



Hawai'i Primary Care Association

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To: **The House Committee on Health**
The Hon. Ryan I. Yamane, Chair
The Hon. Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair

Testimony in Support of House Bill 692

Relating to Children's Health Care

Submitted by Beth Giesting, CEO

February 13, 2009, 8:30 a.m. agenda, Room 329

The Hawaii Primary Care Association asks your support for this measure. We greatly appreciate the Legislature's concern for ensuring that none of Hawaii's keiki goes without health care and re-introducing this concept after the original program was abruptly terminated last year.

Hawaii is very fortunate to have expansive Med-QUEST programs that cover our children – including immigrants and COFA migrants – in families with incomes up to 300% of poverty. There is a small group of children, however, who are not eligible for public insurance and whose parents cannot afford to pay premiums. Our experience with 2008's Keiki Care program tells us that this amounts to about 2,000 children.

We believe that Hawaii can and should invest this modest appropriation to ensure that all children have access to the health care they need most. While our Community Health Centers are the best places to direct families for comprehensive primary health care, they are unable to help when children need emergency care, specialists, or hospitalization. It should be noted that Hawaii is expected to soon be able to get federal matching funds for children covered by Med-QUEST programs. Some of that money should be reprogrammed to pay for Keiki Care. We also believe that the costs for coverage are considerably less than the potential financial losses to our hospitals for uncompensated ER and inpatient care for uninsured children, not to mention the potential harm to children who don't get care they need.

Thank you for your consideration of this measure and for the opportunity to testify in its support.



Hearing date:
FRIDAY,
February 13,
2009, 8:30 a.m.
House Health
Committee
Room 329

To: Representative Ryan Yamane, Chair
Representative Scott Nishimoto, Vice Chair
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

From: Elisabeth Chun, Executive Director
Good Beginnings Alliance

Date: Friday, February 13, 2009, 8:30 am
Conference Room 329

Subject: **HB692: Lengthens the pilot program established under Act 236, Session Laws of Hawaii 2007, to expand health care coverage for children living in Hawaii. Appropriates funds.**

The Good Beginnings Alliance is a policy and advocacy organization focused on Hawaii's youngest children and their families. We strive to ensure a nurturing, safe and healthy development for all children from pre-birth to age eight. We believe all children deserve safe and supportive environments that meet their needs as they grow and develop.

We support this bill.

Act 236, SLH 2007 provided visionary support for Hawaii's uninsured children. We realize the state has significant budget concerns; however at a time when Hawaii's weakened economy is placing more stress on families, it is critical that programs such as Keiki Care not be eliminated. Ensuring that all of Hawaii's children are safe, healthy, and ready to learn is a necessity, not a luxury, and will end up saving our state in emergency room and urgent care costs in the future.

Please protect our young children and support their healthy development.

Mahalo for your support.

For more information contact: Good Beginnings Alliance; phone: 531-5502;
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