



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
Friday, February 21, 2025 at 10:00 a.m.

By

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Lee Buenconsejo-Lum, MD, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
John A. Burns School of Medicine

And

Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 718 HD1 – RELATING TO POSITIONS AT THE JOHN A. BURNS SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today. The John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) **strongly supports HB 718 HD1** which seeks funding for three (3) faculty positions in cardiovascular biology, tropical medicine and quantitative health biostatistics and one (1) environmental health and safety officer staff position. The amount requested is \$763,000 for each of fiscal years 2025-2026 and 2026-2027.

1. Faculty Positions

Advancement of JABSOM's research mission enables the healthcare community to better understand potential health disparities across a wide spectrum of conditions and diseases commonly experienced by many in Hawai'i who are already at higher risk for disease or who suffer disproportionately. The basic science position in cardiovascular biology will help further the foundational knowledge that can then be used by our clinicians, researchers in our Department of Native Hawaiian Health, and community partners to develop better risk reduction strategies or new interventions that could reduce cardiovascular diseases. A senior faculty member in JABSOM's Tropical Medicine program will advance the department's education and research of globally significant infectious diseases of vital interest to Hawai'i and the Asia-Pacific region. The department's importance in addressing diseases of far-reaching consequences became known during the COVID-19 Pandemic when it was vital to develop diagnostics and vaccines to preserve the health of Hawai'i's residents efficiently and effectively, given our remote location and isolated communities. Biostatisticians play a pivotal role in providing required education to medical students, residents, and other trainees, enriching the academic environment and facilitating student success. They are also critical members of research teams, especially in this era of big data sets and utilizing artificial intelligence tools to perform analyses more quickly, which means that the data

can be used to drive policy, program, or new strategies more quickly. Together, all three faculty positions enable JABSOM to further innovate and fulfill long-term goals to improve health in Hawai'i and the Asia-Pacific region, and will help in JABSOM's plans to increase class size over the next few years.

2. Staff Position

Since the Kaka'ako health and wellness medical school buildings opened in 2005, the City and County of Honolulu Board of Water Supply (BWS) provided JABSOM's chilled water service operations, equipment maintenance and injection well testing, and fulfilled reporting requirements. The BWS 20-year contract will expire in September 2025, and the BWS has elected not to renew the contract. JABSOM must therefore contract a chiller plant-cooling system servicer to maintain uninterrupted operations and emergency services twenty-four hours, seven days per week. An environmental safety officer is needed to perform all the required daily, quarterly, semi-annual and annual testing of the injection wells and reporting duties. The environmental safety officer is crucial to the continuous operation of JABSOM's chiller plant-cooling system which supports all of its buildings.

We support HB 718 HD1, provided that its passage does not impact the priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.



**Testimony to the House Committee on Finance
Friday, February 21, 2025; 10:00 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 308
Via Videoconference**

RE: HOUSE BILL NO. 0718, HOUSE DRAFT 1, RELATING TO POSITIONS AT THE JOHN A. BURNS SCHOOL OF MEDICINE.

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, 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** House Bill No. 0718, House Draft 1, RELATING TO POSITIONS AT THE JOHN A. BURNS SCHOOL OF MEDICINE.

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.

This measure, as received by your Committee, would appropriate an unspecified amount of general funds for fiscal year 2025-2026 and fiscal year 2026-2027 to fund an unspecified number of full-time equivalent faculty positions and environmental health and safety officer staff positions at the John A. Burns School of Medicine.

This measure would take effect on July 1, 3000.

The State of Hawaii is experiencing a severe shortage of health care professionals in the workforce, especially in rural areas. Recent studies note that the current shortage of physicians is at 20% of the total full-time equivalent positions throughout the State. The shortage is especially severe in the fields of primary care, infectious diseases, colorectal surgery, pathology, general surgery, pulmonology, neurology, neurosurgery, orthopedic surgery, family medicine, cardiothoracic surgery, rheumatology, cardiology, hematology/oncology, and pediatric subspecialties of endocrinology, cardiology, neurology, hematology/oncology, and gastroenterology.

Testimony on House Bill No. 0718, House Draft 1
Friday, February 21, 2025; 10:00 a.m.
Page 2

The HPCA believes that provision of additional resources for the John A. Burns School of Medicine will greatly enhance the educational opportunities for future physicians. This is critical because the shortage of doctors in Hawaii is dire.

It should also be noted that Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center (WCCHC) also trains future physicians through its partnership with the A.T. Still University School of Osteopathic Medicine in Arizona (ATSU-SOMA). In addition, WCCHC will embark on its Family Medicine Residency Program beginning July 2025.

Accordingly, the HPCA urges 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.



The House Committee on Finance
February 21, 2025
Room 308
10:00 AM

RE: **HB 718, HD 1, Relating to Positions at the John A. Burns School of Medicine**

Attention: Chair Kyle Yamashita, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi and members of the Committee

The University of Hawaii Professional Assembly (UHPA), the exclusive bargaining representative for all University of Hawai'i faculty members across Hawai'i's statewide 10-campus system, **supports HB 718, HD 1**, relating to positions at the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM).

HB 718, HD 1, establishes three full-time positions in cardiovascular biology, tropical medicine, and quantitative health biostatistics for the purpose of better understanding health disparities across a wide spectrum of conditions and diseases commonly experienced by many in the State who are already at risk for disease or who suffer disproportionately.

To ensure the recruitment and retention of the positions, it is essential for the FTE appropriation to have a recurring, general funded designation.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Fern'.

Christian L. Fern
Executive Director
University of Hawaii Professional Assembly