

## **Testimony of the Hawaii Medical Board**

**Before the  
House Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce  
Thursday, February 20, 2025  
2:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 329 and Videoconference**

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

Chair Matayoshi 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 the intent of this measure and offers comments on this bill.

The purposes of this bill are to: (1) specify the types of foreign medical schools whose graduates may be accepted for licensure; (2) specify licensure requirements for foreign medical graduates; (3) exempt foreign medical graduates from the residency requirements for medical licensure if the applicant had at least one year of fellowship training in a program whose parent program or hospital holds certain accreditations; and (4) authorize the Board to waive the residency requirements if the foreign medical graduate applicant has graduated from a foreign medical school, passed the USMLE, and practices in a specialty that no other licensed physician in the State practices in.

For the Committee's information, the Advisory Commission on Additional Licensing Models (ACALM) was formed by the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB), Intealth, and the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) in 2023, in response to increasing interest among state policymakers to improve patient access and reduce workforce shortages by changing licensure requirements for physicians who have completed training and/or practiced abroad. The ACALM recently released its first set of recommendations<sup>1</sup>, to assist with the development and implementation of laws specific to the licensing of physicians who have already trained and practiced medicine outside of the United States or Canada.

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<sup>1</sup> Advisory Commission Releases Recommendations to Inform Legislation on Licensing Internationally-Trained Physicians: "<https://www.fsmb.org/siteassets/communications/acalm-guidance.pdf>"

The Board supports this measure's intent to expand alternative licensure pathways. However, the Board is concerned that the language in this bill is overly subjective and would give the Board unnecessarily broad discretion to determine the comparability of clinical competencies between individuals who have graduated from a program accredited by the ACGME or American Osteopathic Association (AOA) and those who have not (page 3, lines 3 through 8). Further, the waiver of the residency requirement (page 5, lines 8 through 15) is vague and does not justify the compromising of public safety to allow a less qualified candidate a full license to practice in the State. The Board notes that it does not license by specialty making it difficult to determine if eligibility for the waiver is met. The Board respectfully requests additional time to review the ACALM's guidance document to provide recommendations for amendments to this measure, including amending the appropriate statutory provision, Hawaii Revised Statutes section 453-4.5, Foreign medical graduates; alternative qualifications instead of HRS section 453-4, Qualifications for examination and licensure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

Feb. 20, 2025, 2 p.m.  
Hawaii State Capitol  
Conference Room 329 and Videoconference

**To: House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce**  
**Rep. Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair**  
**Rep. Cory M. Chun, Vice-Chair**

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

RE: COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF HB1379 HD1 — RELATING TO HEALTH

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

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii supports the intent of [HB1379 HD1](#), 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.](#)



**Philippine Medical Association of Hawai'i**

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**Rhea Bautista, MD**

*Executive Director*

**BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
2025**

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*Ohana Medical Missions*

To: The Honorable Chair Scot Z. Matayoshi, the Honorable Vice Chair Cory M. Chun, and the Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce

Subject: TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB1379

Aloha Esteemed Committee Members,

On behalf of the Philippine Medical Association of Hawaii (PMAH), we submit this testimony in strong support of HB 1379, which seeks to create a clear and fair pathway for foreign-trained doctors to obtain licensure in Hawaii. PMAH represents over 200 physicians across both specialty and primary care fields. Many of our members are foreign medical graduates (FMGs) who have become cornerstones of Hawaii's medical community, providing essential care to underserved populations. We believe this bill has the potential to significantly reduce the state's physician shortage, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

Hawaii urgently needs more doctors, particularly in primary care and specialty fields. Many FMGs possess the necessary skills and training to help alleviate this shortage, yet the current licensing system poses significant barriers. By refining the process, these qualified physicians can contribute to our healthcare system while upholding high standards of patient care. To ensure fairness and accessibility, we defer to the Hawaii Medical Board to establish the parameters for implementing this pathway effectively.

The Philippine Medical Association of Hawaii (PMAH) strongly supports HB 1379 as a crucial step toward addressing the physician shortage. However, 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.

Through continued collaboration with the medical community, Hawaii can create a balanced and effective solution—enabling FMGs to strengthen the healthcare workforce while ensuring rigorous oversight and training. Taking action now will help strengthen Hawaii's healthcare workforce, expand patient access to care, and maintain the high medical standards our communities rely on.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Rainier Dennis D. Bautista, MD, DABFM, FAAFP

President, Philippine Medical Association of Hawaii



Thursday, February 20, 2025 at 2:00 PM  
Via Video Conference; Conference Room 329

**House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce**

To: Representative Scott Matayoshi, Chair  
Representative Cory Chun, Vice Chair

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

Re: **HB 1379, HD1 – 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 writes in SUPPORT of HB 1379, HD1 which specifies licensure requirements for foreign medical graduates and exempts foreign medical graduates from the residency requirements for medical licensure if the applicant has had one year of fellowship training where the parent program or hospital holds certain accreditations.

Allowing the substitution of one year of medical training in a hospital for one year of fellowship training where the parent program or hospital is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education may permit foreign medical school graduates to become licensed professionals and enter the health care workforce sooner. A residency program is entered into after graduation from medical school and lasts between 2-4 years, depending on the specialty the resident is training in, and is often performed in a hospital setting. A fellowship, on the other hand, is done after the completion of a residency program and involves additional specialized training under a more experienced physician. The purposes and objectives of residency and fellowship training are similar. Both programs aim to prepare doctors for future full-fledged medical practice.

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. Therefore, the flexibility to

substitute types of accredited training may ease the path to licensure and has the potential of allowing much needed physicians to practice in Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



## Hawaii Medical Association

1360 South Beretania Street, Suite 200 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96814  
Phone: 808.536.7702 • Fax: 808.528.2376 • hawaiimedicalassociation.org

### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE

Representative Scot C Matayoshi, Chair  
Representative Cory M Chun, Vice Chair

Date: February 20, 2025  
From: Hawaii Medical Association (HMA)  
Jerald Garcia MD - Chair, HMA Public Policy Committee

**RE HB 1379 HD1** RELATING TO HEALTH- Medical Students; Licensure; Waiver; International Medical Graduates; Exemptions

#### **Position: Comments**

This measure would exempt 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, authorize 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 that no other licensed physician in the State practices in.

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 supports the intent of this measure. HMA respectfully recommends further discussion and 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 provide comments on this measure.

## REFERENCES AND QUICK LINKS

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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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**HB-1379-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 9:57:35 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/20/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
hugo higa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**To:** The Honorable Chair Scot Z. Matayoshi, the Honorable Vice Chair Cory M. Chun, and the Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce

**Subject:** TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB1379\_HD1

I am writing in **strong support of HB1379\_HD1**, which seeks to establish a **clear and fair pathway** for foreign-trained physicians to obtain licensure in Hawaii. As a local physician, I see firsthand the **growing physician shortage** in our state.

Hawaii **urgently needs** more doctors, and many **foreign medical graduates (FMGs)** already have the training and experience to help, yet face unnecessary barriers to licensure. This bill provides a **practical solution** by refining the licensing process **while maintaining high patient care standards**.

By supporting **HB1379\_HD1**, Hawaii can strengthen its **healthcare workforce, expand access to care, and ensure every community receives the quality medical care it deserves**.

I believe this especially impacts primary care from which many practitioners have moved away from this field. Passage of this bill will add more medical care to many populations.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Hugo Higa MD

**LATE**

**HB-1379-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 5:53:04 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/20/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Arlene Kiyohara	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Dr. Arlene Kiyohara, MD

**LATE**

**HB-1379-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 9:05:24 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/20/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kenric Murayama	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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