



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'ŌIHANA OLAKINO
P.O. Box 3378
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony in SUPPORT of S.C.R. 16 / S.R. 12
REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO CONVENE A TASK FORCE TO IDENTIFY AND
DEVELOP MINIMUM PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER
TRAINING PROGRAMS**

SENATOR JOY A. SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Hearing Date: March 28, 2025

Room Number: Conference Room 225
and Videoconference

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The Department of Health (DOH) will rely on existing resources to meet the
2 requests.

3 **Department Position:** The DOH supports this concurrent resolution which requests the
4 Department to convene a task force to identify and develop minimum professional standards
5 for Community Health Worker (CHW) training programs.

6 **Department Testimony:** The DOH appreciates the intent of this measure, to establish a task
7 force composed of CHWs, and allied organizations that provide training, employment, and
8 technical assistance, to advance agreement on the minimum professional standards for CHWs,
9 such as identifying and defining applicable professions that qualify as a CHW and the trainings,
10 credentials, education, and work experiences to be required.

11 This concurrent resolution aligns with ongoing efforts within the DOH and with
12 community stakeholders to ensure quality assurance for CHWs and to advance their
13 educational and professional infrastructure. The DOH is committed to working alongside the

1 CHWs because of their important connections within communities to uplift healthy behaviors
2 and serve as the trusted link to health resources and social services.

3 **Offered Amendments:** None

4 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



Papa Ola Lokahi
677 Ala Moana Blvd
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Phone: 808.597.6550 ~ www.papaolalokahi.org

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair

March 28, 2025, 1:00 p.m.

Re: SCR16 – REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO CONVENE A TASK FORCE TO IDENTIFY AND DEVELOP MINIMUM PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER TRAINING PROGRAMS

Position: Comment

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair and members of the committee,

Papa Ola Lōkahi (POL) appreciates the opportunity to testify on **SCR16**, which requests the Department of Health to convene a task force to identify and develop minimum professional standards for community health worker training. We **respectfully provide comments and request an amendment**.

Papa Ola Lōkahi was established in 1988 through the Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act (Public Law 100-579). Our organization was charged in this federal and other state-level legislation to carry out [myriad kuleana](#) to improve the health and well-being of Native Hawaiians.

Community health workers are vital links between their home communities and medical information and public health resources. This is why Papa Ola Lōkahi developed the Hookele i ke Ola curriculum and trained community health workers on all islands in health centers and medical institutions to be patient navigators. This is also why more recently we helped to establish a Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Community Health Worker Network, called Peau o Le Vasa. We appreciate that this resolution recognizes the vital role that these and other community health workers play for the health care system and our many communities.

We support efforts to set standards for community health workers so that they can be adequately compensated for the critical function they serve. However, we believe that these standards must

Papa Ola Lōkahi, the Native Hawaiian Health Board, authorized by the federal Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act, is charged with raising the health status of Native Hawaiians to the highest possible level, which we achieve through strategic partnerships, programs, and public policy.

reflect the diverse communities in which community health workers live and serve. Because of this, we respectfully request that this committee amend the current bill to provide more diverse representation. We provide the following amendment language for your consideration:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Director of Health is requested to invite representatives of the following stakeholders to serve on the task force:

(1) A representative from the Department of Health, who shall serve as the chair of the task force;

(2) One community health worker from each county;

(3) A representative from the Hawaii Public Health Institute;

(4) A representative from the Hawaii Public Housing Authority;

(5) A representative from the Med-QUEST Division of the Department of Human Services;

(6) A representative from the University of Hawaii - West Oahu;

(7) A representative from Kapiolani Community College;

(8) A representative from the Healthcare Association of Hawaii;

(9) A representative from the Hawaii Association of Health Plans;
and

(10) A representative from Papa Ola Lokahi;

(11) A representative from the Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Community Health Worker Alliance;

~~(10-12)~~ Any additional members with appropriate specialized expertise recommended by task force members and approved by the chair; and

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on SCR16. If you have any further questions, please contact our Director of Policy & Strategy, Ke'ōpū Reelitz at kreelitz@papaolalokahi.org.

Papa Ola Lōkahi, the Native Hawaiian Health Board, authorized by the federal Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act, is charged with raising the health status of Native Hawaiians to the highest possible level, which we achieve through strategic partnerships, programs, and public policy.

March 24, 2025

Senator Joy San Buenaventura
Chair, Health & Human Services

Senator Henry J.C. Aquino
Vice-Chair, Health & Human Services

Senate Committee Members

Re: Request for Amendments to SR 12 / SCR 16

Aloha, my name is Michelle Malia Hiraishi, and I am the Board Chair of Ka`u Rural Health Community Association, Inc. (KRHCAI). I on behalf of myself, and I on behalf of the Board of Directors of KRHCAI, offer our strong support of SR 12/SCR16. We are excited that the work performed by our state's Community Health Workers (CHW) is gaining acknowledgement, and are very grateful for your help in moving this resolution forward!

