

Testimony of the Board of Pharmacy

**Before the
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Wednesday, February 5, 2025
1:00 p.m.
Conference Room 225 and Videoconference**

**On the following measure:
S. B. 1279, RELATING TO PHARMACISTS**

Chair San Buenaventura and Members of the Committee:

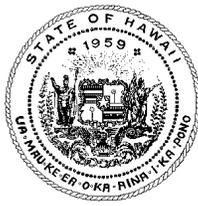
My name is Rochelle Araki and I am the Executive Officer for the Board of Pharmacy (Board). The Board will meet on February 20, 2025, and takes no position on this measure at this time. For now, the Board offers the following comments.

The purpose of this bill is to authorize a registered pharmacist under contract with a covered entity for purposes of the Federal 340B Drug Pricing Program to supervise via telehealth the filling or receipt of a prescription in certain circumstances.

This measure is similar to House Resolution 124, which was adopted in 2024 to demonstrate a method of expanding the accessibility and affordability of prescription drugs to vulnerable populations and rural communities throughout the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
AND REHABILITATION**
*Ka 'Oihana Ho'omalu Kalaima
a Ho'oponopono Ola*
1177 Alakea Street
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TOMMY JOHNSON
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and
Programs

No. _____

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 1279
RELATING TO PHARMACISTS.



by
Tommy Johnson, Director
Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 5, 2025; 1:00 pm.
State Capitol, Conference Room 225 & via Videoconference

Chair San Beunaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 1279, which proposes to expand access to pharmacy services through telehealth for medically underserved populations. Allowing pharmacists under contract with covered entities in the 340B Drug Pricing Program to oversee prescriptions remotely improves healthcare access while maximizing resources.

Healthcare in corrections is deeply connected to community health. Individuals in our custody and care come from the community and will return to it. Many have chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, or substance use disorders, and ensuring consistent medication access reduces risks to both public safety and long-term healthcare costs. The 340B program is essential in this effort by making medications more affordable for vulnerable populations and stretching limited state resources further.

Many of the individuals in our custody and care come from communities with limited access to healthcare providers and pharmacies. SB 1279 helps address these disparities by extending the reach of qualified pharmacists through telehealth services, ensuring that patients—whether in a correctional facility or a rural community—receive the medications they need without unnecessary barriers.

The health of our correctional population is a shared responsibility, as these individuals reintegrate into our neighborhoods, workplaces, and healthcare systems. SB1279 strengthens Hawaii's commitment to equitable healthcare access, promotes fiscal responsibility, and supports public safety and health by ensuring that patients receive the medications they need in a timely and efficient manner.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support** for SB 1279.



Committee on Health and Human Services
Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: Wednesday, February 5, 2025

ACS CAN SUPPORTS SB 1279: RELATING TO PHARMACISTS

Cynthia Au, Government Relations Director – Hawaii Guam
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

Thank you for the opportunity to **SUPPORT** SB 1279: Relating to Pharmacists. This bill authorizes a registered pharmacist under contract with a covered entity for purposes of the federal 340B Drug Pricing Program to supervise via telehealth the filling or receipt of a prescription in certain circumstances.

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN), the nonprofit, non-partisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society advocates for public policies to reduce the cancer burden for everyone. ACS CAN supports telepharmacy as a method of expanding the accessibility and affordability of prescription drugs to vulnerable populations and rural communities throughout the state. Everyone should have equitable access to prescription medications.

The intent of the bill is to put into law Lanai Community Health Center's (LCHC's) Telepharmacy Project which ended on June 1, 2024 so patients have access to timely affordable prescription medications. Currently, almost 80 percent of the population of Lanai relies on LCHC for primary care services but might have to wait for certain prescription medications to be received by mail. Federal qualified health centers are federally funded nonprofit health centers or clinics that serve medically underserved areas and populations.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony in SUPPORT on this important matter. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Government Relations Director Cynthia Au at 808.460.6109, or Cynthia.Au@Cancer.org.



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The State Legislature
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Wednesday, February 5, 2025
Conference Room 225, 1:00 p.m.

