



## DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

1010 Richards Street, Room 118 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813  
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V) • Fax (808) 586-8129

February 24, 2022

### TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

#### House Bill 1575, House Draft 2 – Relating to Physician Assistants

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports with comments House Bill 1575, House Draft 2 Relating to Physician Assistants.

The DCAB supports with changes to the amendments to Section 291-51, Hawaii Revised Statutes to include "licensed" physician assistant to the Definitions of Certificate of Disability and Person with Disability.

SECTION 2. Section 291-51, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended as follows:

1. By amending the definition of "certificate of disability" to read:  
""Certificate of disability" means a medical statement issued by a licensed practicing physician, licensed physician assistant, or advanced practice registered nurse ~~[which]~~ that verifies that a person is disabled, limited, or impaired in the ability to walk."
2. By amending the definition of "person with a disability" to read:  
""Person with a disability" means a person with a disability that limits or impairs the ability to walk, and who, as determined by a licensed practicing physician, licensed physician assistant, or an advanced practice registered nurse:
  - (1) Cannot walk two hundred feet without stopping to rest, and who has been diagnosed with:
    - (A) An arthritic, neurological, orthopedic, renal, vascular, or oncological condition;
    - (B) Lung disease to such an extent that the person's forced (respiratory) expiratory volume for one second, when measured by spirometry, is less than one liter, or the arterial oxygen tension is less than sixty mm/hg on room air at rest; or
    - (C) A cardiac condition to the extent that the person's functional limitations are classified in severity as Class III or Class IV according to the standards set by the American Heart Association; and
  - (2) Because of a condition identified in paragraph (1):
    - (A) Cannot walk two hundred feet under the person's own power without stopping to rest;
    - (B) Cannot walk without the use of, or assistance from, a brace, cane, crutch, another person, prosthetic device, wheelchair, or other assistive device; or
    - (C) Uses portable oxygen."

Licensed physician assistants who treat patients will have the authority to assess and verify patients who meet the definition of a person with a disability to apply for a disability parking permit.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kristine Pagano*

*for*

KIRBY L. SHAW  
Executive Director

**Testimony of the Hawaii Medical Board**

**Before the  
House Committee on Finance  
Thursday, February 24, 2022  
2:00 p.m.  
Via Videoconference**

**On the following measure:  
H.B. 1575, H.D. 2, RELATING TO PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS**

Chair Luke and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ahlani Quiogue, 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) expand the scope of practice for physician assistants; and (2) require a sampling of medical records, rather than all medical records, to be reviewed when physician assistants prescribe controlled substances.

The Board supports this bill, as it: (1) broadens physician assistants' scope of practice to provide a wide range of services, which would benefit the citizens of Hawaii; and (2) alleviates the overly burdensome administrative requirement of having a supervising physician review all medical records that contain written orders or prescriptions for controlled substances.

The Board recognizes the important role physician assistants have in healthcare and believes this bill is a step in the right direction.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



TO: House Committee on Finance  
The Honorable Sylvia Luke, Chair  
The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Vice Chair

Hearing Date/Time: February 24, 2022, 2:00 p.m.  
Place: Via Videoconference

**Re: HB 1575 HD2, Relating to Physician Assistants**

Dear Chair Luke, Vice Chair Yamashita, and Committee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on HB 1575 HD2, which serves to modernize scope of practice for physician assistants in the state of Hawai`i.

**Hawai`i Academy of Physician Assistants (HAPA) STRONGLY SUPPORTS HB 1575 HD2**

HAPA is the Hawaii state chapter of The American Academy of Physician Assistants. According to the 2021 annual report on findings from the Hawaii physician workforce assessment report, Hawai`i has an unmet need for 732 full time physicians across the state with neighbor island counties facing the most severe shortages.

Paradoxically, since 2016, the number of practicing physician assistants has increased by 105% on the island of Hawai`i, 114% on Kauai, and 35% on Maui. Despite this increase, physician assistants remain underutilized due to Hawai`i's restrictive practice laws, which prevent physician assistants from practicing at the top of their training and education. HAPA supports HB 1575 HD2 because it removes some of these restrictions and helps bring Hawai`i physician assistant scope of practice into alignment with national practices. Notably, physician assistants are one of the three health care professionals (along with physicians and nurse practitioners) authorized by the Affordable Care Act to serve as primary care provider (PCP).