KRHCAI is well known in the Ka`u community, the Big Island community, and in the rural health community. We have a long, strong history of providing community-based health education and para-professional services through "grassroots" efforts; we are painfully aware of the difficulties in providing health services on Hawai'i Island and the need for quality, community-based services. Thus, we respectfully request SR 12/SCR 16 include the following amendments:

1. AMMEND TASK FORCE MEMBER INVITATIONS TO INCLUDE HAWAIIAN ORGANIZATIONS

The current draft omits the inclusion of a significant stakeholder group: Native Hawaiians. While the resolution includes inviting numerous member organizations that serve the general community, no suggested member organization focuses on providing health services to our state's indigenous communities in a culture-first approach, thus greatly increasing the effectiveness of services. We suggest inclusion of a representative from the Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander CHW's Association, and/or Papa Ola Lokahi.

2. AMMEND TASK FORCE MEMBER INVITATIONS TO INCLUDE RURAL HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS

While we fully support the development of this task force, the resolution in its current draft inadvertently omits the inclusion of another significant stakeholder group: rural health provider organizations. We suggest the inclusion of a representative from a rural health service provider.

Additionally, we humbly request KRHCAI be invited as a member organization. Our long history of championing the quality work done by CHWs is evident, through our organization's 26 years of providing health education services via CHWs, building collaboration and partnerships with other health organizations, and promoting CHW's access to education, training, leadership and workforce development. We believe KRHCAI would bring a highly unique expertise to the task force.

Thank you for allowing me to offer suggested amendments to the current draft of SR 12 /SCR 16.

Michelle M. Hiraishi



HIPHI Board

May Okihiro, MD, MS
Chair
John A. Burns School of Medicine,
Department of Pediatrics

Titimaeta Ta'ase, JD
Secretary
State of Hawai'i, Deputy Public Defender

Carissa Holley, MEd
Treasurer
Hale Makua Health Services

Debbie Erskine
ARCH-MEPS Consulting LLC, Owner

Camonia Graham - Tutt, PhD
University of Hawai'i - West O'ahu

Jennifer José Lo, MD
Hawai'i Health Partners

Misty Pacheco, DrPH
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

Kathleen Roche, MS, RN, CENP
Kaiser Permanente

Dina Shek, JD
Medical-Legal Partnership
For Children in Hawai'i

Garret Sugai
HMSA

JoAnn Tsark, MPH
John A. Burns School of Medicine, Native
Hawaiian Research Office

HIPHI Initiatives

Coalition for a
Tobacco-Free Hawai'i

Community-Based Research &
Evaluation

Community Health
Worker Initiatives

COVID-19 Response

Environmental Health

Hawai'i Drug & Alcohol-Free Coalitions

Hawai'i Farm to School Network

Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition

Hawai'i Public Health Training Hui

Healthy Eating + Active Living

Kūpuna Collective/Healthy Aging &
Community Living

Public Health Workforce Development

Date: March 26, 2025

To: Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services

RE: Support for SR 12/SCR 16 Requesting The Department of Health to
Convene a Task Force to Identify and Develop Minimum Professional
Standards for Community Health Worker Training Programs

Mtg: March 28, 2025, 1:00pm, Conference Room 225

Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)¹ supports **SR 12/SCR 16**, which is requesting the Department of Health to convene a task force to identify and develop minimum professional standards for Community Health Worker training programs in the state of Hawai'i.

Since 2017, HIPHI has supported and convened a network of community health workers (CHW) from across the state and a network of CHW allies dedicated to supporting CHWs. We continue working with Hawai'i CHWs and allies to determine the best path to sustain the CHW workforce and provide thriving wages. We believe that convening a task force to develop professional standards for CHW training programs can contribute to the sustainability and long-term impact of CHW programs throughout Hawai'i. HIPHI supports this resolution but does have some comments on the resolution in its current form.

- 1) To ensure that CHWs are properly represented, we request adding the Hawai'i Community Health Worker Association (HICHWA) as important stakeholders to include in this task force. The HICHWA has been a grassroots effort for many years that officially launched as an association in 2022. Their mission is to empower and equip CHWs throughout the state of Hawai'i, and their Leadership Council is led by 100% CHWs located on each of the islands in Hawai'i.
- 2) In addition, we also request the following organizations be added to the list of stakeholders:
 - a) A representative from Hawai'i Primary Care Association
 - b) And a representative from Papa Ola Lōkahi

¹Hawai'i Public Health Institute's mission is to advance health and wellness for the people and islands of Hawai'i. We do this through expanding our understanding of what creates health of people and place, fostering partnerships, and cultivating programs to improve policies, systems, and the environments where people live, learn, work, age, and play.



