

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
P.O. Box 3378
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:
File:

House Committee on Higher Education

H.B. 691, HD 1, RELATING TO PHYSICIAN SHORTAGES

**Testimony of Chiyome Leinaala Fukino, M.D.
Director of Health**

**February 10, 2009
2:15 PM**

1 **Department's Position:** The Department of Health does not support this measure as written.

2 **Fiscal Implications:** There is a \$250,000 general fund appropriation into and out of a newly created
3 Hawaii rural health care provider loan repayment special fund to assist in creating the program.

4 **Purpose and Justification:** The department is well-acquainted with the physician shortages that our
5 underserved and rural communities are experiencing. This bill establishes the Hawaii Rural Health
6 Provider Loan Repayment program within the Department of Health to encourage physicians to work in
7 federally-designated health professional shortage areas of the State.

8 This measure contains substantially similar language to H.B. 2519, HD2, SD2, CD1 passed in
9 the 2008 legislative session that became law as Act 242. Act 242 created a working group within the
10 Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism to develop a plan to establish the Hawaii
11 Health Corps Program (HHCP) to, similarly, address physician and dentist shortages by creating
12 programs, such as student loan repayments and state-funded stipends. The working group's report
13 outlining findings and recommendations is being submitted to the 2009 legislature. The working group
14 also submitted legislation addressing this same subject. We recommend that the interested parties, with
15 the aid of the report and consequent legislation, continue the conversation about how scarce federal and

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1 state resources might be used to improve recruitment and retention of health care professionals in rural
2 and/or underserved areas.

3 Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.



Hawai'i Primary Care Association

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To: **House Committee on Higher Education**
The Hon. Jerry L. Chang, Chair
The Hon. Mark M. Nakashima, Vice Chair

Testimony in Support of House Bill 691, HD 1 **RELATING TO PHYSICIAN SHORTAGES**

Submitted by Beth Giesting, CEO

February 10, 2009, 2:15 p.m. agenda, Room 309

The Hawaii Primary Care Association urges your support for this bill. We believe loan repayment programs are a very powerful tool for recruiting and retaining health care professionals in underserved areas. It is all too apparent that Hawaii has an urgent need for such a program at this time.

We also note a tremendous need for more dentists to care for the underserved and would ask that they be added to the state loan repayment program now or as soon as possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

HMSA



An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

February 10, 2009

The Honorable Jerry Chang, Chair
The Honorable Mark Nakashima, Vice Chair
House Committee on Higher Education

Re: HB 691 HD1 – Relating to Physician Shortages

Dear Chair Chang, Vice Chair Nakashima and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Medical Service Association (HMSA) appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of HB 691 HD1 which would create the Hawaii Rural Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Program to provide student loan repayments to physicians who practice in federally designated health professional shortage areas of the state.

States across the country are attempting to attract physicians through the implementation of innovative programs such as the loan repayment program in HB 691 HD1. A loan repayment program offered in tandem with the John A. Burns' School of Medicine's rural residency program will make practicing in rural areas of the state more attractive and feasible for newly graduated physicians.

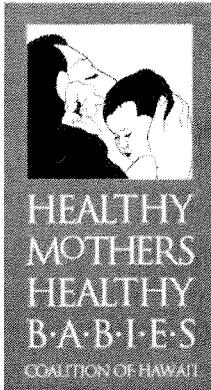
Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We would respectfully urge the Committee's support of this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JD' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Jennifer Diesman
Assistant Vice President
Government Relations

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February 9, 2009

Committee: On Higher Education

Bill: HB 691,HD1

Honorable Chairperson Chang, Vice Chairperson Nakashima, and Members of the Health Committee:

My name is Jackie Berry, Executive Director of Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition of Hawaii. HMHB IS IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB 691,HD1. This Bill would establish a Hawaii Rural Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Program to provide student loan repayments to physicians who practice in federally designated health professional shortage areas of the state.

One of the central components to ensuring access to health care is having qualified physicians to provide the services. As we all know, there are areas of the State of Hawaii that have very serious shortages of physicians. The data on access to prenatal care indicates that a major reason for late and inconsistent prenatal care is access to physicians, particularly on the island of Hawaii and in the rural areas of Oahu. Getting appropriate and timely prenatal care is a major indicator affecting birth outcomes.

We urge your support for the passage of this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration of this issue and our testimony.

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Testimony on HB 691
February 10, 2009 at 2:15 p.m.
Jerris Hedges, MD

Aloha. Thank you, Chair Rep. Chang, Vice Chair Rep. Nakashima and members of the House Higher Education Committee for this opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 691.

I am offering this testimony as an individual, who also happens to be the Dean of the John A. Burns School of Medicine.

The John A. Burns School of Medicine was founded in 1965 to provide opportunity to citizens of Hawai'i – both through the provision of physician education in Hawai'i for state residents and by providing a means to enhance the retention of practicing physicians with ties to Hawai'i within the state.

The current educational debt of the medical school graduates of the John A. Burns School of Medicine exceeds \$85,000 among those with educational debt. Coupled with a higher cost of living and lower physician reimbursement in Hawai'i than most regions elsewhere in the U.S., the retention of medical school graduates in Hawai'i is becoming more challenging. This phenomenon has reached critical proportions on our neighbor islands.

A loan repayment program that provides some relief of this educational debt and assists with the establishment of new physician practices on the neighbor islands will assist with the significant physician access problem existing on the neighbor islands. As demonstrated on the mainland, educational debt loan repayment programs can aid physician recruitment to rural areas.

(more)

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This program will be most successful if coupled with neighbor island based educational programs that are underdevelopment by the John A. Burns School of Medicine. An extended exposure to our more rural communities while a medical student, resident (post medical school specialty training) and through such a loan repayment program will enhance long-term career and practice site choices favoring the neighbor islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Jerris R. Hedges, MD

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