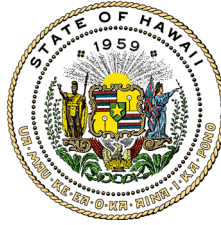


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII

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Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 1592
Relating to the Senior Medicare Patrol Program

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
SENATOR JOY A. SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR
SENATOR HENRY J.C. AQUINO, VICE CHAIR

Testimony of Caroline Cadirao
Director, Executive Office on Aging
Attached Agency to the Department of Health

Hearing Date: February 8, 2023
1:00 PM.

Room Number: 225

1 **EOA's Position:** The Executive Office on Aging (EOA), an attached agency to the Department
2 of Health, supports the intent of SB 1592, relating to Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Hawaii.

3 **Fiscal Implications:** This measure appropriates \$229,680 for SFY 2023 and the same sum for
4 SFY 2024 for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) Program Specialist III position, one full-time
5 equivalent (1.0 FTE) Program Specialist IV position, and one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE)
6 Program Specialist V position within the EOA for SMP Hawaii. The sums appropriated shall be
7 expended by the EOA.

8 **Purpose and Justification:** The purpose of this bill is to appropriate funds to EOA for three (3)
9 full-time permanent positions for the SMP Hawaii program. These positions will strengthen and
10 increase SMP's ability to ensure timely, reliable, and accurate services are provided to kupuna,
11 their families, and caregivers in need. SMP Hawaii's mission is to provide a "help net" to
12 educate, assist, and refer residents to the proper authorities, and be a reliable source for accurate

1 information and responsive assistance with Medicare, Medicaid, and other health-related scams,
2 fraud, or abuse. SMP receives inquiries from the statewide Help Line and interactive website,
3 provides 1:1 counseling and referrals, and conducts community outreach to underserved groups
4 and communities to expand access and assistance. SMP Hawaii, it's volunteers and partners,
5 will continue to educate, advocate, and help to protect our precious kupuna.

6 In addition, SMP Hawaii has established a network of partnerships across the finance,
7 technology, legal, and retail industries to be able to triage non-health related fraud cases to the
8 proper authority to provide further assistance, in a timely manner. These cases include gift card
9 and charity schemes, romance, caregiver, and imposter scams and ransomware that tricks older
10 adults into giving away their personal information and money.

11 According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 8/22/22, National Vital
12 Statistics Report, Hawaii ranks number one nationwide in longevity at 81.3 years of age, and this
13 population of those aged 65 and over is projected to continue to grow as the baby boomer
14 generation becomes eligible for Medicare. Annually, Medicare loses an estimated 70 billion
15 dollars to fraudulent claims. Criminals steal an average \$34,200 per victim. Hawaii reports over
16 \$17,000,000 lost to online scams. Losses are expected to exceed \$53 million per year by 2035.

17 As a community we have all experienced the rise in scam behaviors on our phones, social
18 media accounts, emails and even the television ads that harangue us with enticing offers that are
19 "too good to be true!" Our shorelines no longer protect us from the barrage of scams that
20 inundate us due to our growing reliance on the internet and social media in our daily lives.

21 As Hawaii's aging population grows, so has the incidence of scams that target this vulnerable
22 group. The frequency and complexity of scams have grown significantly as scam artists know
23 that Hawaii's people are very giving and trusting of others by nature and the potential for harm
24 to this targeted group continues to rise disproportionately.

25 Hawaii SMP was established in 1997, and for twenty-five years, EOA has operated this
26 program with two temporary full-time staff who recruit, train, and retain a cohort of volunteers

1 statewide. The passing of this bill to establish three (3) critically needed permanent full-time
2 positions will allow for the needed expansion of EOA's capacity to meet the demands for timely,
3 accurate, and reliable services to kupuna, their family members and caregivers in need.
4 Failure to secure general funding to increase staffing will continue to limit our ability to grow
5 and expand the safety net to safeguard against victimization, to contribute toward the
6 preservation of the Medicare program, and could jeopardize EOA's mission "To optimize the
7 health, safety and independence of Hawaii's older adults and people with disabilities. We
8 support kupuna and their caregivers through planning, development, advocacy, and coordination
9 of policies, programs, and services."

10 It takes our entire state to protect our kupuna.

11 **Recommendation:** EOA supports the intent of this measure provided that its enactment does not
12 reduce or replace priorities with the Administration's budget request.