- 3) To ensure that CHWs are leading these efforts to establish minimum professional standards for their workforce, we also request adding language that aligns with the National Association of Community Health Workers and the American Public Health Association² standards that recommend at least 50% of leadership dealing with CHW components are CHWs themselves. To ensure this task force is CHW-led, we advocate that at least 50% of the task force members are CHWs.

As previously mentioned, HIPHI is in support, however, our testimony includes requested recommendations to the task force members that we believe will lead to the best representation of the uniqueness of CHW work throughout Hawai'i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify and provide comments on **SR 12/SCR 16**.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Rosilyn Filemoni". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Rosilyn Filemoni, MPH
Program Manager: Community Health Worker Initiatives

²Support for Community Health Worker Leadership in determining workforce standards for training and credentialing. American Public Health Association - For science. For action. For health. (2014, November 18).



Date: March 27, 2025

**HICHLA Association
Leadership Council**

Claudia Hartz, CHW
Outgoing Chair

Gracie Flores, CHW
Chair

Cyd Hoffeld, CHW
Vice Chair

**HICHLA Association
Island Representatives**

Cynthia Crabtree, CHW
Hawai'i Island

Jovena Moses, CHW
Hawai'i Island

Ashley Tone, CHW
Maui

Maile Holokai, CHW
Maui

Denise 'Ola' Ropa, CHW
Lāna'i

David Mamae, CHW
O'ahu

Crystal Caday-Bargayo,
CCHW
Kaua'i

To: Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services

RE: Support for SR 12/SCR 16 Requesting The Department of Health to Convene a Task Force to Identify and Develop Minimum Professional Standards for Community Health Worker Training Programs

Mtg: March 28, 2025, 1:00 pm, Conference Room 225

The Hawai'i Community Health Worker Association (HICHLA) **supports SR 12/SCR 16**, which is requesting the Department of Health to convene a task force to identify and develop minimum professional standards for Community Health Worker training programs in the state of Hawai'i.

The Hawai'i Community Health Worker Association (HICHLA) supports SR 12/SCR 16, and it respectfully requests that the resolution be amended to include key community stakeholders and ensure that Community Health Workers (CHWs) themselves are at the center of the task force.

My name is Gracie Flores, and I serve as the HICHLA Chair. I am also a dedicated CHW, and an advocate for health equity in Hawai'i. I submit this testimony on behalf of the HICHLA in support of SR12/SCR16 and offer recommendations to strengthen the resolution's impact. Incorporated in 2022, HICHLA empowers and equips CHWs to reduce health disparities by increasing access to training, education, and multi-sector collaboration.

SR 12/SCR 16 is an important step toward addressing the healthcare needs of our communities by recognizing and supporting the critical work of CHWs. Community Health Workers are essential to reaching underserved populations and reducing long-term healthcare costs by addressing the root causes of illness. Ensuring proper training standards will strengthen workforce quality and improve health equity across the islands.

Professional Standards Benefits

Establishing minimum professional standards for CHW training programs ensures that all CHWs receive standardized, high-quality training that equips them with the necessary knowledge and skills. Preparing CHWs to address a variety of health

challenges, especially those related to social determinants of health, with greater confidence and effectiveness.

Establishing these standards ensures that all CHWs receive standardized, high-quality training that equips them with the necessary knowledge and skills. Preparing CHWs to address a variety of health challenges, especially those related to social determinants of health, with greater confidence and effectiveness.

Establishing statewide standards gives CHWs more legitimacy within the healthcare system, potentially leading to increased respect and integration into multidisciplinary teams. Standardized training paves the way for certification and career progression, allowing CHWs to take on expanded roles and responsibilities.

With standardized training, CHWs can more effectively support patients, leading to improved chronic disease management, reduced hospital readmissions, and healthier communities. Well-trained CHWs act as trusted liaisons between healthcare providers and marginalized communities, improving communication and access to care.

Establishing professional standards positions CHWs to qualify for Medicaid reimbursement and other funding opportunities, ensuring sustainability and growth for the profession. Standardization can encourage investment in CHW training programs and workforce development initiatives.

CHWs play a vital role in addressing health inequities in Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and other underserved communities. Standardized training enhances their ability to address these disparities effectively. Equipping CHWs with the right tools empowers them to advocate for and support their communities in achieving better health outcomes.

