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**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB689
RELATING TO LOAN REPAYMENT FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS.**

SENATOR JOY SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HOMELESSNESS

SENATOR MICHELLE KIDANI, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Hearing Date: February 16, 2023

Room Number: 329

- 1 **Fiscal Implications:** \$1M general fund appropriation as required match for federal funds.
- 2 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health (DOH) supports the State Loan Repayment
- 3 Program, which has demonstrated success at influencing a majority of participants – healthcare
- 4 providers of various specialties, not just physicians – to remain in Hawaii, practicing almost
- 5 exclusively in underserved areas.
- 6 The department is currently the fiscal intermediary for general funds, and encourages the
- 7 Legislature to ensure that 100% of appropriations reach this program. DOH looks forward to
- 8 continued partnership with the University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine across a
- 9 continuum of health care workforce initiatives.
- 10 **Offered Amendments:** N/A.
- 11



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Senate Committee on Higher Education
Thursday, February 16, 2023 at 3:00 p.m.

By

Lee Buenconsejo-Lum, Acting Dean and
Kelley Withy, MD, Professor, Department of Family Medicine and Community Health,
Hawai'i/Pacific Basin Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Director
John A. Burns School of Medicine
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa And
And
Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 689 – RELATING TO LOAN REPAYMENT FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

Chairs San Buenaventura and Kim, Vice Chairs Aquino and Kidani, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today. The John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) **strongly supports SB 689** which seeks funding for the Hawai'i State Loan Repayment Program administered by JABSOM in the amount of \$1,000,000 for fiscal years 2023-2024 and 2024-2025. We request that the measure take effect on July 1, 2023.

Since September 2012, the Hawai'i State Loan Repayment program has been operating successfully, and has supported 76 recipients in exchange for work commitments in underserved geographic practice areas in Hawai'i. Of the loan repayment participants, 80% have remained in Hawai'i to practice, and more than half have remained at the site where they performed their service. As of this date, there are 23 active providers in the Hawai'i State Loan Repayment program with another 9 providers applying for JABSOM'S Innovative Loan Repayment Program, which is also administered by JABSOM and uses non-federal monies to match State funds to support other local healthcare providers who do not meet the federal guidelines but who still work in an area of need.

The Hawai'i State Loan Repayment program leverages public funds and private donations to access matching federal funds through the State Loan Repayment Program of the National Health Service Corps Branch of the United States Department of Health and Human Services. Currently, health care professionals who have benefited from the loan repayment program serve on all islands and in the communities

of Waimea, Kihei, Wai'anae, Hilo, and Wailuku; at health clinics in Kalihi-Pālana and Kōkua Kalihi Valley; and in public institutional settings at the federal detention center in Honolulu, the Hālawā correctional facility and the Maui County correctional center. Health care professionals who are eligible to participate in the program include physicians, nurse practitioners, psychologists, social workers, and many others.

Many Hawai'i residents are unable to obtain timely and appropriate health care due to shortages of primary and behavioral health care professionals in the State. These shortages not only threaten individual health, but also cumulatively affect the State's health care costs. Areas of Hawai'i that have been designated by the federal government as medically underserved have been most significantly affected by shortages of primary and behavioral health care professionals, such as physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and psychologists. Social workers, marriage and family therapists, and nurses are also urgently needed in these areas.

In many cases, the increasingly high cost of education for health care professionals binds graduates to a career path designed to repay often exorbitant student loans. These career paths most frequently lead to professional practice in highly specialized practice in urban areas rather than in general practice on the neighbor islands or in underserved areas of O'ahu where the need is greatest. Furthermore, those states with robust primary health care systems have lower costs and improved patient outcomes. Recognizing this correlation, many states have made the policy decision to dedicate public funds to loan repayment programs to help develop a strong primary health care workforce for underserved areas.

