

Testimony of
Jonathan Ching
Government Relations Director

Before:
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

February 10, 2025
1:20 p.m.
Conference Room 225
Via Videoconference

Re: SB 956, Relating to Prescription Drugs.

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and committee members, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on SB 956, which allows a patient seen in-person by another health care provider in the same medical group as the prescribing physician to be prescribed an opiate prescription for a three-day supply or less via telehealth.

Kaiser Permanente Hawai‘i SUPPORTS SB 956.

Kaiser Permanente Hawai‘i is one of the nation’s largest not-for-profit health plans, serving 12.6 million members nationwide, and more than 271,000 members in Hawai‘i. In Hawai‘i, more than 4,200 dedicated employees and more than 650 Hawai‘i Permanente Medical Group physicians and advance practice providers work in our integrated health system to provide our members coordinated care and coverage. Kaiser Permanente Hawai‘i has more than 20+ medical facilities, including our award-winning Moanalua Medical Center. We continue to provide high-quality coordinated care for our members and deliver on our commitment to improve the health of our members and the people living in the communities we serve.

SB 956 permits patients who have seen their provider in-person to be prescribed a limited supply of opiates by another healthcare provider within the same medical group via telehealth. Kaiser Permanente Hawai‘i supports this bill because it provides timely access to pain management while still protecting patients from the harmful effects of overprescribing, inappropriate long-term use, and addiction.

Acute pain requires prompt intervention, and this bill ensures patients receive immediate pain relief even when their regular provider is unavailable. Under current law, patients in this situation must quickly see another provider to satisfy the face-to-face requirement. This is challenging due

to the provider shortage and the redundant treatment consumes resources that could benefit other patients.

SB 956 allows providers in the same medical group who have access to the patient's history to fill that gap by prescribing only three days of opiates. By limiting the supply of opiates to three days, this bill balances the need for timely pain relief with the responsibility to prevent opioid-related harm. **This safeguard ensures appropriate and safe pain management, minimizes the risk of misuse and addiction, and still provides enough time for the patient to get in touch with their usual provider or schedule an appointment to see a new provider.**

Allowing providers to prescribe a three-day supply of opiates based on another provider's evaluation, within the same medical group, offers significant benefits. **It enhances access to pain management, ensures continuity of care, improves patient convenience, optimizes healthcare resources, enables swift response to acute pain, and adheres to clinical guidelines.** For these reasons, Kaiser Permanente Hawai'i supports this measure as a proactive step toward improving patient care and outcomes.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.

Hawai'i Association of Professional Nurses (HAPN)



To: The Honorable Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

From: Hawai'i Association of Professional Nurses (HAPN)

Subject: SB956 – Relating to Prescription Drugs

Hearing: February 10, 2025, at 1:20 p.m.

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

On behalf of the Hawai'i Association of Professional Nurses (HAPN), we appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony in **support of SB956 with amendments**, which seeks to improve patient access to short-term opiate prescriptions while maintaining necessary safeguards against misuse.

HAPN supports this measure as a practical and necessary step to enhance patient-centered pain management while upholding strong regulatory oversight. However, we respectfully request amendments to ensure the bill effectively serves Hawaii's patients while preserving safety measures.

Proposed Amendments

- **Inclusion of Provider-Neutral Language** – The bill should ensure that APRNs, PAs, and other qualified licensed healthcare providers are explicitly authorized to prescribe short-term opiate medications. Expanding prescriptive authority aligns with Hawai'i's team-based approach to care and ensures that all licensed providers can fulfill their roles in pain management.
- **Clarification of Geographic Restrictions** – To uphold regulatory safeguards, the bill should specify that all prescriptions for controlled substances must be initiated within the State of Hawai'i. This ensures that prescribing remains under state jurisdiction and prevents out-of-state providers from issuing controlled substance prescriptions via telehealth.

These amendments strengthen SB956 by balancing improved patient access with necessary regulatory protections to prevent misuse and ensure safe prescribing practices.

Why SB956 Matters for Hawaii's Patients

Timely access to short-term pain relief is critical for patients recovering from surgery, injuries, or other acute conditions. Current prescribing restrictions can cause unnecessary delays, leaving patients without needed treatment. By expanding provider flexibility, improving telehealth access, and maintaining oversight, SB956 strengthens both patient care and provider accountability.