13 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Beverly Gotelli
6286 Opaekaa Road
Kapaa, HI 96746

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH and HUMAN SERVICES

Sen. Joy San Buenaventura, Chair

Sen. Henry Aquino, Vice Chair

DATE: Wednesday, February 8, 2023

TIME: 1pm.

Support: SB 1592 RELATING TO THE SENIOR MEDICARE PATROL PROGRAM

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the Committee:

I'm a 5 year member of the Policy Advisory Board on Elder Affairs (PABEA), which provides community input to the DOH-Executive Office on Aging, monitors EOA and more. PABEA supports this measure to appropriate funds for additional positions to meet the demands for assistance caused by increased reports on fraud, healthcare billing errors and abuse. It is not only our vulnerable seniors that are affected by fraud but also their families and caregivers.

Residents with incorrect or false claims could be better served if SMP Hawaii had adequate staffing. More cases of suspected fraud or abuse could be resolved, with Medicare/Medicaid cost savings, recoveries or avoidance resulting. With only two full-time staff members for the past 25 years, we are grateful that SMP Hawaii has managed to-date, but it is really at a tipping point since the Baby Boomers, the largest population of our country, entered their "golden years" in 2011 here in Hawaii. This population will only increase through the next two decades. Scams on the phone and via email and social media have also risen. Now is the time to act to genuinely help our kupuna, those most vulnerable to fraudsters.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 1592.

Beverly Gotelli
Policy Advisory Board on Elder Affairs

THE KŪPUNA CAUCUS



Feb. 6th 2023 for HHS_02-03-23 1:00 pm Hearing

TO: THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

CONCERNING: SB606 (Relating to Hearing Aids), SB608 (Relating to Prescription Drugs), SB609 (Relating to Hearing Aids), SB900 (Relating to Health Insurance Assistance Program), SB 901 (Care Facility Inspections), SB902 (Relating to Caregivers), SB1592 (Relating to Senior Medicare Patrol Program). SB853 (Relating to Healthy Aging Partnership), SB 442 (Relating to Health)

POSITION: Full support

Aloha Chair Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the committee

The Kupuna Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii supports the bills listed above and hopes they will be passed.

It has taken long enough for Federal and State health programs to recognize the vital importance of hearing aids to seniors who suffer disproportionately from gradual hearing loss. Hearing assistance is vital to self-sufficiency, to personal safety, and for the people a senior may interact with on a daily basis. Any bill that supports financial assistance in buying hearing aids is worthy of support.

The recent COVID pandemic demonstrated the need for more stringent and frequent inspections of care facilities and the need to provide the results to the public before they trust a place with their loved ones.

There is a serious shortage of care givers especially those who work for agencies that accept Federal or state assisted insurance programs. One reason is because the businesses keep almost all of the money paid by the insurance for the hourly services and pay the workers poorly. Better training and a higher wage will provide more and better in home care.

Please continue to support agencies and department services that assist Kupuna to live out their lives with dignity, healthy, safe and well cared for.

Martha Randolph for
The Kupuna Caucus

**Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice-Chair
Committee on Health & Human Services [HHS]**

Mae Fujii, SMP Hawaii Volunteer
808-395-1460
February, 2023

Support for SB1592, Relating to Funding for the Senior Medicare Patrol

As an SMP volunteer since September, 2011, I have a special devotion to this program that informs and educates kupuna and all ages to protect themselves from fraud and scams. As an active volunteer in performing various roles, including printed media and television assignments, I have received attention, giving me the opportunity to relay our mission to prevent, detect, and report scams and fraud.

I observed a surge in membership and services in my first seven years followed by a period of decline in membership a few years before and during the pandemic when there were several turnovers in the positions of director and volunteer coordinator, which went unfilled during part of the pandemic. During this time we began to see a gradual turnaround with innovative projections and a vigorous effort to meet the demands in technology to improve our presentations, counseling, and outreach to the public. Since then we are beginning to have better training, mentoring, and retention of the core volunteers with both the director and a volunteer coordinator, who was recently hired. However, with fraud and scams growing by “leaps and bounds,” it is paramount that we acquire funding for additional program specialists.