Suggested Amendments

However, to ensure a more comprehensive and community-driven approach, I respectfully recommend that the resolution be amended to include the Hawai'i Community Health Worker Association (HICHWA), Papa Ola Lōkahi, and the Hawai'i Primary Care Association (HPCA) as key stakeholders.

- **Hawai'i Community Health Worker Association (HICHWA):** As the statewide association for CHWs, HICHWA plays an essential and dynamic role in advancing the professional development, advocacy, and peer support of CHWs who serve Hawai'i's diverse populations. HICHWA demonstrates its commitment through biennial CHW conferences, regional meetings, and a statewide Leadership Council with representatives from every major island. These leaders bring deep expertise about the unique needs of their respective communities and maintain strong ties to frontline CHWs, ensuring that HICHWA remains a well-equipped, community-rooted partner in any collaborative effort. By including HICHWA, CHWs' voices, lived experiences, and invaluable insights are amplified and placed at the forefront of policy discussions that directly impact their work and the communities they serve.
- **Papa Ola Lōkahi:** This organization is a leader in Native Hawaiian health and is the backbone of the Native Hawaiian Health Care System. Their expertise and cultural perspective are vital to ensuring that SR 12/SCR 16 aligns with the unique needs of Native Hawaiian communities.

*The Hawai'i Community Health Worker Association is convened under
Hawai'i Public Health Institute, a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit organization.*

hichw.org • Gracie Flores: gracie_flores@uhc.com • Chauncey Hatico, Hawai'i Community Health Worker
Association Coordinator: chauncey@hiphi.org

- **Hawai'i Primary Care Association (HPCA):** Representing community health centers statewide, HPCA plays a key role in ensuring access to primary care services for underserved populations. Their inclusion would help integrate CHWs into healthcare systems more effectively.

By incorporating these organizations into SR 12/SCR 16, we can leverage their expertise, strengthen partnerships, and ensure a community-driven approach to addressing health disparities in Hawai'i.

In addition to adding key stakeholders to the task force, we recommend that at least 50% of the task force's members be CHWs to ensure that CHWs are leading efforts to establish minimal professional standards for their workforce. [The American Public Health Association](#) (APHA) recommends that CHWs hold leadership roles in workforce development, and the [National Association of Community Health Workers](#) (NACHW) emphasizes CHW-led policy participation as a best practice.

As previously mentioned, HICHLWA supports the intent of this resolution. However, our testimony includes recommendations to the task force members that we believe will represent the diversity of CHW work throughout Hawai'i.

I urge the committee to amend and pass SR 12/SCR 16 so Hawai'i can take a meaningful, inclusive step toward professionalizing the CHW workforce while honoring the lived expertise already serving our communities. This approach aligns with national best practices and guidance from esteemed organizations such as the APHA and NACHW.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,



Gracie Flores, CHW
Hawai'i Community Health Worker Association Chair

LATE



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SR12/SCR 16

March 27, 2025

Committee on Health and Human Services
Hawaii State Legislature
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Aloha mai kākou Chair Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, and Committee members:

I am Dr. Adrienne Dillard, Ph.D., MSW, LSW, CEO of Kula no na Po'e Hawaii. I am a community health worker with degrees who has served the Hawaiian Homestead communities of Papakolea, Kewalo, and Kalawahine for over 30 years. I am writing in support of SCR 16.

Our support comes with the recommendation that the Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Community Health Worker Alliance (NHPH CHW Alliance) be included on the Task Force. The NHPI CHW Alliance comprises Community Health Workers representing communities disproportionately affected by health inequities. Their lived experiences, cultural knowledge, and direct service to underserved communities uniquely position them to contribute meaningfully to the task force. We respectfully request their formal inclusion as task force members.

A seat is made available for Papa Ola Lōkahi (POL), a leading Native Hawaiian health organization with extensive expertise in health workforce development, which is an essential partner. Including POL will ensure cultural alignment, historical understanding, and Native Hawaiian representation in the task force's work.

I would request a seat on the Task Force for Kula no nā Po'e Hawai'i (KULA). KULA Hawai'i has been steadfastly addressing the health needs of the Native Hawaiian community for over 30 years and has dedicated years to training Community Health Workers. With extensive experience in both direct service and workforce development, Kula no nā Po'e Hawai'i is uniquely positioned to contribute to the task force's efforts to establish culturally grounded training standards.

Additionally, the task force ensures that 51% of the Members are CHWs. To prioritize community voice and frontline expertise, we recommend that no less than 51% of the task force consist of practicing CHWs from across Hawai'i. Those most impacted by CHW training decisions must have not only a seat at the table but a meaningful role in shaping these decisions.