HAPA appreciates the Legislature's passage of Act 181, Session Laws of Hawai`i 2019, which was a monumental bill that modernized physician assistant chart review and successfully lowered administrative burden for physicians, without compromising patient care. HB 1575 HD2 expands the review structure established in 2019 to include physician assistant prescribed controlled substances. Like 2019, we expect this change will continue to prioritize patient care while significantly decreasing physician administrative burden. In addition, HB 1575 HD2 will allow physician assistants, like advanced practice nurses (APRNs), to sign temporary disability insurance forms, disability parking permits, Provider Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment (POLST) forms, and other administrative forms that are time sensitive and critical for patients' quality of life and continuity of care but are often delayed by the physician shortage.

Physician assistants are highly skilled medical providers and authorized by the Affordable Care Act, along with physicians and APRNs, to serve as primary care provider (PCP). They receive rigorous medical training modeled on medical school curriculum which includes rotations in family medicine, internal medicine, general surgery, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, emergency medicine, psychiatry, and other specialty electives. Physician assistant training programs typically require thousands of hours of previous clinical care experience before matriculation is even considered.



In practice, physician assistants routinely take medical histories, perform physical examinations, order and interpret laboratory tests, diagnose illnesses, develop and manage treatment plans, prescribe medications, and first-assist in surgery.

With their skillset and training, physician assistants play a critical role on care delivery teams and can pivot quickly to supply care when and where it is needed most. This has been invaluable during the pandemic when we rely heavily on physician assistants' unique adaptability to ensure care delivery in an ever-changing landscape.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this matter.

Hawai`i Academy of Physician Assistants

Testimony of  
Jonathan Ching  
Government Relations Director

Before:  
House Committee on Finance  
The Honorable Sylvia Luke, Chair  
The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Vice Chair

February 24, 2022  
2:00 p.m.  
Via Videoconference

**Re: HB1575, HD2, Relating to Physician Assistants**

Chair Luke, Vice Chair Yamashita, and committee members, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on HB1575, HD2, which modernizes the practice of physician assistants.

**Kaiser Permanente Hawai'i STRONGLY SUPPORTS HB1575, HD2.**

Kaiser Permanente Hawai'i is Hawai'i's largest integrated health system that provides care and coverage for approximately 265,000 members. Kaiser Permanente Hawai'i believes that physician assistants should be permitted to practice medicine at the top of their training, education, and experience. Kaiser Permanente Hawai'i appreciates the contributions made by licensed physician assistants and has a great deal of confidence in the quality of health care they provide to our members. Our physician-owned Hawai'i Permanente Medical Group (HPMG) – Hawai'i's largest multispecialty medical group – employs over 650 physicians and licensed medical providers, including over 80 physician assistants. Within the Kaiser Permanente system, physician assistants collaborate with physicians and other medical professionals to provide high quality patient care in a variety of specialties and settings, including: Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, Dermatology, Orthopedics, Cardiology, Endocrinology, Oncology, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Emergency Medicine, Nephrology, Occupational Medicine, Vascular Surgery, General and Cardiothoracic Surgery, Infectious Disease, Radiology, Urology and Otolaryngology (ears, nose and throat).

Kaiser Permanente Hawai'i supports HB1575, HD2 because it removes barriers to practice for physician assistants and ensures greater access to health care for Hawai'i residents, especially those who reside on the neighbor islands where need is greatest. Since 2016, the number of physician assistants has increased by 105% on the island of Hawai'i, 114% on Kauai, and 35% on Maui. Despite this increase, physician assistants remain underutilized because Hawai'i's restrictive practice laws prevent physician assistants from practicing at the top of their training and education. We support HB1575, HD2 because it removes some of these restrictions and helps bring Hawai'i physician assistant scope of practice into alignment with national practices.

HB1575, HD2 builds on the Legislature's previous successes modernizing physician assistants' practice in Hawai'i. In 2019, the Legislature passed Act 181, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2019, modernizing physician assistant chart review by collaborating physicians, which has successfully lowered administrative burden on physicians, without compromising patient care. HB 1575, HD2 expands the review structure established in 2019 to include physician assistant prescribed controlled substances. Similar to 2019, we expect this change will continue to prioritize patient care while significantly decreasing physicians' administrative burden. In addition, HB1575, HD2 will allow physician assistants, like advanced practice nurses (APRNs), to sign temporary disability insurance forms, disability parking permits, Provider Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment (POLST) forms, and other administrative forms that are time sensitive and critical for patients' quality of life and continuity of care but are often delayed by the physician shortage.