With faith that the increasing demands for our services will be met with additional staffing, I would like to share a few personal examples that have kept me firmly grounded as a contributing volunteer:

At a tabling event at the Kahala Mall last year, a stranger came up to thank me for participating in a public service television skit that I did with two other volunteers and a program specialist from the EOA. She appreciated how our skit helped her to be more aware of financial fraud, causing her to be concerned that her vulnerable mother will not become a victim when answering scam phone calls. I was quite surprised that she recognized me as the narrator, who addressed the viewers with lines like “It’s not your fault!” and “Please report suspected scams to SMP...” After three years, they’re still running this skit or just my narrator’s segment on KGMB, seen during commercial breaks on Jeopardy, my favorite game show. According to my son, his friends on the mainland have reported seeing this segment on Facebook, so the far reaching effects of social media are helping to spread our mission to a wider audience.

Occasionally I receive friendly phone calls or emails from kupuna who thank me for information given in previous individual interactions when I have cautioned them about not answering suspected scam phone calls, trashing suspicious snail mail, and not pressing on unfamiliar links in emails. I am reassured that my kupuna friends who recognize the red flags will not fall prey to scammers.

Another role that brings joy in being a fraud watch volunteer is when I conduct reference check interviews for volunteer applicants and at the end of the interview, the references often say, "Thank you for what you do to help protect us from scams and fraud." Hearing these words of appreciation is encouraging that our message is being heard and heeded.

I humbly ask for the committees' favorable support of SB1592 for funding our need for additional program specialists, so that SMP will be better able to fight against fraud and scams in Hawaii and to make this a safer place especially for our silver-haired generation that is also growing by *"leaps and bounds."*

Mahalo nui loa,
Mae Fujii

Chair, Joy A. San Buenaventura
Vice Chair, Henry J.C. Aquino
HHS (Health and Human Services)

Candace Nakamoto
808-349-2007, masamiyoung@gmail.com
2.3.23

Support for SB1592, Relating to the Senior Medicare Patrol

The Hawaii Senior Medicare Patrol is a federally funded, volunteer-based program that is administered by the Hawaii State Department of Health, Executive Office on Aging. SMP Hawaii empowers and assists Medicare beneficiaries, their families and caregivers to prevent, detect and report health care fraud, errors and abuse through outreach, counseling and education.

As a Social Worker in the field of Gerontology and an informal caregiver for my grandparents, I personally have seen a drastic increase in the number of scams and frauds plaguing our Kupuna. Every day fraudsters come up with new conniving ways of scamming vulnerable and naive older adults. From romance, IRS and Social Security, Publishers Clearing House, and even grandparent scams (the list never ends). We need to destigmatize the shame and embarrassment of falling victim to these scams (no one is immune). When we shine a light and let people know they are not alone, and we all need to be alert and akamai (it takes an entire state to protect our Kupuna). Scammers won't stop, through educational outreach presentations, working with partner organizations such as the Department of the Attorney General, and keeping the larger institutions accountable such as the banks. SMP is in the trenches assisting the community and leading the forefront of change.

Hence, I strongly support SB1592, relating to the Senior Medicare Patrol, which would provide SMP Hawaii with three additional staff to sustain the program and meet the growing needs of our older adult population. I urge the committee to pass SB1592. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Respectfully
Candace Nakamoto

Chair, Joy A. San Buenaventura
Vice Chair, Henry J.C. Aquino
HHS (Health and Human Services)

Davis Kop
808-429-7618, daviskop@gmail.com
February 6, 2023

SMP Hawaii is a volunteer-based federal program designated by the state of Hawaii for the coordination of aging initiatives. SMP Hawaii collaborates with a network of partners and advocates to expand outreach and assistance to communities statewide. Its mission is to empower and assist Medicare beneficiaries, their families and caregivers to prevent, detect and report health care fraud, errors and abuse through outreach, counseling and education.

As an elder millennial, I have been scammed multiple times, so I can only imagine the frustration and financial woe these scams cause *kupuna*. As fraud becomes increasingly harder to spot due to growing technological advancements and connectivity, educating and advocating for our senior citizens will be paramount in destigmatizing any shame and embarrassment that comes with falling victim to these fraudsters. As Norma Kop's son, I have witnessed and attended firsthand the Zoom presentations and events inviting the public to learn about Medicare scams and what to do when one is on the receiving end of health care fraud. Money and assets are important, but both pale in comparison to time and life legacy. Those are precious resources that cannot be returned.