Page 2
March 27, 2025

Kula no nā Po'e Hawai'i deeply appreciates the Department of Health and the legislature for recognizing the value of the CHW workforce. We stand ready to kōkua in building a task force that reflects inclusivity, cultural grounding, and the aspirations of the communities it seeks to serve.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Adrienne Dillard".

Dr. Adrienne Dillard, Ph.D., MSW, LSW
CEO
Kula no na Po'e Hawaii



Community Association

Mission: "To Do What It Takes To Keep Ka'u Healthy"

P.O.Box 878 Pahala, Hawaii 96777

Website: krhcai.com

Phone: (808) 928-0101

March 26, 2025

To: Senator Joy San Buenaventura
Chair, Health & Human Services
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice
Chair
Senate Committee Members

From: Jessanie Marques, Executive Director
Ka'u Rural Health Community Association, Inc.

Re: Request Amendment/s to SR12/SCR16

My name is Jessanie Marques, (AKA auntie Jessie) Executive Director of Ka'u Rural Health Community Association, Inc. (KRHCAI) and support the intent of SB12/SCR16.

However, on behalf of KRHCAI I would like to request consideration to amend the following concerns:

- 1) Amend task force members invitations to include community based non profit "grass roots" organizations such as KRHCAI and the Native Hawaiian Pacific Island CHW's Association. Inclusion of our organizations would not only promote "transparency" of policy and decision making process, it would promote "trust" in government.
- 2) Amend that additional task force members include and approve our CBO/NPO "grass roots" organizations membership. Our "specialized expertise" is evidenced by our collaboration and partnerships promoting CHW's education, training, leadership and workforce development,

Mahalo, for providing me the opportunity to share my man'o, and strongly ask that you approve our request.



Community Association

Mission: "To Do What It Takes To Keep Ka'u Healthy"

P.O.Box 878 Pahala, Hawaii 96777

Website: krhcai.com

Phone: (808) 928-0101

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

Kaapuni Kama
808-272-8859

Friday, March 28, 2025

Support of SCR16, Requesting the Department of Health to convene a task force to identify and develop minimum professional standards for Community Health Worker training programs.

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

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of **Senate Concurrent Resolution 16 (SCR16)**. My name is Kaapuni Kama and I am the Vice President of Programs at Kula no na Po'e Hawai'i, a community-based non-profit in Papakolea Hawaiian Homestead. I received my Community Health Worker certificate in 2019 from Kapiolani Community College and I'm also the Treasurer of the Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Community Health Workers Alliance. I am not speaking on behalf of my employer or alliance affiliations but stand in support with both organizations on this resolution.

I strongly believe that establishing minimum standards for CHW training is necessary to advance workforce development and ensure cultural integrity across Hawai'i's diverse communities. SCR16 provides a vital opportunity to develop a unified, thoughtful, and culturally relevant framework for CHW training. As trusted frontline workers, we bridge the gap between community and care. Our work is rooted in culture, relationships, and aloha—principles that must guide the development of training standards. Along with my support, I would also like to recommend the following amendments be made moving forward:

1. 51% of the Task Force Should Be CHWs

To ensure the process is rooted in community voice and front-line expertise, I strongly recommend that **at least 51% of the task force be comprised of practicing Community Health Workers** from across Hawai'i. Those most impacted by training decisions must have a meaningful seat at the table—not only as contributors but as leaders and decision-makers.

2. Inclusion of the NHPI CHW Alliance on the Task Force

As a collective of CHWs representing Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities—who are disproportionately impacted by health inequities—I respectfully request that the **NHPI CHW Alliance be formally included as a member of the task force**. Our lived experience, cultural lens, and direct service in underserved communities uniquely position us to contribute meaningfully to these discussions.

3. Inclusion of Papa Ola Lōkahi (POL)

We further request the inclusion of **Papa Ola Lōkahi (POL)** on the task force, as the leading

Native Hawaiian health organization with decades of experience in Native Hawaiian health workforce development. POL's participation ensures cultural alignment, historical context, and Native Hawaiian representation.

I mahalo the State Legislature and Department of Health for prioritizing the development of our CHW workforce. I stand ready to kōkua in building a task force that is inclusive, culturally grounded, and truly reflective of the communities it seeks to serve.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

Kaapuni Kama
Vice President of Programs
kaapuni@kula-papakolea
808-272-8859



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

From: Paula Arcena, External Affairs Vice President
Mike Nguyen, Director of Public Policy
Sarielyn Curtis, External Affairs Specialist

Hearing: Friday, March 28, 2025, 1:00 PM, Conference Room 225

RE: **SR12/SCR16 Requesting the Department of Health to Convene a Task Force to Identify and Develop Minimum Professional Standards for Community Health Worker Training Programs.**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support with comments on SR12 and SCR16**. These measures request the Department of Health to convene a task force to identify and develop minimum professional standards for community health worker (CHW) training programs.

