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CATHY BETTS
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KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

March 22, 2023

TO: The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **SCR 183/ SR 177 – REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO STUDY PROVIDING CERTAIN HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR ALL CHILDREN AND PREGNANT PERSONS WHO WOULD OTHERWISE QUALIFY FOR COVERAGE IF NOT FOR THEIR IMMIGRATION STATUS.**

Hearing: March 24, 2023, 1:02 p.m.
Conference Room 225 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of this resolution and offers comments.

PURPOSE: This resolution requests that DHS study options to provide health insurance coverage for all children and pregnant persons who would otherwise qualify for coverage if not for their immigration status and submit a report including proposed legislation by October 2023.

DHS appreciates the commitment of the Legislature to improve access to health insurance for all children and pregnant persons regardless of immigration status. DHS can research the care opportunities, resources, and costs of providing such coverage to this specified group and engage applicable stakeholders in the study, including immigrant health care providers, social service providers, and advocacy groups.

However, given the very short time frame for the legislative report, October 31, 2023, which is to include engaging applicable stakeholders, the study findings, and drafting of proposed legislation, the report will likely be abbreviated and high level.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.



TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF S.C.R. 183 and S.R. 177

Friday, March 24, 2023, 1:02 PM
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

To: Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

From: The Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights
Co-Chairs Amy Agbayani and Pat McManaman

The Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights works to achieve equity, justice, inclusion, uphold civil rights, and eliminate discrimination.

We stand in **Strong Support of S.C.R. 183 and S.R. 177**. These measures request the Department of Human Services to study and report back to the Legislature on programming alternatives, feasibility, and estimated costs of providing Medicaid or Medicaid-like healthcare services for income-qualified pregnant persons and children not otherwise eligible for federally funded Medicaid due to their immigration status.

Expanded access to health care insurance through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the Hawai'i Prepaid Health Care Act, which assures coverage to all qualified persons, regardless of immigration status, has contributed to low rates of uninsured persons in Hawai'i when compared to other states. Despite the low rates of uninsured Hawai'i residents, low-income, undocumented immigrants are barred from accessing health care insurance through Medicaid and ACA exchanges.

Long-established medical consensus holds that prenatal care is fundamental to reproductive and infant health. The lack of access to prenatal care increases the risk of premature birth and low birth weight and is a factor in a range of poor health outcomes experienced by undocumented pregnant women and their babies, including higher rates of labor and delivery complications and premature births. Many of these negative outcomes pose long-term development risks to newborn U.S. citizen children and could be avoided with full access to prenatal care.

Long-standing medical consensus also holds that healthcare services for children are fundamental to their well-being and development. Nevertheless, even in bona fide emergencies, undocumented immigrants in Hawai'i hesitate to utilize emergency rooms to access healthcare for their undocumented immigrant children. Their fears that they and their uninsured children may be reported to the United States are not unfounded. During the years that I practiced immigration law, I assisted several undocumented children and families whose status was reported to immigration officials while accessing emergency services. In one of those cases, the child had been diagnosed with leukemia.

Currently, twenty-five states provide or will soon provide health care coverage for income-qualified pregnant persons regardless of their immigration status, and eleven states provide or will soon provide health care coverage for children regardless of their immigration status.

With one of the lowest national rates of uninsured persons and a leader in healthcare, Hawai'i has the opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to healthcare for all by passing the proposed resolutions to study program opportunities and costs to provide healthcare coverage for low-income, undocumented children and pregnant persons.



Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.

To: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: **SCR 183 / SR 177 – Requesting the Department of Human Services to Study Providing Certain Health Insurance Coverage for All Children and Pregnant Persons Who Would Otherwise Qualify for Coverage if not for Their Immigration Status**

Hawai'i State Capitol and Via Videoconference
March 24, 2023, 1:02 PM

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of SCR 183 / SR 177**, which requests the Department of Human Services to study the extension of health insurance coverage to children and pregnant people who would otherwise qualify if not for their immigration status.

**HCAN Speaks! Board
of Directors**

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Of the estimated 15,000 foreign-born children in Hawai'i who are income-eligible for Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), it is estimated that 4,000 (or 29%) are barred from those federal programs as a result of their immigration status.¹

Currently eleven states plus the District of Columbia allow income-eligible children to enroll in Medicaid or CHIP regardless of their immigration status.² Hawai'i should join the growing number of states that are considering such coverage.

Extending coverage is both compassionate and smart. It is hard to accept that some children are deprived of health care in the Aloha State. In addition, the pandemic has taught us the important public health lesson that having a healthy population, regardless of people's immigration status, is a benefit to the entire state and economy.

Keiki with health insurance coverage have better health outcomes compared to those without coverage. Poor health can adversely affect children's academic achievement, which in turn can undermine their health and financial security into adulthood.³

Extending health coverage to low-income keiki also helps their families have greater financial security. When children have health insurance, their parents can use more of their income on other basic needs, such as food and housing. Extending coverage to pregnant people can lead to improved parental health, which strengthens their ability to care for their children.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please pass these resolutions.