An investment of State matching funds would enable JABSOM to draw as much federal money as possible and allow the program to provide loan repayment to more health care professionals in our ongoing efforts to alleviate the health care professional shortages in Hawai'i.

We request a minor, non-substantive amendment to page 2, line 12 by the insertion of the word "Branch" to reflect the correct name of the federal program that underwrites the Hawai'i State Loan Repayment Program:

"National Health Service Corps Branch State Loan Repayment Program of the United States Department of Health and Human Services".

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support, provided that its passage does not replace or impact priorities as indicated in the University's Board of Regents Approved Executive Biennium Budget.

Thursday, February 16, 2023 at 3:00 PM
Via Video Conference; Conference Room 229

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

To: Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Higher Education

To: Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

From: Michael Robinson
Vice President, Government Relations & Community Affairs

**Re: Testimony in Support of SB 689
Relating to Loan Repayment For Health Care Professionals**

My name is Michael Robinson, and I am the Vice President of Government Relations & Community Affairs at Hawai'i Pacific Health. Hawai'i Pacific Health is a not-for-profit health care system comprised of its four medical centers – Kapi'olani, Pali Momi, Straub and Wilcox and over 70 locations statewide with a mission of creating a healthier Hawai'i.

HPH writes in SUPPORT of SB 689 which appropriates funds for the Hawaii State Loan Repayment program administered by the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM).

The continuation of the Hawaii State Loan Repayment program that supports payments of educational debt for primary care and behavioral health physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, psychologists, social workers, licensed professional counselors, marriage and family therapists and certified nurse midwives who work for non-profit organizations in Health Professions Shortage Areas of Hawaii plays a vital role in addressing the shortage of healthcare professionals in the state. Hawaii has a shortage of almost 800 doctors, and almost all other types of primary care and behavioral healthcare workers. Without these healthcare providers, the people of Hawaii do not have access to the healthcare they need. The shortage is most acute for those on the neighbor islands and those with the least resources. One of the fastest and least expensive methods for recruiting providers is through loan repayment.

JABSOM has successfully administered the program which has supported 76 healthcare providers since the program began in 2012. To date, nearly 2/3 of those providers continue to work in medically underserved communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



February 16, 2023 at 3:00 pm
Conference Room 229

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

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

Senate Committee on Higher Education

To: Chair Donna Mercado Kim
Vice Chair Michelle N. Kidani

From: Paige Heckathorn Choy
Associate Vice President, Government Affairs
Healthcare Association of Hawaii

Re: Support
SB 689, Relating to Loan Repayment for Health Care Professionals

The Healthcare Association of Hawaii (HAH), established in 1939, serves as the leading voice of healthcare on behalf of 170 member organizations who represent almost every aspect of the healthcare continuum in Hawaii. Members include acute care hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, home health agencies, hospices, assisted living facilities and durable medical equipment suppliers. In addition to providing access to appropriate, affordable, high-quality care to all of Hawaii's residents, our members contribute significantly to Hawaii's economy by employing more than 30,000 people statewide.

We would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to **support** this measure, which would provide funding for loan repayment at the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) to support various healthcare professionals who practice in underserved areas. Investing in our healthcare workforce is critical because of the shortage of professionals in several categories in Hawaii, including physicians and other critical allied professionals. This funding will help to alleviate that shortage by creating opportunities directly in the state to train our healthcare workforce. By training professionals in-state, we are more likely to keep them and their skills here, serving patients in Hawaii.

We are supportive of the legislature's efforts to direct funding towards effective and important programs that will help to ensure that residents have access to needed care.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our testimony in support of this measure and funding.



**Testimony to the Senate Joint Committee on Health and Human Services and
Higher Education
Thursday, February 16, 2023; 3:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 225
Via Videoconference**

RE: HOUSE BILL NO. 0689, RELATING TO LOAN REPAYMENT FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS.