Physician assistants are skilled health care providers and authorized by the Affordable Care Act, along with physicians and APRNs, to serve as primary care provider (PCP). They receive rigorous medical training modeled on medical school curriculum which typically includes rotations in family medicine, internal medicine, general surgery, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, emergency medicine, psychiatry, and other specialty electives. Physician assistant training programs typically require thousands of hours of previous clinical care experience before matriculation is even considered.

In practice, physician assistants routinely take medical histories, perform physical examinations, order and interpret laboratory tests, diagnose illnesses, develop and manage treatment plans, prescribe medications, and first-assist in surgery. With their skills and training, physician assistants play a critical role on our care delivery teams and are represented in every medical specialty within our medical group. Kaiser Permanente Hawai'i continues to focus on recruiting physician assistants because physician assistants possess a skillset and training that allows them to be able to pivot quickly to supply care when and where it is needed most. This has been invaluable during the pandemic when we rely heavily on our physician assistants' unique adaptability to provide care in an ever-changing landscape.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this important measure.



DATE: 22 Feb 2022

To: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair  
Representative Kyle T. Tamashita, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Finance

RE: **Testimony in Strong Support of HB 1575 HD2, RELATING TO PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS**

Hrg: 24 Feb 2022, 2:00 PM House conference room 308 via Videoconference

Dear Chair Luke, Vice Chair Yamashita, and Members of the Committees,

The Hawai'i Public Health Association (HPHA) is a group of over 450 community members, public health professionals, and organizations statewide dedicated to improving public health. Our mission is to promote public health in Hawai'i through leadership, collaboration, education and advocacy. Additionally, HPHA aims to call attention to issues around social justice and equity in areas that extend beyond the traditional context of health (e.g., education, digital equity, cultural sensitivity), which can have profound impacts on health equity and well-being. Therefore, as stewards of public health, HPHA is also advocating for equity in all policies.

We are providing this testimony in **strong support of HB 1575 HD2**, which seeks to improve patients' access to care by reasonably expanding the scope of practice for physician assistants (PAs). In 2021, the annual report on the physician workforce in Hawai'i estimated a shortage of over 700 full time physicians. Physician shortages are a barrier to access timely medical care, especially for remote rural communities, and can lead to significant health disparities and poor community health outcomes. PAs are an essential part of the solution to expand access to healthcare and reduce health disparities.

The people of Hawai'i deserve access to safe, timely, and nearby medical care. Hawai'i PAs remain committed to this kind of quality healthcare delivery in our community. The PA profession has had significant growth both nationally and in the state of Hawai'i over the last decade. PAs have demonstrated the ability to deliver high quality medical care along with physicians and advanced practice nurses, fill gaps in care, and reduce health disparities by expanding access to quality health care. PAs are highly educated and trained in the medical curriculum and model, and are nationally certified to provide a wide range of clinical services. This bills help to reduce barriers to PA practice and thus, improve community access to quality medical care.

**We support HB 1575 HD2 and respectfully ask that you pass this measure.** Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important public health issue affecting members of our community.

Sincerely,

J. Leocadia Conlon, PhD, MPH, PA-C  
Legislative Committee Chair  
Hawai'i Public Health Association



February 22, 2022

To: Honorable Representative Sylvia Luke – Chair, Finance  
Honorable Representative Kyle Yamashita – Vice Chair

Hearing: Thursday, February 24, 2022 – 2:00 p.m.

RE: HB 1575, HD2 – Relating to Physician Assistants – In Support

On behalf of the Occupational Therapy Association of Hawaii (OTAH) we support HB 1575, HD 2- Relating to Physician Assistants which modernized physician assistant scope of practice. Currently under HRS 453-5.5, Physician assistants are able to sign orders and plans of care for both Physical and Speech therapies, however, not for Occupational Therapy. Occupational Therapy practitioners provide services to both inpatient and outpatients who have sustained a stroke, brain injury, spinal cord injury, hip fractures, amputations, hand & upper extremity conditions. Occupational Therapy practitioners are employed in hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, mental health agencies, schools to name a few throughout Hawaii.

The Hawaii Academy of Physician Assistants (HAPA) is also in favor of HB 1575, HD 2 to include orders for Occupational Therapy and plans of care in HRS 453-5.5.

