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**COUNTY COUNCIL**  
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April 18, 2024

TO: The Honorable Chris Lee, Chair, and  
Members of the Committee on Transportation and Culture and the Arts

The Honorable Angus L.K. McKelvey, Chair, and  
Members of the Committee on Government Operations

FROM: Alice L. Lee  
Council Chair 

SUBJECT: **HEARING OF APRIL 19, 2024; TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HCR157,  
RELATING TO AIR TRANSPORTATION ON MOLOKAI AND LĀNAʻI**

I **support** these measures to urge the Federal and State governments to address the ongoing air-transport crisis for Molokai and Lānaʻi residents.

I am providing this testimony in my capacity as an individual member of the Maui County Council.

I support these measures for the following reasons:

1. Residents on Molokai and Lānaʻi rely on air transportation for health care, business, and personal needs.
2. Air transportation to and from those islands is expensive and unreliable.
3. Ensuring consistent and affordable air transportation is vital to maintaining residents' well-being.

Thank you for your consideration.

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To: The Honorable Chris Lee, Chair  
The Honorable Lorraine R. Inouye, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Transportation and Culture and the Arts

The Honorable Angus L.K. McKelvey, Chair  
The Honorable Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Government Operations

From: Paula Arcena, External Affairs Vice President  
Mike Nguyen, Public Policy Manager

Hearing: Friday, April 19, 2024, 3:00 PM, Conference Room 225

RE: **HCR157 Urging the United States and the State to recognize and address the air transportation crisis on Moloka'i and Lāna'i.**

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AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of HCR157**. This measure urges the United States and the State to recognize and address the air transportation crisis on Moloka'i and Lāna'i.

Founded in 1994 by Hawai'i's community health centers, AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan serving over 84,000 Medicaid and dual-eligible health plan members on all islands. Approximately 40 percent of our members are keiki. We are Hawai'i's only health plan exclusively dedicated to serving Medicaid and Medicaid-Medicare dually-eligible beneficiaries. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for access to quality, whole-person care for all.

AlohaCare is committed to improving access to care and strengthening the Medicaid program. As you may know, Medicaid enrollment in our State has grown by over 46% from 327,000 enrollees in March 2020 to 476,000 in January 2024. This tremendous growth has put a further strain on our State's already challenged provider capacity, especially in rural areas. The Hawai'i Physician Workforce Assessment Project Report<sup>1</sup> indicates that Hawai'i is in need of at least 750 doctors, with the greatest statewide shortage being in primary care specialties. The proportional need is greatest on the neighbor islands, with both Maui and Hawai'i County experiencing a physician shortage of 40%.

Hawai'i residents in rural and remote communities have long been accustomed to travelling to urban areas to access specialized care and routine treatment. Residents

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ahec.hawaii.edu/workforce-page/>



of Molokaʻi and Lānaʻi rely on air travel to access emergency and, oftentimes, routine medical care. Pregnant persons on Lānaʻi must travel to give birth while those on Molokaʻi can only deliver for low-risk pregnancies without an epidural.

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the two airlines that used to serve Lānaʻi and Molokaʻi ceased operations, leaving residents with only one airline today. This remaining airline is a vital means for medical travel. However, it has experienced significant challenges and disruptions causing many residents to miss medical appointments.

AlohaCare provides medically necessary travel for our members. These challenges and disruptions have affected our members and providers. We have been actively engaged with the airline, our transportation coordination vendor, and legislators to proactively support a better solution and experience for our members and providers.

AlohaCare supports this measure because the air transportation crisis for Molokaʻi and Lānaʻi residents, especially for those traveling for medical care, requires state and federal actors to collectively recognize the challenges and work together on solutions.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support of HCR157**.



To: The Honorable Chris Lee, Chair  
The Honorable Lorraine Inouye, Vice Chair  
Members, Senate Committee on Transportation and Culture and the Arts

The Honorable Angus L.K. Mckelvey, Chair  
The Honorable Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair  
Members, Senate Committee on Governmental Operations

From: Jacce Mikulanec, Director, Government Relations, The Queen's Health System

Date: April 19, 2024

Re: Support for HCR157 – URGING THE UNITED STATES AND THE STATE TO RECOGNIZE  
AND ADDRESS THE AIR TRANSPORTATION CRISIS ON MOLOKAI AND LĀNA'I.