Founded in 1994 by Hawai'i's community health centers, AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan serving over 70,000 Medicaid and dual-eligible health plan members on all islands. Approximately 37 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.

Our commitment to whole-person care goes beyond doctor visits and medication. AlohaCare recognizes the significant impact of social determinants of health (SDOH), like housing, healthy food, and income on health and wellness, especially for low-income Medicaid populations. According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, SDOH can influence up to 80 percent of health outcomes.¹ Often, CHWs are trusted members in their community who help address the multifaceted needs of underserved populations, making it easier for them to access care and ensuring services are delivered in a way that respects their culture and needs.

We appreciate the importance of CHWs, and we support the intent of this measure. AlohaCare is proud to employ CHWs and make them available to our members. CHWs are an important part of the care team because of their ability to quickly establish trusting relationships with people which is vital when working with

¹ [Medicaid's Role in Addressing Social Determinants of Health](#)



ALOHA CARE

members who face multiple challenges daily, leaving their health care deprioritized. Standardized CHW professional standards for training programs will create more consistent service delivery, recognition, and potential advancement in this career field. AlohaCare would respectfully request to be considered for inclusion in this task force.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support with comments on SR12 and SCR16.**

SR-12

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 11:08:07 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chauncey Hatiko	Testifying for National Association of Community Health Workers	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is **Chauncey Hatiko**, and I am honored to serve as the Hawai‘i Ambassador for the **National Association of Community Health Workers (NACHW)**. I am submitting this testimony in **support** of **SR12 / SCR16**.

However, to ensure a more comprehensive and community-driven approach, I respectfully **recommend that the resolution be amended to include the Hawai‘i Community Health Worker Association (HICHA), Papa Ola Lōkahi, and the Hawai‘i Primary Care Association (HPCA)** as key stakeholders.

In addition to adding key stakeholders to the task force, I **recommend that at least 50% of the task force’s members be CHWs** to ensure that CHWs are leading efforts to establish minimal professional standards for their workforce. [The American Public Health Association](#) (APHA) recommends that CHWs hold leadership roles in workforce development, and the [National Association of Community Health Workers](#) (NACHW) emphasizes CHW-led policy participation as a best practice.

I urge this committee to **pass SR12 / SCR16 with the suggested amendments** to recognize and strengthen the contributions of CHWs and ensure that we can continue to uplift our communities with culturally grounded, community-centered care.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your continued support of Hawai‘i’s CHWs.

Respectfully submitted,

Chauncey Hatiko

Hawai‘i Ambassador, National Association of Community Health Workers (NACHW)

Hawai‘i Community Health Worker Association Coordinator, Hawai‘i Public Health Institute

March 25, 2025

Senator Joy San Buenaventura
Chair, Health & Human Services

Senator Henry J.C. Aquino
Vice-Chair, Health & Human Services

Senate Committee Members



Re: Request for Amendments to SR 12 / SCR 16

Aloha, my name is Kelsey Hiraishi. I fully support SR 12/SCR16.

I am a Native Hawaiian, Japanese, and Portuguese kupuna, born and raised on Hawaii Island. Having lived my entire life on the Big Island in a rural community, I have experienced the hardship of getting to my doctor just to get simple health question answered. I have used community health workers services many times. I suggest the following changes to SR 12/SCR 16:

1. AMMEND TASK FORCE MEMBER INVITATIONS TO INCLUDE HAWAIIAN ORGANIZATIONS

The current draft omits the inclusion of a significant stakeholder group: Native Hawaiians. While the resolution includes inviting numerous member organizations that serve the general community, no suggested member organization focuses on providing health services to our state's indigenous communities in a culture-first approach, thus greatly increasing the effectiveness of services. I suggest inclusion of a representative from the Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander CHW's Association, and/or Papa Ola Lokahi.

2. AMMEND TASK FORCE MEMBER INVITATIONS TO INCLUDE RURAL HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS

The resolution in its current draft inadvertently omits the inclusion of another significant stakeholder group: rural health provider organizations. I suggest the inclusion of a representative from a rural health service provider. I suggest including a representative from Ka`u Rural Health Community Association, Inc.

Thank you for allowing me to offer suggested amendments to the current draft of SR 12 /SCR 16.

Kelsey Hiraishi

SR-12

Submitted on: 3/25/2025 8:37:55 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cynthia Crabtree	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Testimony for SR 12 / SCR 16

Submitted by Cynthia Crabtree

Community Health Worker – Hawai‘i Island Representative

Hawai‘i Community Health Worker Association (HICHWA)

Date: March 28, 2025

Aloha mai kākou,

My name is Cynthia "Cee Cee" Crabtree, and I am a Community Health Worker (CHW) based in Hilo. I also serve as the Hawai‘i Island Representative for the Hawai‘i Community Health Worker Association (HICHWA).

