcare, regardless of one's ability to pay, is a fundamental right. The wellbeing of all of Hawai'i's people is of the utmost importance, and this bill aligns with our commitment to ensuring equitable healthcare access for all. Public funding for health information technology infrastructure is essential to transform healthcare delivery and maintain public health readiness and recovery. By investing in certified, hosted, and maintained health information technology systems, we can enhance care coordination, improve patient outcomes, and assist providers in meeting regulatory obligations. These systems also promote public health by equipping providers and government agencies with the information necessary to understand their community's needs and craft data-driven policies. Furthermore, harnessing the latest technology, including tele-health services, is vital to removing barriers and increasing access to care. This bill will help reduce health disparities in Hawai'i's rural and underserved communities by ensuring that sensitive patient health information is interoperable among providers, thereby supporting trauma-informed care and reducing the need for patients to repeatedly share potentially traumatic information.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify in support of SB959, RELATING TO HEALTH. Should you have any questions or require further information, please contact the Democratic Party of Hawai'i at legislation@hawaiidemocrats.org.

DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII

PO Box 2041 • Honolulu, HI 96805 • www.hawaiidemocrats.org

SB-959

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 4:46:00 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rick Ramirez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a healthcare provider to many patients living with HIV/AIDS, this measure is so great in support of the work that goes on to support us. The establishment of the Health Infrastructure Grant Program within the Department of Health, to be administered by the State Health Planning and Development Agency, to support health information technology infrastructure and the implementation of interoperable health information technologies in federally qualified health centers, rural health clinics, Ryan White HIV/AIDS program centers, and Native Hawaiian health centers. Appropriates funds for the grant program is a great necessity. This summary is well written and so, as a healthcare provider I fully support this bill. Please do the same.

Thanks

Rick Ramirez, DNP, APRN, AGACNP-Bc, FNP-BC, ENP-C