



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

#### Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Higher Education  
Tuesday, March 18, 2025 at 3:00 p.m.

By

T. Samuel Shomaker, MD, Dean,  
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 Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, 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 are needed for teaching medical students and residents and are thus part of our strategy for addressing the physician workforce shortage. The faculty positions will also enable JABSOM to further innovate and fulfill long-term goals to improve health in Hawai'i and the Asia-Pacific region.

## 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.



The Committee on Higher Education  
March 18, 2025  
Room 229  
3:00 PM

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

Attention: Chair Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Michelle Kidani 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,

Christian L. Fern  
Executive Director  
University of Hawaii Professional Assembly



**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Higher Education  
Tuesday, March 18, 2025; 3:00 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 229  
Via Videoconference**

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

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, 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**  
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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.

**HB-718-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2025 8:35:46 PM

Testimony for HRE on 3/18/2025 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kevin Faccenda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill to fund doctors and researchers at JABSOM. Continued investment is needed in public health, given the changes happening with federal funding right now, having this sort of funding coming from within the state is more important now than ever to keep our 'ohana healthy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify,

Kevin Faccenda, Honolulu

**HB-718-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/16/2025 11:40:10 AM

Testimony for HRE on 3/18/2025 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Christian Llantero	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a current student at the University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine, I believe that funds for positions in cardiovascular biology, tropical medicine, and quantitative health biostatistics will greatly further and supplement the education I am currently receiving towards my medical degree. As an aspiring physician, having faculty in these departmental positions will be a great asset as I aim to learn about these areas of medicine. For someone who aims to practice in Hawaii, gaining knowledge in these fields is fundamental in being able to administer patient-centered care and having these faculty to assist me in acquiring such knowledge is invaluable.

**HB-718-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/17/2025 2:00:59 PM

Testimony for HRE on 3/18/2025 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Selena Vanapruks	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB 718. These positions are essential to biomedical research in Hawai'i. People have worked hard for these positions, sometimes for their whole lives, and deserve the opportunity to hold these roles. Especially now as federal funding is being cut so drastically, the state should support JABSOM in filling these positions while funding is available.

**LATE**

**HB-718-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/18/2025 11:08:54 AM  
Testimony for HRE on 3/18/2025 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jason Irei	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Jason Irei and I am a Ph.D. student studying at the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM). I am writing to strongly advocate for HB718. I have seen firsthand that JABSOM is an institution dedicated to training high-quality physicians as well as biomedical scientists.

Additional faculty research positions will create invaluable opportunities for Hawaii’s medical and research students to engage in high-impact science. Early exposure to basic and translational research projects will allow students to develop critical thinking skills, deepen their understanding of disease mechanisms, and foster a passion for scientific discovery. These experiences will be a key differentiator as medical and graduate students move forward in their careers.

HB718 is a critical investment in the future of both physicians and the broader scientific community. I strongly urge you to support HB718 so that JABSOM may continue to train the next generation of physicians and scientists.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jason Irei