

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 11 2025

RE: S.B. No. 557
S.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2025
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Higher Education, to which was referred
S.B. No. 557 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to require the University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) to direct Huli Au Ola to conduct a study on the recruitment and retention of physicians and dentists to serve the island of Molokai, and appropriate funds to JABSOM for the study.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Hawai'i Primary Care Association, Hawaii Dental Service, Molokai Homestead Farmers Alliance, AlohaCare, Chamber of Commerce Hawaii, and twelve individuals.

Your Committee received comments on this measure from the Department of the Attorney General and University of Hawai'i System.

Your Committee finds that Huli Au Ola, JABSOM's Maui County Area Health Education Center, provides support and assistance to underserved and rural areas of Maui County, including the island of Molokai which is the area most underserved by non-primary care physicians and dentists. Your Committee further finds that



ensuring physicians and dentists to serve on Molokai is critical to the community of approximately seven thousand as most residents cannot afford to travel for medical and dental care. This measure promotes a more equitable health care system that meets the needs of Molokai's residents by requiring Huli Au Ola to conduct a study identifying barriers to the recruitment and retention of physicians and dentists to serve the island of Molokai.

Your Committee also notes the concern raised by JABSOM that it may be more feasible to fund Huli Au Ola directly for the study. Your Committee also notes the testimony of the Department of the Attorney General recommending the insertion of language making the appropriation to Huli Au Ola a grant pursuant to chapter 42F, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

Accordingly, your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Deleting language that would have required JABSOM to direct Huli Au Ola to conduct the study;
- (2) Specifying that Huli Au Ola shall conduct the study pursuant to this measure;
- (3) Changing the appropriation to an unspecified amount;
- (4) Specifying that the appropriation for the study made by this measure shall be a grant to Huli Au Ola pursuant to chapter 42F, Hawaii Revised Statutes;
- (5) Inserting an effective date of July 31, 2050, to encourage further discussion; and
- (6) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

Your Committee also notes that Huli Au Ola is based on Molokai and is more familiar with the circumstances regarding the shortage of physicians and dentists on the island. Your Committee respectfully requests that the subsequent Committees to which this measure is referred enter into a dialogue with the Director of Huli Au Ola.



As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Higher Education that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 557, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 557, S.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Ways and Means.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Higher Education,



DONNA MERCADO KIM, Chair