We hope that your committee will favorably pass HB 1575, HD 2. With passage of this bill, the consumer can receive complete orders from one referral source. At the present time, the consumer needs to see his/her physician to obtain a referral to Occupational Therapy as orders from a physician assistant is not covered under current regulation under HRS 453-5.5. Thus, the consumer, will experience a delay in receiving services. In some of our hospitals and outpatient facilities, Physician Assistants work alongside the primary physicians and have been writing orders for Occupational Therapy services. However, we have needed to ask that the MD's co-sign orders or additional orders need to be re-written by the primary physician. By adding Occupational Therapy, this would allow our consumers to access OT services in a timely manner and when prescribed by the Physician Assistant. Furthermore, Medicare allows Physician Assistants to prescribe OT services, but depending on the Medicare fiduciary they reference the individual states statutes.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach me at (808) 542-1882.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brooke Nakamura', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Brooke Nakamura, OTD, OTR/L  
Doctorate of Occupational Therapy  
President, Occupational Therapy Association of Hawaii



## THE QUEEN'S HEALTH SYSTEMS

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To: The Honorable Sylvia Luke, Chair  
The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Vice Chair  
Members, House Committee on Finance

From: Jace Mikulanec, Director, Government Relations, The Queen's Health Systems

Date: February 24, 2022

Re: Support for HB 1575 HD2: Relating to Physician Assistants

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The Queen's Health Systems (Queen's) is a nonprofit corporation that provides expanded health care capabilities to the people of Hawai'i and the Pacific Basin. Since the founding of the first Queen's hospital in 1859 by Queen Emma and King Kamehameha IV, it has been our mission to provide quality health care services in perpetuity for Native Hawaiians and all of the people of Hawai'i. Over the years, the organization has grown to four hospitals, and more than 1,500 affiliated physicians and providers statewide. As the preeminent health care system in Hawai'i, Queen's strives to provide superior patient care that is constantly advancing through education and research.

Queen's appreciates the opportunity to provide comments in support of HB 1575 HD2, which would expand the scope of practice for physician assistants (PA) and require a sampling of medical records, rather than all medical records, to be reviewed when physician assistants prescribe controlled substances. PAs continue to play an increasingly important role in addressing the need for quality health care professionals in our State – especially during the COVID19 pandemic and within our neighbor island and rural communities.

We appreciate the Committee's attention to this important issue and thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 1575 HD2.

*The mission of The Queen's Health Systems is to fulfill the intent of Queen Emma and King Kamehameha IV to provide in perpetuity quality health care services to improve the well-being of Native Hawaiians and all of the people of Hawai'i.*

February 22, 2022

To: Honorable Representative Sylvia Luke - Chair, Finance  
Honorable Representative Kyle Yamashita - Vice Chair

Hearing: Thursday, February 24, 2022 - 2:00 p.m.

RE: HB 1575, HD2- Relating to Physician Assistants - In Support

We are occupational therapy practitioners and are employed at one of Oahu's acute care hospital and outpatient clinics. We support HB 1575, HD 2 - Relating to Physician Assistants which expands the authorized scope of practice for physician assistants. Currently under HRS 453-5.5, Physician assistants are able to sign orders and plans of care for both Physical and Speech therapies, but not for Occupational Therapy. Occupational Therapy practitioners provide services to both inpatient and outpatients who have sustained a stroke, brain injury, spinal cord injury, hip fractures, amputations, hand & upper extremity conditions. Occupational Therapy practitioners are employed in hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, mental health agencies, schools to name a few throughout Hawaii.

At our hospital and outpatient clinics, we work closely with Physician Assistants in orthopedic surgery, neurosurgery and general surgery to name a few. On behalf of the OT practitioners at our facility and our professional state association, Occupational Therapy Association of Hawaii, we support HB 1575, HD 2 which will include changes to the current **CHAPTER 453 MEDICINE AND SURGERY §453-5.S Physician assistant; authority to sign documents** that will include orders for Occupational Therapy and plans of care.