With the increasing population of *kupuna* and the baby-boomer generation needing assistance, it is imperative that SMP Hawaii is provided with additional staff and support to continue serving the senior citizens of Hawaii. I strongly support SB 1592 and HB 1487 in relation to Senior Medicare Patrol. I urge the committee to pass both initiatives. Mahalo for the opportunity to write my testimony.

Sincerely,
Davis Kop

Chair, Joy A. San Buenaventura
Vice Chair, Henry J.C. Aquino
HHS (Health and Human Services)

Norma de la Cruz Kop
808-226-4077 ndckop@hawaii.rr.com
February 5, 2023

Support for SB1592, Relating to the Senior Medicare Patrol

The Hawaii Senior Medicare Patrol is a federally funded, volunteer-based program that is administered by the Hawaii State Department of Health, Executive Office on Aging since its inception in 1997. SMP is part of 54 chapters in the U.S., including the territories of Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. SMPs *“empowers and assists Medicare beneficiaries, their families and caregivers to prevent, detect and report health care fraud, errors and abuse through outreach, counseling and education.”*

Born and raised in Waialua on Oahu’s North Shore, I remember too well how hard my parents, who together raised 11 children and five foster children, worked to make ends meet, not even thinking that there would be much left for a nest egg. They both worked full-time, Dad as a boilerman at Waialua Sugar Plantation – Castle and Cooke, and Mom, a pineapple worker for Del Monte. They served as foster parents for 11 years, raising four children representing three families, who went on to become self-sufficient and industrious people. Our family also had a piggery business and offered catering services to the community.

My parents emphasized the importance of education – the one thing that would unlock opportunities if we were focused, determined, hopeful and kind. Everyone mattered, they said. And integrity is the one thing we control, along with our attitude.

I graduated college in Oregon, worked in news media, transitioned to the education field and later, health. Why do I bring this to your attention? It is because in Hawaii, our migrant parents and grandparents from other countries pursued their dreams for a better, safer life; one that held the assurance of meaning, purpose and basic human rights, including a democracy that would advocate for one’s ability to access needed services, supports and resources.

This is part of one’s legacy. And I wish to emphasize that what our aging population, which we are all part of this inevitability, continues to face, is the *loss* of their legacy. When fraudsters conspire to work solo or in networks, and mislead, deceive and destroy *kupuna*, we all suffer. Our families suffer, our neighborhoods, our communities and ultimately, our state suffer. This is because fraud, errors and abuse, not just in healthcare but beyond, lead to harm, danger and even

death (by suicide because of the tremendous guilt victims experience). The social determinants of health are profoundly impacted because of the power of scammers and as we know, their work is only ramping up as they toy with new types of ways to fraud people, in-person or on the Internet.

The number one deterrent from con artists and their growing legions is **education**. Enter SMP Hawaii – collaborating with its partners from local, county, state, national and federal levels (Department of the Attorney General, Office of Inspector General, Social Security Administration, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Commerce and Consumer Affairs, Public Safety and more), SMP *educates* the individual, organization and community on Medicare and Medicaid fraud prevention, *counsels and refers* people to the appropriate resource for assistance beyond healthcare scams; serves as a *resource* for subject matter expertise, and much more.

As we each near life’s end, it’s natural to think, “What *have* we done to make our world a better place?” SMP Hawaii is helping to change the narrative of blame-and-shame when one is scammed out of their savings and assets, to one of being informed and empowered to make the right decision. However, to do this, SMP Hawaii needs critical support to establish the program for years to come. Yes, this issue is much more than money, savings and a nest egg.

Therefore, I strongly support **SB1592, relating to the Senior Medicare Patrol**, which would provide SMP Hawaii, with three additional staff to sustain the program and meet the growing needs of our older adult population in this state, which leads the nation in average life expectancy. I urge the committee to pass SB1592. Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

With Respect,

Norma d.C. Kop

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

Arlis Muraoka
Volunteer with Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Hawaii
Phone: (808) 959-3767

February 6, 2023

Support for SB1592, Relating to the Senior Medicare Patrol Program

Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Hawaii is a federally-funded, volunteer-based program administered by the Hawaii State Department of Health, Executive Office of Aging protecting Hawaii's kupuna and their families from Medicare fraud, errors, and abuse. Today, 1 in 5 Hawaii residents are age 65 and older and 295,405 are enrolled in Medicare. By 2030 more than 1 in 3 residents will be 65 and older and in 2037 more than 500,000 residents will be eligible for Medicare. Every year scammers prey on this vulnerable group not only on Medicare but identity theft, gift card scams, government imposters, just to name a few. SMP Hawaii offers free education, counseling, referrals, exhibits, and community presentations to help kupuna avoid fraud and scams.