TO: The Honorable Joy San Buenaventura Chair
FROM: Keali'i Lopez, State Director, AARP Hawai'i
RE: Support for S.B. 1279 – Tele Pharmacy

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura and Members of the Committee:

My name is Keali'i Lopez, and I am the State Director for AARP Hawai'i. AARP is a nonpartisan, social mission organization that advocates for individuals age 50 and older. We have a membership of nearly 38 million nationwide and nearly 135,000 in Hawaii. We advocate at the state and federal level for the issues that matter most to older adults and their families.

AARP supports S.B. 1279 which authorizes a registered pharmacist under contract with a covered entity for purposes of the federal 340B Drug Pricing Program to supervise via telehealth the filling or receipt of a prescription in certain circumstances.

This bill will directly benefit consumers, especially those on the neighbor islands including kupuna. The Lanai Community Health Center's tele pharmacy pilot project successfully demonstrated a prototype for other remote communities or areas facing health provider shortages throughout the state. Under the Lanai model, a licensed pharmacist located on the island of Maui was able to supervise Lanai Community Health Center staff via tele health technology with the filling and dispensing of prescriptions to patients at the LCHC campus. This allowed Lanai patients to receive their prescriptions and refills more quickly than if they had needed to wait for the medications to arrive through the mail.

Covered entities under the federal 340B Program need to either operate a pharmacy at the location where the prescriptions are filled for distribution, or must contract with a participating third party pharmacy to fill and distribute the medications. For especially isolated communities, where there may only be one pharmacy servicing an entire island, should that pharmacy decide not to participate in the 340B Program, the entire community would not be able to receive the savings discounts nor the expanded health care services that the 340B Program was intended to provide.

The passage of this bill will allow tele-pharmacy services such like Lanai Community Health continue to serve the island residents. Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 1279.

SB-1279

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 10:09:01 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/5/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ronald Taniguchi, Pharm.D., MBA	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In full support of SB1279. Mahalo

SB-1279

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 7:51:02 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/5/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melissa Bumgardner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB1279. Federally Qualified Health Centers located on the neighbor islands face extreme resource limitations. Recruiting and retaining qualified healthcare providers is one such limitation. SB 1279 would allow for covered entities, such as FQHCs to provide much needed medication access to patients via "telepharmacy." Telepharmacy allows entities to leverage scarce resources and ensure their patients can access medications at their home health center rather than experience delays in waiting for medications to come via mail (with contracted pharmacies). This concept has been demonstrated to be a safe and effective method of delivery pharmacy services to patients such that 28 states permit the practice (as of 2023). It was also successfully demonstrated here, in Hawai'i, in a pilot project on Lana'i in 2024.

I encourage you to pass this bill to help ensure that all Hawai'i residents have readily available access to medications.

Feb. 5, 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

LATE

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

COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF SB1279 — RELATING TO PHARMACISTS

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

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii would like to offer its support for [SB1279](#), which would allow pharmacists serving certain eligible facilities and patients to supervise via telehealth the filling or receipt of prescriptions in certain circumstances.

The expanded use of telehealth that would be enabled by this bill unfortunately would be limited to pharmacists under contract with and helping patients at facilities designated as helping medically underserved communities as defined by federal law. Even with that limitation, however, it would represent an important step forward for telehealth in Hawaii.

Greater use of telehealth involving pharmacists would be an easy, practical way to mitigate the problems related to healthcare access and staffing shortages that have had a significant effect on healthcare in Hawaii. These issues are especially prevalent in rural areas and the underserved communities addressed in this bill.

We hope this bill will be the first of many to expand the use of telehealth in Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ted Kefalas
Director of Strategic Campaigns
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

**2025 Hawaii
Leadership Board**

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Wednesday, February 5, 1:00 PM Hawaii State Capitol, Conference
Room 225, and Videoconference**