With hope that your committee will pass HB 1575, HD 2. Passage of this bill will allow the consumer to receive complete orders from one referral source. At the present time, the consumer needs to see his/her physician to obtain a referral to Occupational Therapy as orders from a physician assistant is not covered under current regulation under HRS 453-5.5. Thus, the consumer, will experience a delay in receiving services. At our facility, Physician Assistants work alongside the primary physicians and have been writing orders for Occupational Therapy services. However, we have needed to ask that the MD's co-sign orders or additional orders need to be re-written by the primary physician. Furthermore, Medicare allows Physician Assistants to prescribe OT services, but depending on the Medicare fiduciary they reference the individual states statutes.

If you have any questions, we can be reached at (808) 522-4602.

Sincerely,

*Avis Sakata, OTR/L*

Avis Sakata, OTR/L  
Occupational Therapy Team Lead

**Additional OT staff in agreement with testimony:**

**Whitney Reigh Asao, OTD**

**Ashley Cadavona, OTR**

**Brian Coyle, COTA**

**Farrah Dimagiba, OTR**

**Lisa Hall, OTR**

**Casey Imelio, OTR**

**Wendy Kondo, OTR**

**Andrea Muraoka, OTR**

**Bernice Oishi, COTA**

**Vandana Pal, OTR**

**Melissa Pang, OTR**

**Tisha Taba, OTR**

**Katie Watanabe, OTR**

**Dale Yasumoto, OTR**

February 22, 2022

To: Honorable Representative Sylvia Luke – Chair, Finance Commerce  
Honorable Representative Kyle Yamashita– Vice Chair

Hearing: Friday, February 11, 2022 – 2:00 p.m.

RE: HB 1575, HD2 – Relating to Physician Assistants – In Support

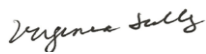
I am a retired Occupational Therapist who continues to be interested in healthcare concerns for our consumers. I support the intent of HB 1575, HD2 – Relating to Physician Assistants which expands the authorized scope of practice for physician assistants.

Currently under Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) 453-5.5, Physician assistants can sign orders and plans of care for both Physical and Speech therapies, however, not for Occupational Therapy (OT). Allowing physician assistants to sign occupational therapy orders will allow consumers timely access to occupational therapy services. Consumers will not need to wait for a physician's co-signature or for the physician to re-write the orders for OT services.

The proposed HB1575, HD2 will amend Hawaii Revised Statutes §453-5.5 Physician assistant; authority to sign documents will allow Physician Assistants to sign orders and plans of care for Occupational Therapy services.

Thank you for your consideration to approve SB1575, HD2 and for the opportunity to present testimony.

Sincerely,



Virginia Tully

**HB-1575-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/22/2022 6:39:51 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2022 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Remote Testimony Requested</b>
Timothy R. Smith, PA-C	Hawaii Permanente Medical Group	Support	No

Comments:

TO: Sylvia Luke, Chair, Kyle T. Yamashita, Vice Chair, and Members of the House Committee on Finance

FROM: Timothy R. Smith, PA-C

DATE: February 22, 2022

RE: HB1575 HD2 – Strong Support

Dear Chair Luke, Vice Chair Yamashita, and Committee Members,

My name is Timothy R. Smith, PA-C. I am a physician assistant (PA) practicing at Kaiser Moanalua Medical Center Oncology Clinic. I write in strong support of HB1575 HD2, which seeks to improve patients’ access to care by reasonably expanding the scope of practice for physician assistants (PAs) and reducing overly burdensome medical records review requirements. This will help our patients with cancer receive safe, professional, informed and compassionate care in a more timely manner.

The people of Hawai`i deserve access to safe, timely, and nearby medical care. Hawai`i PAs remain committed to this kind of healthcare delivery in our community. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Timothy R. Smith, PA-C

**HB-1575-HD-2**

Submitted on: 2/23/2022 10:34:15 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Madeleine	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

TO: Sylvia Luke, Chair, Kyle T. Yamashita, Vice Chair, and Members of the House Committee on Finance

FROM: Madeleine Redding PA-C

DATE 02/23/2022

RE: HB1575 HD2 – Strong Support

Dear Chair Luke, Vice Chair Yamashita, and Committee Members,

My name is Madeleine Redding .I am a physician assistant (PA) practicing at **Hale Nani**. I write in strong support of HB1575 HD2, which seeks to improve patients’ access to care by reasonably expanding the scope of practice for physician assistants (PAs) and reducing overly burdensome medical records review requirements.

The people of Hawai`i deserve access to safe, timely, and nearby medical care. Hawai`i PAs remain committed to this kind of healthcare delivery in our community. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Madeleine Redding PA-C