I submit this written testimony in **strong support of SR 12 / SCR 16.**

I also support HICHWA’s recommendations to:

- Include CHWs, Papa Ola Lōkahi, and HPCA on the task force
- Ensure at least 50% of the task force are practicing CHWs

I support certification **only if it does not exclude CHWs who are already doing the work.**

Many of us have built deep trust in our communities without formal credentials, and our voices must be part of setting any standards moving forward.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,

Cynthia Crabtree CHW, CHC

Hawai‘i Island Representative, HICHWA

Community Health Worker & Certified Health Coach, Hilo

SR-12

Submitted on: 3/25/2025 10:55:07 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
April Arroyo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Date: March 25, 2025

To: Senator Joy San Buena Ventura, Chair Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Re: Testimony in *support or opposition* of SR12/SCR16

Hrg: Friday, March 28, 2025 TIME: 1:00 PM

PLACE: Videoconference Conference 225

My name is April Arroyo and I am a Maui community health worker who specializes in behavioral health. I am writing in strong support of Senate Resolution 12 requesting the establishment of a task force by the Department of Health to identify and develop minimum professional standards for community health worker (CHW) training programs. This resolution represents an important step forward in strengthening the health and well-being of our communities across the State of Hawaii.

Community health workers play an integral role in bridging gaps in healthcare access, particularly for vulnerable populations. By providing culturally relevant, accessible care, CHWs enhance health outcomes, promote preventive care, and reduce disparities in health. However, the effectiveness of CHWs is contingent upon the quality and consistency of their training. Establishing a task force dedicated to identifying professional standards for CHW training programs ensures that these vital workers are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to deliver high-quality care.

The resolution proposes a well-rounded and inclusive task force, inviting representatives from a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including the Department of Health, community health workers, public health experts, and educational institutions. This diversity will ensure that the task force can develop standards that are not only scientifically sound but also practically applicable to the diverse needs of our communities. Importantly, the inclusion of CHWs themselves in the task force will bring invaluable frontline perspectives that will inform training standards that are both relevant and achievable.

Additionally, the representation of various sectors, such as the Hawaii Public Health Institute, the Hawaii Public Housing Authority, and the Med-QUEST Division, ensures that the task force will consider the full range of factors that impact the work of CHWs, from public health policy to housing and healthcare access. These comprehensive insights are essential for creating training programs that will address the real-world challenges CHWs face in their work.

The proposed involvement of the University of Hawaii - West Oahu and Kapiolani Community College in this process is also vital. These institutions are in a unique position to provide the educational infrastructure necessary to train future community health workers. Through their involvement, the task force will be able to align academic programs with the professional standards developed, ensuring that CHWs are not only trained effectively but are also prepared to meet the specific needs of our communities.

The establishment of this task force will ultimately improve health outcomes for residents throughout Hawaii, especially those in underserved areas, by standardizing and elevating the training of our community health workers. By ensuring that CHWs are well-prepared, we are investing in a workforce that will contribute to the overall health and well-being of our state.

I strongly encourage the passage of this resolution and the establishment of this task force, as it will foster a more effective and sustainable healthcare delivery model in Hawaii.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
April Arroyo
Behavioral Health Community Health Worker
aearroyo@hawaii.edu
(808) 757-8176

Date: March 25, 2025

To: Senator Joy San Buena Ventura, Chair
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Re: Testimony in support of SR12/SCR16

Hrg: Friday, March 28, 2025, TIME: 1:00 PM PLACE Videoconference Conference 225

My name is Crystal Caday-Bargayo, and I am a resident of Lihue, Kauai, Hawaii. I am a Community Health Worker. I completed my certificate at Kauai Community College.

I fully support SR 12/SCR 16 because it recognizes the vital role that Community Health Workers (CHWs) play in improving health outcomes, reducing health disparities, and promoting preventative healthcare in underserved communities across Hawaii. CHW-Led housing intervention improves health outcomes, increases access to services, enhances trust and communication and reduces homelessness. CHWs are trusted members of our communities who serve as bridges between individuals and healthcare services, improving access to care and increasing health literacy. We live in a unique state made up of several islands. Each island has its character traits, and the people on each island have their own identity. Hearing the voices from representatives of each island will bring a distinct understanding of the needs and bring to light the resource constraints of each island.

