

Testimony of the Hawaii Medical Board

**Before the
Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection
Tuesday, April 1, 2025
10:07 a.m.
Conference Room 229 and Videoconference**

**On the following measure:
H.B. 1379, H.D. 2 S.D. 1, RELATING TO HEALTH**

Chair Keohokalole 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.

Tuesday, April 1, 2025 at 10:07 AM
Via Video Conference; Conference Room 229

Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection

To: Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair
Senator Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair

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

**Re: HB 1379, HD2, SD1 – Testimony In support
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 HB 1379, HD2, SD1 which 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 Commerce and Consumer Protection

Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair
Senator Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair

Tuesday, April 1, 2025, at 10:07AM
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

LATE

RE: HB1379 HD2 SD1 Relating to Health

Aloha e Chair Keohokalole, Vice Chair Fukunaga, 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 Senate Draft 1 (HB1379 HD2 SD1), 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 SD1 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.

Hawaii faces a severe shortage of qualified physicians, particularly on the neighbor islands, where a 2022 assessment by the Hawaii Physician Workforce Assessment Project found that some counties are missing as much as forty percent of the doctors they need. To address this deficit, this measure broadens the criteria under which graduates of foreign medical schools may obtain licensure in Hawaii, recognizing additional forms of post-graduate training, including accredited clinical fellowship programs. By doing so, the legislation seeks to strengthen the local healthcare workforce and improve access to vital medical services across the State.

By making licensure more attainable for qualified foreign-trained doctors, the measure encourages the recruitment and retention of medical talent to meet critical healthcare demands. The Chamber supports this legislation because it bolsters local healthcare capacity, alleviates physician shortages, and ultimately enhances health outcomes for communities statewide.

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 Senate Draft 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify



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LATE

Rhea Bautista, MD

Executive Director

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To: The Honorable Chair Jarrett Keohokalole, the Honorable Vice Chair Carol Fukunaga, and the Committee on Commerce & Consumer Protection

Subject: Testimony in Support of HB 1379, HD2, SD1

Aloha Esteemed Committee Members,

The Philippine Medical Association of Hawaii (PMAH) strongly supports HB 1379, HD2, SD1, which creates an equitable and much-needed licensure pathway for internationally trained physicians who meet rigorous clinical and examination standards.

As an organization representing over 200 Filipino-American physicians across the state, PMAH recognizes the vital role foreign medical graduates (FMGs) have played—and continue to play—in Hawaii's healthcare workforce. Many of our members are FMGs who have overcome significant barriers to provide compassionate, high-quality care across the islands, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

HB 1379, HD2, SD1 proposes alternative licensure pathways for FMGs who have passed the USMLE and completed post-graduate training in accredited programs, aligning with standards recognized by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) and other internationally respected bodies. We commend this measure for its thoughtful approach to expanding the physician pipeline while maintaining public safety and high standards of care.

We are aligned with the testimonies submitted by the State Health Planning and Development Agency (SHPDA), Hawai'i Medical Board, Hawai'i Pacific Health, Grassroot Institute of Hawaii, and the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii in supporting the intent of this bill. We also agree with SHPDA's recommendation to reference the World Directory of Medical Schools and to consider structured supervised practice periods for internationally trained physicians. We support the Hawai'i Medical Board's emphasis on maintaining appropriate protections for public safety while creating feasible pathways for qualified physicians.

However, we feel it is critical to clarify and address one key issue:

"The measure also provides alternative requirements for foreign medical school graduates who have completed certain requirements to qualify for licensure... by obtaining an ECFMG certificate and completing two years of post-graduate training in an accredited residency or fellowship program."

We respectfully highlight that this still requires residency or fellowship training in the United States or Canada—which is the very bottleneck this bill seeks to address. FMGs who have already completed residency in their home country and have been actively practicing for years often face significant barriers to re-enter a U.S. residency program due to limited GME slots. Requiring them to repeat residency or

fellowship here diminishes the value of their prior training and experience, and perpetuates an inefficient and overly narrow pathway.

We instead advocate for a more practical and globally informed model:

Supervised Practice Period: We support allowing experienced FMGs who have completed residency abroad and passed the USMLE to undergo a structured, time-limited supervised practice period in Hawaii. This model ensures patient safety while valuing prior training and allows Hawaii to retain control over quality assurance and integration into our healthcare culture.

Formation of a Stakeholder Working Group: PMAH strongly recommends forming a stakeholder group including the Hawai'i Medical Board, Hawai'i Medical Association, Philippine Medical Association of Hawaii, health systems, and other community and physician organizations. This group would collaboratively identify acceptable training standards, address any concerns about public safety, and create a shared pathway that respects both local and international best practices. Decisions about medical licensure should not be made in haste—and we are committed to working together to get it right.

At the end of the day, this is not about lowering the bar—it is about expanding the lane for physicians who have already proven their competence and are ready to serve our communities with compassion, cultural sensitivity, and excellence.

We appreciate the Committee's attention to this urgent issue and look forward to working collaboratively toward a solution that ensures access to care, high standards of practice, and respect for diverse physician pathways.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Rainier Dennis D. Bautista, MD, DABFM, FAAFP
President, Philippine Medical Association of Hawaii



LATE

Hawaii Medical Association

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SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair
Senator Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair

Date: April 1, 2025
From: Hawaii Medical Association (HMA)
Jerald Garcia MD - Chair, HMA Public Policy Committee

RE HB 1379 HD2 SD 1 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

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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

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.

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April 1, 2025, 10:07 a.m.

Hawaii State Capitol

Conference Room 229 and Videoconference

To: Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection

Sen. Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair

Sen. Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair

From: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

Ted Kefalas, Director of Strategic Campaigns

RE: COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF HB1379 HD2 SD1 — RELATING TO HEALTH

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

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii supports the intent of [HB1379 HD2 SD1](#), 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.¹ The Hawaii Physician Workforce Assessment estimates that the state needs to net 100 new physicians per year in order to meet demand by 2032.² 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

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

² [Ibid.](#)