The Queen's Health System (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 10,000 affiliated physicians, caregivers, and dedicated medical staff 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 testimony in support of HCR157, which calls upon all relevant levels of state and federal government to address the ongoing need for more reliable air transport services on Molokai and Lana'i. Our most vulnerable and high-risk patients deserve a reliable interisland aeromedical service provider in the event of an emergency; we have observed patients from neighbor island facilities, including Molokai General Hospital, with serious medical conditions ranging from complicated pregnancies to cardiovascular failure in desperate need of medical attention having to wait to be airlifted and treated on Oahu. With only a single service provider in a State that experiences on average 2,500 air ambulance trips per year, a more stable and reliable solution is needed.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HCR157.

‘Ano‘ai me ke aloha iā ‘oukou. ‘O wau ‘o Kaleikaumaka Roback.

I writing to express my strong support for HCR 157, which addresses the critical air transport crisis facing Molokai and Lāna‘i. As a resident of Hawaii and someone deeply invested in the well-being of our communities, I believe it is imperative that we take urgent action to ensure reliable air transportation for all residents, especially when it comes to accessing essential healthcare services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened longstanding challenges in air travel, leading to the termination of operations by certain airlines serving Molokai and Lāna‘i. This has left our sister islands with limited options, higher costs, and increased unreliability in accessing off-island healthcare services. As a result, many residents are facing significant barriers to receiving timely medical care, with missed appointments and delayed treatments becoming all too common.

This crisis is not just a matter of inconvenience; it is a matter of life and death. Residents of Molokai and Lāna‘i, like all Hawaiians, deserve equal access to healthcare services without undue hardship or delay. Every missed appointment, every delayed treatment, represents a potential risk to someone's health and well-being.

By passing HCR 157, we can send a clear message that we prioritize the health and safety of all residents, regardless of where they live. This bill urges the United States and State to recognize the urgency of the situation and take meaningful steps to address it. It is a call to action to ensure that reliable air transportation is available to our communities, enabling them to access the critical healthcare services they need.

I urge you to support this bill and take decisive action to address the air transport crisis on Molokai and Lāna‘i. Our communities are counting on us to make the right decision and ensure that no one is left behind when it comes to accessing essential healthcare services.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

**HCR-157**

Submitted on: 4/17/2024 11:27:16 PM

Testimony for TCA on 4/19/2024 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Noah Kalehuawehe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hā‘ale aku ku‘u aloha iā ‘oukou, ‘o au ‘o Noah Kalehuawehe.

Today, I stand before you to urge your support for HCR 157, a resolution that addresses the urgent air transportation crisis on Molokai and Lana‘i. These islands, like many parts of Hawaii, heavily rely on air travel as their primary mode of transportation.

Residents of Molokai and Lana‘i face unique challenges due to the limited availability and reliability of air transportation services. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, several airlines provided flights to these islands, but in its aftermath, some ceased operations, leaving only one carrier to serve these communities.

The consequences of this limited air service are profound, especially in terms of accessing critical medical care. Picture this: families are torn apart because they can't afford the excessively high costs of flights to access vital medical care. Imagine the heartache of parents missing crucial appointments for their children's treatments because flights get canceled unexpectedly. We cannot turn a blind eye to the struggles faced by our fellow Hawaiians on these islands. They deserve better. They deserve reliable air transportation that doesn't empty their pockets or leave them stranded in times of need. By supporting HCR 157, we aren't just addressing a crisis; we are restoring hope and dignity to the residents of Molokai and Lana‘i. We are ensuring that every individual, regardless of where they live, has equitable access to essential services and opportunities.

I urge you to listen to the cries of these communities, to feel the urgency in their voices, and to take decisive action. Support HCR 157 and let's work together to improve the lives of our fellow Hawaiians.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to the people of Hawaii.