I recently became a SMP Hawaii volunteer. Both SMP Hawaii staff members have helped guide me as I trained to become a volunteer. I soon began to notice that there were many other administrative duties requiring their attention in addition to coordinating exhibits and community outreach. Some examples are 1) Working on one case can take a few days to more than a year to resolve. In 2022, there were 633 kupuna who called SMP Hawaii seeking help. 2) Being part of a national program requires data entries into SIRS (SMP Information and Reporting System) and making sure our federal grant requirements are followed. 3) Healthcare fraud like many other types of fraud often evolves leading to a constant need to be reviewed and discussed with the Volunteer Team.

I live on Hawaii Island and community outreach can be challenging with the distance between communities as far as 77 miles apart. Add the rest of the state all being managed by only two full-time staff members. With the anticipated increase in the kupuna population, it is vital that more help is needed.

Therefore, I strongly support SB1592, relating to the Senior Medicare Patrol Program, which would provide SMP Hawaii with critical and important funding for three program specialist positions to expand outreach and counseling to kupuna. I urge the Committee to pass SB1592. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Arlis Muraoka

SB-1592

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 9:17:13 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/8/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rick Tabor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The number of elderly victims of scams has risen at an alarming rate, while the loss amounts are even more staggering.

In Hawaii, 470 people over the age of 60 reported losses last year amounting to \$11.7 million, according to the FBI's Elder Fraud Report for 2021.

While that number is alarming, it's down from the previous year, in which 1,978 people in Hawaii over 60 years old reported losses totaling \$13.7 million.

Nationwide, more than 92,000 victims over the age of 60 reported losses of \$1.7 billion in 2021. The average loss per person nationwide was more than \$18,000.

So, who you going to call? Since 1997 Senior Medicare Patrols (SMPs) empower and assist Medicare beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers to prevent, detect, and report health care fraud, errors, and abuse through outreach, counseling, and education.

Our Island's kūpuna population has become the fastest growing population in the world. Today, 8.5 percent of people worldwide (617 million) are aged 65 and over. According to a new report, "[An Aging World: 2015\(link is external\)](#)," this percentage is projected to jump to nearly 17 percent of the world's population by 2050 (1.6 billion). The number of persons aged 80 years or older is expected to triple between 2020 and 2050 to reach 426 million. SMP has become inundated with referrals. Volunteers are wonderful, but it's time to hire enough staff to help out! At this rate, SMP will not be able to keep up with the demand.

Thank you for considering the need for more staffing.

SB-1592

Submitted on: 2/7/2023 11:55:59 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/8/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Barbatra Frazier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Senator,

I am a resident of Volcano and a volunteer counselor with SHIP, a partner organization to SMP.

I stongly support the passage of this bill to provide SMP with state funding for full time employees. In my short experience as a SHIP counselor, I have become more concerned about the ability of kupuna to acquire good information about Medicare *or* potential online scams Kupuna must navagate so much confusing advertising and so many misleading offers ranging from unlawful soliciitiion to downright fraud, and SMP does so much to resist and counteract the unethical efforts of such advertisers and scammers. What SMP had already done is amazing, but they need more financial support. Please pass this bill.

Respectfully,

May Barbara Frazier

Volcano HI

Chair, Joy A. San Buenaventura
Vice Chair, Henry J.C. Aquino
HHS (Health and Human Services)

Kaimele Kop
808-392-8349, kaimelekop@gmail.com
February 7, 2023

The Hawai‘i Senior Medicare Patrol is a federally funded, volunteer-based program that is administered by the Hawai‘i State Department of Health, Executive Office on Aging since 1997. SMP “empowers and assists Medicare beneficiaries, their families and caregivers to prevent, detect and report health care fraud, errors and abuse through outreach, counseling and education.”

I am a junior at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa studying Public Health, with an emphasis on health inequities and disparities. As a Kanaka Maoli (native) born and raised in Hawai‘i, I feel strongly about the health of my community and have been inspired by the work of my mother, Norma Kop, regarding kupuna health and protection. SMP is crucial for the future of Hawai‘i because it protects our kupuna from fraud and abuse. Even as a 20-year-old, I can acknowledge that technology is confusing and can be too advanced at times. If I, a member of this “digital natives” generation, am having trouble spotting online scams, I can only imagine how difficult it is for our kupuna. Scammers and those involved with fraud are incredibly quick and know what and who to target. It is not fair for our community to reduce significant resources like SMP so let’s work together to support and protect our kupuna.

