



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

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

**KENNETH S. FINK, MD, MGA, MPH**  
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ADMINISTRATOR

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March 14, 2025

To: SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair and  
Honorable Members

From: John C (Jack) Lewin MD, Administrator, SHPDA and  
Senior Advisor to Governor Green on Healthcare Innovation

Re: HB 1379, HD2 - Relating to Health

Hearing: Monday, March 17, 2025 @ 1:00 pm; Conference Room 225

Position: SUPPORT, with COMMENTS

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Testimony:

This complicated bill exempts graduates from international medical schools from the residency requirements for medical licensure if the applicant has had at least one year of fellowship training in a program whose parent program or hospital is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, American Osteopathic Association, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, or College of Family Physicians of Canada. It further authorizes the board to waive the residency requirements if the applicant has graduated from a foreign medical school, passed the USMLE, and practices in a specialty in which no other licensed physician in the State practices.

SHPDA FULLY SUPPORTS THE INTENT of this bill to ease the physician shortage here in both primary and specialty practices. We defer to the DCCA Medical Board on how to best accomplish this worthy objective. We agree with the Philippine Medical Association's previous testimony that to ensure long-term success, public trust, and alignment with best practices, it is essential to establish a structured licensure pathway with clear training requirements and supervised practice. We further agree with Hawai'i Medical Association testimony that the Federation of State Medical Board's (FSMB) recently released recommendations for licensure of internationally Trained Physicians (ITP) should be considered.

Finally, we think it will be improved if it specifies that the college or medical institution origin of the physician is in the reliable World Directory of Medical Schools,

and if the candidate has completed a minimum of two years of higher-level clinical training as an international fellow. That said, this idea is a good one, and we should work out the details and pass this to allow recruitment of more qualified international physicians here.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

**Testimony of the Hawaii Medical Board**

**Before the  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Monday, March 17, 2025  
1:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 225 and Videoconference**

**On the following measure:  
H.B. 1379, H.D. 2, RELATING TO HEALTH**

Chair San Buenaventura and Members of the Committee:

My name is Chelsea Fukunaga, and I am the Executive Officer of the Hawaii Medical Board (Board). The Board supports this bill.

The purposes of this bill are to: (1) allow a pathway for foreign medical school graduates to be licensed as physicians that was previously only available to graduates who passed the qualifying examination of the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) before 1984; and (2) establish an alternative pathway for the licensure as physicians for foreign medical graduates who passed certain examinations, possess an ECFMG certificate, and have completed two years of post-graduate medical training.

The Board believes this bill will create additional pathways for foreign medical school graduates to obtain licensure while maintaining appropriate protection for the public and ensuring that medical licenses are issued to qualified, safe, and competent physicians only. This measure will also strengthen the healthcare workforce and provide greater access to care.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

Monday, March 17, 2025 at 1:00 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: **HB 1379, HD2 – Testimony In support  
Relating to Health**

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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 SUPPORTS the amendments suggested by the Hawai'i Medical Board as contained in HB 1379, HD2. HB 1379, HD2 allows a pathway for foreign medical school graduates to be licensed as physicians in Hawai'i that was previously only available to graduates who passed the qualifying examination of the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates before 1984. The measure also provides alternative requirements for foreign medical school graduates who have completed certain requirements to qualify for licensure.

Recent data reported in the Physician Workforce Report of 2023 shows that of the more than 12,000 licensed physicians in Hawai'i only 3,599 are currently providing patient care to Hawai'i's population. Further, of those practicing, not all physicians practice fulltime. Thus these 3,599 individuals provide approximately 3,022 Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) of active patient care. Moreover, Hawai'i faces a physician shortage of nearly 800 physicians when compared to the Continental United States.

Eliminating the time restriction on when the qualifying examination of the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates should have been passed creates a greater pool of foreign medical school graduates who would be eligible for licensure. Additionally, the inclusion of alternative qualifying requirements enhances the possibility of more graduates becoming physicians in Hawai'i. These changes have the potential of allowing much needed physicians to practice in Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair**

**Monday, March 17, at 1:00PM  
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference**

**RE: HB1379 HD2 Relating to Health**

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

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports House Bill 1379 House Draft 2 (HB1379 HD2), which allows a pathway for foreign medical school graduates to be licensed as physicians that was previously only available to graduates who passed the qualifying examination of the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates before 1984. Establishes an alternative pathway for the licensure as physicians for foreign medical graduates who passed certain examinations, possess an Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates certificate, and have completed two years of post-graduate medical training.

HB1379 HD2 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Business Services. This bill promotes policies that drive economic growth, enhance workforce opportunities, and improve the quality of life for Hawaii's residents.