As a CHW, I've seen first-hand how we are integral in supporting vulnerable populations, including those in rural areas, people of low income, and other underserved groups. As frontline workers, our work reduces barriers to care, provides critical education, and helps individuals navigate complex healthcare and housing systems. This resolution is a significant step toward formally recognizing and expanding the essential work that CHWs do in Hawaii.

I urge you to pass SR 12/SCR 16, as it will improve the physical and mental health and well-being of our communities and help strengthen the healthcare system in Hawaii. By formally supporting CHWs, we can ensure that more individuals have access to quality care and that the state continues to lead in a holistic, progressive, community-centered healthcare solutions.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I strongly urge you to support SR 12/SCR 16 and the continued empowerment of Community Health Workers in Hawaii.

Sincerely,

Crystal Caday-Bargayo, CHW
Resident Service Director, PAL Hawaii
crystalcaday@gmail.com
crystal@pal-hawaii.org
(808) 855-8675

LATE

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

Kaapuni Kama
808-272-8859

Friday, March 28, 2025

Support of SCR16, Requesting the Department of Health to convene a task force to identify and develop minimum professional standards for Community Health Worker training programs.

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

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of **Senate Concurrent Resolution 16 (SCR16)**. My name is Kaapuni Kama and I am the Vice President of Programs at Kula no na Po'e Hawai'i, a community-based non-profit in Papakolea Hawaiian Homestead. I received my Community Health Worker certificate in 2019 from Kapiolani Community College and I'm also the Treasurer of the Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Community Health Workers Alliance. I am not speaking on behalf of my employer or alliance affiliations but stand in support with both organizations on this resolution.

I strongly believe that establishing minimum standards for CHW training is necessary to advance workforce development and ensure cultural integrity across Hawai'i's diverse communities. SCR16 provides a vital opportunity to develop a unified, thoughtful, and culturally relevant framework for CHW training. As trusted frontline workers, we bridge the gap between community and care. Our work is rooted in culture, relationships, and aloha—principles that must guide the development of training standards. Along with my support, I would also like to recommend the following amendments be made moving forward:

1. 51% of the Task Force Should Be CHWs

To ensure the process is rooted in community voice and front-line expertise, I strongly recommend that **at least 51% of the task force be comprised of practicing Community Health Workers** from across Hawai'i. Those most impacted by training decisions must have a meaningful seat at the table—not only as contributors but as leaders and decision-makers.

2. Inclusion of the NHPI CHW Alliance on the Task Force

As a collective of CHWs representing Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities—who are disproportionately impacted by health inequities—I respectfully request that the **NHPI CHW Alliance be formally included as a member of the task force**. Our lived experience, cultural lens, and direct service in underserved communities uniquely position us to contribute meaningfully to these discussions.

3. Inclusion of Papa Ola Lōkahi (POL)

We further request the inclusion of **Papa Ola Lōkahi (POL)** on the task force, as the leading

Native Hawaiian health organization with decades of experience in Native Hawaiian health workforce development. POL's participation ensures cultural alignment, historical context, and Native Hawaiian representation.

I mahalo the State Legislature and Department of Health for prioritizing the development of our CHW workforce. I stand ready to kōkua in building a task force that is inclusive, culturally grounded, and truly reflective of the communities it seeks to serve.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

Kaapuni Kama
Vice President of Programs
kaapuni@kula-papakolea
808-272-8859

LATE

SR-12

Submitted on: 3/27/2025 2:47:14 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cyd L. Hoffeld	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Re: SR12/SCR16

Aloha e Senator Joy San Buenaventura and Senator Henry Aquino,

My name is Cyd Hoffeld, and I am a Community Health Worker (CHW) on Hawai'i Island in the District of Puna.

I am in strong support of SR12/SCR16 because it is an important step toward addressing the healthcare needs of our communities by formally recognizing and supporting the essential work of CHWs in Hawaii.

To ensure a more comprehensive and community-driven approach, the two recommendations below should strongly be considered and the following amendments made:

1. Key Stakeholders Recommendations: The task force should specifically include Hawai'i Community Health Worker Association (HICHTWA), Papa Ola Lōkahi (POL), Hawaii Primary Care Association (HPCA), and the Ka'ū Rural Health Community Association (KRHCAI) as key stakeholder members. These organizations have extensive experience and expertise in supporting CHWs and promoting culturally appropriate healthcare in Hawaii.
2. CHW Representation Recommendations: That at least 50% of the task forces members be CHWs to ensure that those with lived experience and direct knowledge of community needs are leading efforts to establish minimum professional standards for their workforce.

I ask for your strong support of SR12/SCR16 with the addition of the recommendations which strengthen Hawaii's healthcare system by uplifting and supporting the vital work of CHWs.

Warmest mahalo,

Cyd L. Hoffeld

CHW in Pāhoa on Hawai'i Island