RE: Senate Bill No. 1279 – RELATING TO PHARMACISTS

Travis Kikuchi, *Chair*
Senior Vice President
Central Pacific Bank

Lori McCarney, *Immediate*
Past Chair Community
Advocate

Tricia Medeiros, *Past Chair*
Chief Operating Officer
The Plaza Assisted Living

Gina Fujikami, *MD*
The Queen's Medical
Center

Kai Ohashi,
Financial Advisor Edward
Jones

Michael Robinson,
Vice President Hawaii Pacific
Health

Kimberly Soares, *Vice*
President Atlas Insurance

Gino Soquena,
Executive Director
Hawaii Building and
Construction Trade Council

Gordon Takaki, *Past*
President Hawaii Island
Chamber of Commerce

Cary Tanaka,
Past President
Island Insurance
Companies

Caroline Witherspoon,
President Becker
Communications

LJ R. Duenas,
Executive Director
Alzheimer's Association

Chair San Buenaventura and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the critical issue of standardizing cognitive assessment tests. My name is Coby Chock, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy for the Alzheimer's Association. I write in strong support of SB1279, Relating to Pharmacists, which will ensure access to prescription drugs in geographically isolated areas.

People living with dementia and Alzheimer's, along with their caregivers, rely heavily on these prescriptions to manage the symptoms of the disease. These medications are essential for maintaining their cognitive function, managing behavioral symptoms, and improving their overall quality of life. Without easy access to necessary medications, their health and well-being can significantly deteriorate, leading to increased hospitalizations and a higher burden on healthcare systems.

Geographically isolated areas often face unique challenges, including limited healthcare facilities and longer travel times to access medical services. This bill will help bridge the gap in healthcare access by allowing registered pharmacists to oversee the filling and receipt of prescriptions via telehealth. This provision ensures that individuals in remote locations can obtain the medications they need without undue hardship. By supporting this bill, we can provide much-needed relief to those affected by Alzheimer's and dementia, allowing them to live more comfortably and with dignity.

We urge you to support this bill and help improve the lives of individuals affected by Alzheimer's and dementia. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support! If you have questions, please contact me at 808-451-3410 or ckchock@alz.org



Coby Chock
Director of Public Policy and Advocacy
Alzheimer's Association - Hawaii

February 4, 2025

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Senate Bill 1279, Relating to Pharmacists
Wednesday, February 5, 2025 at 1:00 pm
State Capitol, Conference Room 225/Videoconference



LATE

Aloha Chair San Buenaventure, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

The American Diabetes Association (ADA) is the nation's leading voluntary health organization fighting to end the diabetes epidemic and help people living with diabetes thrive. The ADA supports Senate Bill 1279, Relating to Pharmacists.

Diabetes is an epidemic in the US. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), over 38 million Americans have diabetes and face its devastating consequences.¹ What's true nationwide is also true in Hawai'i. Approximately 108,600 adults in Hawaii, or 9.5% of the adult population, have been diagnosed with diabetes. Every year, an estimated 6,700 adults in Hawai'i are newly diagnosed with diabetes and every diagnosis carries the potential for serious and potentially life-threatening complications, including kidney failure, blindness and limb amputation. Diabetes was the eighth leading cause of death in the United States in 2022.²

The mission of the American Diabetes Association (ADA) is to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes. For 80 years, the ADA has been driving discovery and research to treat, manage and prevent diabetes while working relentlessly for a cure, all while advocating for policies to improve health care access, coverage, and affordability; support healthy diets; and address the barriers that can stand in the way of good health.

Senate Bill 1279 would allow a registered pharmacist working under the federal 340B Program to remotely oversee a prescription filling site using live audio-visual communication, even if they are not physically present. Currently, Hawai'i law requires a pharmacist to be on-site when filling prescriptions. The change aims to help rural and difficult to serve areas—where there often isn't enough access to

¹ National Diabetes Statistics Report (2024) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/php/dataresearch/2-FASTSTATS>

² FASTSTATS - leading causes of death (2024) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/leading-causes-of-death.htm>

healthcare professionals—to ensure that prescriptions can be filled safely and efficiently. If passed, this bill will increase access and affordability of diabetes treatment options among at-risk populations.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify and urge your **support** of Senate Bill 1279.

Mālama pono,



WE FIGHT
to end diabetes.

Naomi Manuel, MPH
Executive Director, Hawai'i

Hawai'i Standard Time
Phone: +1 (808) 764-3348
NManuel@diabetes.org

¹ National Diabetes Statistics Report (2024) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/php/dataresearch/2-FASTSTATS>

² FASTSTATS - leading causes of death (2024) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/leading-causes-of-death.htm>