Chair San Buenaventura, Chair Kim, and Members of the Joint Committee:

The Hawaii Primary Care Association (HPCA) is a 501(c)(3) organization established to advocate for, expand access to, and sustain high quality care through the statewide network of Community Health Centers throughout the State of Hawaii. The HPCA **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill No. 0689, RELATING TO LOAN REPAYMENT FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS.

By way of background, the HPCA represents Hawaii's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). FQHCs provide desperately needed medical services at the frontlines to over 150,000 patients each year who live in rural and underserved communities. Long considered champions for creating a more sustainable, integrated, and wellness-oriented system of health, FQHCs provide a more efficient, more effective and more comprehensive system of healthcare.

This bill, as received by your Committee, would appropriate \$1,000,000 in general funds for fiscal year 2023-2024, and \$1,000,000 for fiscal year 2024-2025, for the Hawaii State Loan Repayment Program so long as these funds are matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis by funds from a private or another public source. The funds would be expended by the John A. Burns School Medicine of the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and would take effect on July 1, 2023.

The State of Hawaii is experiencing a severe shortage of health care professionals in the workforce, especially in rural areas. Recent studies note that the current shortage of physicians is at 20% of the total full-time equivalent positions throughout the State. The shortage is especially severe in the fields of primary care, infectious diseases, colorectal surgery, pathology, general surgery, pulmonology, neurology, neurosurgery, orthopedic surgery, family medicine, cardiothoracic surgery, rheumatology, cardiology, hematology/oncology, and pediatric subspecialties of endocrinology, cardiology, neurology, hematology/oncology, and gastroenterology.

Testimony on Senate Bill No. 0689
Thursday, February 16, 2023; 3:00 p.m.
Page 2

This bill would provide the resources to continue a financial incentive that enhances the quality and stock of Hawaii's future healthcare workforce. Accordingly we commend this effort and wish to participate in any and all discussions concerning workforce development.

For this reason, the HPCA supports this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Public Affairs and Policy Director Erik K. Abe at 536-8442, or eabe@hawaiiipca.net.

**Written Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Health & Human Services**

and

Committee on Higher Education

HEARING: Wednesday, February 16, 2023, 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room 229 and via videoconference

By Hawai‘i – American Nurses Association (Hawai‘i-ANA)



**SB689 – RELATING TO LOAN REPAYMENT FOR HEALTH CARE
PROFESSIONALS**

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services, and Chair Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Michelle N. Kidani, members of the Committee on Higher Education, thank you for the opportunity to testify **in strong support of SB689**, loan repayment for health care professionals, including nurses.

We are the Hawai‘i- American Nurses Association (Hawai‘i-ANA), speaking for over 17,000 Registered Nurses in Hawai‘i who care for patients every day in our state. The American Nurses Association (ANA) mission is to “Lead the profession to shape the future of nursing and health care”. ANA supports the nursing profession across the nation in standards of practice including the Code of Ethics, advocacy, certification, accreditation, advanced practice, and education, to evolve the practice of nursing and transform health and health care. Hawai‘i-ANA “Empowers nurses to advocate for the improvement of the healthcare system in the communities where we live and work”.

Hawai'i-ANA acknowledges that reducing nurses personal expenses through loan repayment, is one way to recruit and retain these valued professionals in and across our state. This program has proven success year after year in supporting retention and recruitment of nurses across our state. Hawai'i-ANA provides testimony in strong support of this measure both for the intent of the measure and for full funding of this initiative.

Hawai'i-ANA respectfully asks the Committee to pass SB689 through your committee. We thank your committee for its commitment to the people of Hawai'i, in ensuring access to high-quality nursing care by supporting recruitment and retention of nurses across our state.

Contact information for Hawai'i – American Nurses Association:

President: Dr. Nancy Atmospera-Walch, DNP, CCHN, FAAN, president@hawaii-ana.org

Executive Director: Dr. Linda Beechinor, APRN, FNP-BC executivedirector@hawaii-ana.org

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