I strongly support SB1592 and HB 1487, relating to the Senior Medicare Patrol, and urge the committee to pass both initiatives. Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
Kaimele Kop

Chair, Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura
Vice Chair, Senator Henry J.C. Aquino
Committee on Health and Human Services

Maria Morales
Ewa Beach, Hawaii
(808)391-1056

February 6, 2023

Support for SB1592, Relating to the Senior Medicare Patrol Program

The Hawaii Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) is a federally funded, volunteer-based program that is administered by the Hawaii State Department of Health, Executive Office on Aging. SMP Hawaii empowers and assists Medicare beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers to prevent, detect, and report health care fraud, errors and abuse through outreach, counseling and education.

I work as a Program Coordinator in a non-profit organization, Project Dana, providing social support services to older adults and caregivers. SMP Hawaii is a great community partner. SMP staff and volunteers have provided valuable educational presentations on current scams and frauds targeting older adults, what older can do to protect themselves, how to detect and report, how to navigate Medicare, and community resources available for caregivers. Older adults and caregivers are vulnerable and targeted by scammers and persons committing fraud and abuse. Participants in our program have been targeted by scammers and fraud. However, with the education and skills they learned from SMP Hawaii, they quickly realized the situation they were in and was able to leave the situation without becoming a victim. They also took actions after to prevent the situation from happening again. SMP staff and volunteers helped them become more vigilant, guided them on what they can do, as well as educate others around them.

Our state's older adult population, Medicare beneficiaries, and their caregivers who will need this program's services will only increase in the future. Persons who commit healthcare fraud, errors, and abuse use technology that increases an older adult's vulnerability and complicates detection and prevention. SMP Hawaii provides services that keeps older adults and caregivers updated with current information on scams, frauds, and abuse and what to do for prevention and reporting.

I strongly support SB1592, relating to the Senior Medicare Patrol, which would provide SMP Hawaii with three additional staff to sustain the program and meet the growing needs of our older adult population. I urge the committee to pass SB1592.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Respectfully, Maria Morales

LATE

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Committee on Health and Human Services
Joanne Itano
Volunteer with Hawaii Senior Medicare Medicare Program
Itanoj001@gmail.co,
Feb 6, 2023

I am writing in support of SB1592, Relating to the State Senior Medicare Patrol Program

The Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) program has been protecting Hawaii's Kupuna Since 1997. Medicare population is growing and scammers prey on this vulnerable group. Every hour, kupuna fall victim to scams that are more confusing, intimidating, and threatening. Kupuna need warnings to not click on links, answer blocked calls, or give out personal information. Medicare loses \$70 billion of taxpayer dollars to false claims every year. For 25 years under EOA, SMP has been managed with only two temporary staff. In 2022, through outreach SMP educated 8,463 kupuna to avoid fraud and scams. 633 kupuna called SMP Hawaii for urgent help in 2022. 2023 SMP bill is requesting three permanent positions to expand outreach and counseling to kupuna

Hawaii State Senior Medicare Patrol program is a federally funded, volunteer-based program that is administered by the Hawaii State Department of Health, Executive Office on Aging. Hawaii SMP provides education to seniors to prevent, detect and report fraud. While our focus is Medicare fraud, we also provide information on other types of fraud. This is accomplished through one-on-one counseling sessions, answering questions, and distributing informative brochures at health fairs, and providing SMP-related presentations. These services are free to the public who contact Hawaii SMP through the Help Line and website. Volunteers, who provide these important services, are recruited and trained throughout the year to keep up with the changes or updates to Medicare.

As a volunteer, I respond to calls from the public about fraud. There is a helpline available to receive messages about possible fraud. I also participate in fairs, distributing information and speaking with individuals about preventing fraud. SMP provides a handy book in which all health related information may be documented and used to check insurance statements that they are not being charged for something they did not received, or double charged for a service or charged a higher amount than quoted.

Federally funding is never guaranteed and while SMP has been fortunate to have many years of funding, the loss of funding would result in fewer resources related to fraud available to Hawaii residents.

Thank you.

Respectfully,
Joanne Itano, SHIP Volunteer