This measure responds to the critical need for Hawaii to broaden its pool of qualified physicians by making the licensure process more accessible for graduates of foreign medical schools. The proposed amendments streamline the requirements for such graduates, allowing them to be licensed through either prior completion of the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) qualifying examination and three years of medical training, or by obtaining an ECFMG certificate and completing two years of post-graduate training in an accredited residency or fellowship program. By recognizing equivalent international credentials and ensuring sufficient post-graduate training, this legislation strengthens the ability of competent foreign-educated physicians to practice in Hawaii.

Through these changes, Hawaii's medical board can tap into a wider pool of skilled foreign medical graduates, reinforcing the local healthcare workforce and helping to address physician shortages across the state. The Chamber supports this measure because it helps fill critical gaps in healthcare delivery by attracting qualified foreign-trained doctors, ultimately improving healthcare access and quality for Hawaii's residents.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.

We respectfully ask to pass House Bill 1379 House Draft 2. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

March 17, 2025, 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**  
**Sen. Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice-Chair**

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

RE: COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF HB1379 HD2 — RELATING TO HEALTH

Aloha Chair, Vice-Chair and other members of the Committee,

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii supports the intent of [HB1379 HD2](#), which would ease the pathway to licensure for foreign medical graduates.

Hawaii is suffering from medical staffing shortages that affect both the quality and availability of care. Currently, Hawaii's physician shortage stands at 768, up from 757 in 2023. The greatest shortage is in primary care, where Hawaii needs approximately 152 additional physicians.<sup>1</sup> The Hawaii Physician Workforce Assessment estimates that the state needs to net 100 new physicians per year in order to meet demand by 2032.<sup>2</sup> This bill could help address that shortage by creating a path to licensure for graduates of foreign medical schools.

We defer to the Hawaii Medical Board to determine the best way to balance public safety against effective reforms that will attract new doctors. However, the state should strive to avoid unnecessarily restricting the pool of potential new doctors through overly burdensome requirements.

We urge the Committee to pass HB1379.

Ted Kefalas  
Director of Strategic Campaigns  
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

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<sup>1</sup> "[Annual Report on Findings from the Hawai'i Physician Workforce Assessment Project](#)," University of Hawai'i, December 2024, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> [Ibid.](#)

**HB-1379-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/16/2025 10:35:11 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/17/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rainier Dennis Bautista MD	Testifying for Philippine Medical Association of Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Esteemed Committee Members,

On behalf of the Philippine Medical Association of Hawaii (PMAH), we strongly support HB 1379, which establishes a clear and equitable pathway for foreign-trained physicians to obtain licensure in Hawaii.

PMAH represents over 200 physicians across various specialties and primary care fields, many of whom are foreign medical graduates (FMGs) who have become pillars of Hawaii's healthcare system. They provide essential care to underserved communities, and we believe this bill is a critical step in addressing the state's physician shortage—especially in rural and medically underserved areas.

Hawaii faces an urgent need for more physicians in both primary and specialty care. Many FMGs possess the necessary training and expertise to help alleviate this crisis, yet the current licensing process creates unnecessary barriers. By streamlining this pathway, we can integrate these highly qualified physicians into our healthcare system while maintaining rigorous standards of care.

Additionally, we suggest an amendment to HB 1379 to align it with similar legislation in other states. Instead of requiring a fellowship, we propose that physicians who have completed their residency abroad and passed the USMLE undergo a period of supervised practice before full licensure. This model ensures patient safety while providing a fair and practical pathway for experienced international physicians to contribute to Hawaii's healthcare system.

We fully support the intent of this bill and urge the committee to continue this dialogue to move towards a path that all parties can agree on. This is a very important topic that requires all stakeholders to come to the table to find the best solution to address Hawaii's physician shortage without compromising the quality of care.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.







### **Hawaii Medical Association**

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#### **SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

Date: March 17, 2025

From: Hawaii Medical Association (HMA)

Jerald Garcia MD - Chair, HMA Public Policy Committee

**RE HB 1379 HD2 RELATING TO HEALTH-** Foreign Medical Graduates; Licensure; Hawai'i Medical Board

#### **Position: Support**

This measure would allow a pathway for foreign medical school graduates to be licensed as physicians that was previously only available to graduates who passed the qualifying examination of the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates before 1984, establish an alternative pathway for the licensure as physicians for foreign medical graduates who passed certain examinations, possess an Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates certificate, and have completed two years of post-graduate medical training.

International Medical Graduates who are well trained may bring a wealth of global health knowledge to our State, enriching health systems with cultural diversity and filling in gaps in community healthcare delivery. Currently Hawaii has 3,672 physicians providing care in our state, and there is a statewide shortage of 768 Full Time Equivalents (FTEs). Hawaii presently suffers from a critical physician workforce shortage and will certainly benefit from alternative pathways to licensure for International Medical Graduates, with requirements that maintain high quality and safe care for our citizens.

The Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) has only recently released their recommendations for licensure of internationally Trained Physicians (ITP). These recommendations have been the work of the Advisory Commission on Additional Licensing Models (ACALM), co-chaired by the FSMB, the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) and Intealth™ (which oversees the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates - ECFMG). Integration of these recommendations will be important in the development of alternative pathways for medical licensure in Hawaii.

#### **2025 Hawaii Medical Association Officers**

Elizabeth Ann Ignacio, MD, President • Nadine Tenn-Salle, MD, President Elect • Angela Pratt, MD, Immediate Past President  
Jerris Hedges, MD, Treasurer • Thomas Kosasa, MD, Secretary • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

#### **2025 Hawaii Medical Association Public Policy Coordination Team**

Jerald Garcia, MD, Chair  
Linda Rosehill, JD, Government Relations • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

HMA appreciates the changes to the measure from CPC and supports this measure.

As new pathways for licensure of Internationally Trained Physicians are developed, HMA recommends further collaboration of Hawaii stakeholders including the state medical board, Department of Health, health systems, hospitals and payers for the careful consideration of the FSMB- ACALM recommendations. A stakeholder Work Group may allow for a coordinated collective effort to further develop alternate licensure pathways for Internationally Trained Physicians and ensure that approved candidates possess the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to provide high quality, competent and safe patient care in Hawaii.

Thank you for allowing the Hawaii Medical Association to testify in support of this measure.

#### REFERENCES AND QUICK LINKS

Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB). Advisory Commission on Additional Licensing Models. [FSMB.org Feb 4 2025. https://www.fsmb.org/siteassets/communications/acalm-guidance.pdf](https://www.fsmb.org/siteassets/communications/acalm-guidance.pdf) Accessed Feb 12 2025.

Illinois State Medical Society. New ISMS-Backed Legislation Opens a Licensure Path for More International Medical Graduates! [ISMS.org Sept 8 2023](https://www.isms.org/Sept-8-2023). Accessed Feb 5 2025.

Ramesh T, Brotherton SE, Wozniak GD, Yu H. An increasing number of states filled Conrad 30 waivers for recruiting international medical graduates. [Health Aff Sch. 2024 Aug 19;2\(9\):qxae103](https://doi.org/10.1093/haschl/qxae103). doi: 10.1093/haschl/qxae103. Erratum in: [Health Aff Sch. 2024 Oct 14;2\(10\):qxae121](https://doi.org/10.1093/haschl/qxae121). doi: 10.1093/haschl/qxae121. PMID: 39220581; PMCID: PMC11364145.

Ramesh T, Horvitz-Lennon M, Yu H. Opening the Door Wider to International Medical Graduates - The Significance of a New Tennessee Law. [N Engl J Med. 2023 Nov 23;389\(21\):1925-1928](https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMp2310001). doi: 10.1056/NEJMp2310001. Epub 2023 Nov 18. PMID: 37982423; PMCID: PMC10688565.

Withy K et al. [UH System Annual Report to the 2025 Legislature on Findings from the Hawai'i Physician Workforce Assessment Project](https://www.hawaii.gov/health/2025/01/01/uh-system-annual-report-to-the-2025-legislature-on-findings-from-the-hawai-i-physician-workforce-assessment-project/). Accessed Feb 1 2025.

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Yip C. Hawaii faces shortage of 800 physicians, with neighbor islands hit hardest. [KITV.com. May 20 2024](https://www.kitv.com/story/news/2024/05/20/hawaii-physician-shortage/800-physicians-shortage-hawaii/). Accessed Feb 1 2025.

Lu A. Factors Exacerbating the Physician Shortage in Hawaii: What is Hawaii Doing to Stem the Tide? [Brown University School of Public Health. April 3 2024](https://www.brown.edu/news/2024/04/03/factors-exacerbating-the-physician-shortage-in-hawaii/). Accessed Feb 1 2025.

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#### 2025 Hawaii Medical Association Public Policy Coordination Team

Jerald Garcia MD, Chair  
Linda Rosehill, JD, Government Relations • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

**HB-1379-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 9:55:16 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/17/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
M. Chong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

I support the expansion and clarification of eligibility for internationally trained medical personnel. The United States centric approach to acceptance of education needs to change. This gives a pathway for providers who may be more closely aligned with the population they will serve to work freely here and ensures that the standards and competence the local consumer expects will be met as well. As a mother to a premed student here in Hawaii, I believe options are important.

Melissa Chong

**HB-1379-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/16/2025 10:30:26 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/17/2025 1:00:00 PM

**LATE**

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dara Yatsushiro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support.

**LATE**

**HB-1379-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/16/2025 10:27:37 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/17/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dr. Guy Yatsushiro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this since Hawaii has a doctor shortage.