HAPN remains committed to advocating for policies that support equitable healthcare access and patient safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important measure. We appreciate your ongoing dedication to improving healthcare access and quality in Hawai'i.

Respectfully,

Dr. Jeremy Creekmore, APRN
HAPN President



February 7, 2025

The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura
Chair, Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Hawai'i State Legislature
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 213
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

The Honorable Henry J.C. Aquino
Vice Chair, Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Hawai'i State Legislature
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 204
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: ATA ACTION SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 956

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

On behalf of ATA Action, I am writing to you to express our support for Senate Bill 956 which allows health care providers to prescribe a three-day supply of opiates via telehealth so long as the health care provider practices in the same medical group as the prescribing physician, and the original prescribing physician has performed an in-person examination.

ATA Action, the American Telemedicine Association's affiliated trade association focused on advocacy, advances policy to ensure all individuals have permanent access to telehealth services across the care continuum. ATA Action supports the enactment of state and federal telehealth coverage and fair payment policies to secure telehealth access for all Americans, including those in rural and underserved communities. ATA Action recognizes that telehealth and virtual care have the potential to truly transform the health care delivery system – by improving patient outcomes, enhancing safety and effectiveness of care, addressing health disparities, and reducing costs – if only allowed to flourish.

Our organization believes that SB 956 would be a rational step forward for telehealth policy in Hawaii. SB 956 appropriately balances the need for timely patient care with responsible prescribing practices by allowing patients who have been evaluated in-person by a prescribing physician within the same medical group to receive a short-term, three-day supply of an opiate prescription via telehealth. This policy aligns with the best practices in telemedicine, ensuring that patients receive appropriate treatment while reducing unnecessary barriers to care.

Telehealth has proven to be an essential tool in modern healthcare, improving access for patients—especially those in rural and underserved communities—while maintaining high standards of care. By allowing continuity of care from within a trusted medical group, this legislation ensures patients can receive necessary short-term pain relief without undue delay, especially in urgent or post-operative scenarios. Moreover, SB 956 allows patients, especially those in rural regions which may lack treatment facilities, qualified health providers, or access to medications without the need for transportation.

ATA ACTION

901 N. Glebe Road, Ste 850 | Arlington, VA 22203
Info@ataaction.org



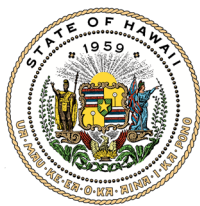
ATA Action commends the Hawai'i State Legislature for continuing to advance telehealth. Please do not hesitate to let us know how we can be helpful in your efforts to advance common-sense telehealth policy in Hawaii. If you have any questions or would like to discuss further the telehealth industry's perspective, please contact me at kzebley@ataaction.org.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kyle Zebley', is written over a faint, light gray circular background.

Kyle Zebley
Executive Director
ATA Action

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



MIKE LAMBERT
DIRECTOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT GOVERNOR
KE KE'ENA

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT
Ka 'Oihana Ho'okō Kānāwai
715 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

JARED K. REDULLA
Deputy Director
Law Enforcement

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 956
RELATING TO PRESCRIPTION DRUGS
Before the Senate Committee on
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Monday, February 10, 2025, 1:20 PM
State Capitol Conference Room 225, Via Videoconference

LATE

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

The Department of Law Enforcement (DLE)'s Narcotics Enforcement Division (NED) is the State's regulator for the controlled substances industries in Hawaii and the agency charges with enforcement of chapter 329, HRS, the Uniform Controlled Substances Act. The DLE supports Senate Bill 956.

This bill would allow a patient seen in-person by another health care provider in the same medical group as the prescribing physician to be prescribed an opiate prescription for a three-day supply or less via telehealth.

This bill balances DLE's concerns for public safety and proper prescribing by allowing a very limited pathway to prescribe an opioid via telehealth, so long as it is done by another prescriber in the same medical group, and for an opioid telehealth prescription for a three-day supply or less. The collaboration of healthcare providers in the same medical group, with access to the same patient records, balances the DLE's public safety concerns with the evolving need for patient access to medications. As a result, the DLE supports this proposal.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.