Thank you,

Nicole Woo, Director of Research and Economic Policy

¹ https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/mpi_chip-immigrants-brief_final.pdf

² <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2022/12/06/more-states-offer-health-coverage-to-immigrant-children>

³ <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/updates/show/316-health-insurance-2021>



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Testimony in SUPPORT of SCR 183 / SR 177
REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO STUDY PROVIDING
CERTAIN HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR ALL CHILDREN AND
PREGNANT PERSONS WHO WOULD OTHERWISE QUALIFY FOR COVERAGE IF
NOT FOR THEIR IMMIGRATION STATUS
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 24, 2023

Dear Chair Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Henry J.C. Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights is in full support of SCR 183 / SR 177, which requests the Department of Human Services to study the costs and program opportunities for providing health care coverage to pregnant persons and children who would otherwise qualify for coverage if not for their immigration status.

Access to quality healthcare is a fundamental right that should not be denied to anyone, regardless of their immigration status. SCR 183 / SR 177 is an essential step aimed at addressing the persistent challenges faced by low-income immigrants in accessing affordable health care. Denial of access to health care creates a cycle of disadvantage, leading to poorer health outcomes and greater economic hardships for our immigrant families. They contribute so much to our State and Federal government, yet are unable to access the health care they need. As we witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic, all of our community's health is bound up together. If we allow some populations to go without services or care, it will eventually impact the collective health of the whole state. There are approximately many who may be impacted by this resolution. The State is home to an estimated 41, 246 undocumented persons.

Hawai'i has made significant strides in reducing our uninsured population but there remain vulnerable children and pregnant persons who are unable to access MedQUEST or the healthcare connector. This study is an investment in preventative care that will save the state dollars that would otherwise be spent in the much more costly Emergency Room. We cannot stop folks from all injury or illness- but getting them care as soon as it is needed is cheaper than more extensive measures later.

I urge you to pass SCR 183 / SR 177 and help our immigrant communities break the cycle of disadvantage and provide them with the opportunity to lead healthier, more productive lives.

Thank you for your support and consideration,

Catherine Chen
Co-Coordinator/Refounder, Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights

SCR-183

Submitted on: 3/22/2023 3:32:41 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/24/2023 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rozlyn Calderon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in SUPPORT of SCR183/SR177

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of SCR183 and SR177, which request the Department of Human Services to study providing certain health insurance coverage for all children and pregnant persons who would otherwise qualify for coverage if not for their immigration status.

Testimony in SUPPORT of SCR183/SR177

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 24th, 2023

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of SCR183 and SR177, which request the Department of Human Services to study providing certain health insurance coverage for all children and pregnant persons who would otherwise qualify for coverage if not for their immigration status.

Testimony in SUPPORT of SCR183/SR177

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 24th, 2023

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of SCR183 and SR177, which request the Department of Human Services to study providing certain health insurance coverage for all children and pregnant persons who would otherwise qualify for coverage if not for their immigration status.

Immigrants face numerous barriers to health coverage. Undocumented immigrants are ineligible both for Medicaid coverage and for federal premium tax credits to purchase health insurance in a state insurance exchange. **Access to quality healthcare is a fundamental right that should not be denied to anyone, regardless of their immigration status.**

All individuals, regardless of citizenship or immigration status, should have access to and coverage for comprehensive, quality health care, including reproductive health care. We must protect and support immigrant communities so they can continue to seek the health care they need without fear.

I urge you to pass SCR183 and SR177 and help our immigrant communities break the cycle of disadvantage and provide them with the opportunity to lead healthier, more productive lives.

Thank you for your support and consideration,

Rozlyn Calderon

SCR-183

Submitted on: 3/21/2023 7:02:26 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/24/2023 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Thaddeus Pham	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

As a public health professional and a child of refugees, I write in **UNEQUIVOCAL SUPPORT** of SCR183 and SR177, which request the Department of Human Services to study providing certain health insurance coverage for all children and pregnant persons who would otherwise qualify for coverage if not for their immigration status.

Access to quality healthcare is a fundamental right that should not be denied to anyone, regardless of their immigration status. These resolutions aim to address the persistent challenges faced by low-income immigrants in accessing affordable health care. Denial of access to health care creates a cycle of disadvantage, leading to poorer health outcomes and greater economic hardships for our immigrant families. They contribute so much to our State and Federal government, yet are unable to access the health care they need.

I have witnessed, both professional and personally, how lack of access to healthcare leads to poor health, earlier death, and also economic burden. These impacts not only affect individuals but ripple out to our local communities and populations.

I urge you to pass SCR183 and SR177 and help our immigrant communities break the cycle of disadvantage and provide them with the opportunity to lead healthier, more productive lives.

With thanks,

Thaddeus Pham (he/him)