



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ÖNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony Hō‘ike Mana‘o I Mua O Ka ‘Aha‘olelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education
Friday, February 6, 2026 at 2:05 pm

By

T. Samuel Shomaker, MD, JD, MSM, Dean
John A. Burns School of Medicine

And

Naoto T. Ueno MD, PhD, Director
University of Hawai'i Cancer Center

And

Clementina D. Ceria-Ulep, PhD, RN, Dean and Professor
UH School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene

And

Alexander N. Ortega, PhD.

UH Thompson School of Social Work and Public Health
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

And

Rae Matsumoto, PhD.

Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

And

Vassilis Syrmos, PhD

Interim Provost

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

And

Bonnie Irwin, PhD

Chancellor

University of Hawai'i at Hilo

HB 2159 – RELATING TO HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in SUPPORT of HB 2159 which establishes positions and appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i (UH) to support health care workforce development in the State. The University of Hawai'i Health Science/Health Professions units train the next generation of healthcare providers and human health scientists to address a myriad of chronic diseases with a high burden and disproportionate impact on various populations and communities in Hawai'i. The coordinated interdisciplinary initiative outlined in HB 2159 will enhance the health care workforce through a team-based system, increase access to care for our communities and capitalize on partnerships with other public and private organizations.

Severe shortages exist in practically all health profession disciplines and most medical specialties, limiting access to care. The risk burden and low access are more pronounced in rural and underserved areas, as well as in certain minority and vulnerable populations. **This coordinated hiring request encompasses three areas that address critical workforce shortage needs in high-priority concerns for the state: (1) cancer, (2) neurology & dementia, and (3) behavioral health-primary care integration/addiction medicine.**

FUNDING & POSITIONS REQUESTED:

The proposal involves UHM John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM), UH Cancer Center (UHCC), UHM School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene (SONDH), UHM Thompson School of Social Work and Public Health (TSSWPH), and the UH Hilo Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy (DKICOP). The requested faculty positions support training, clinical care and research across UH. This multidisciplinary request leverages strengths across UH, in partnership with our major health system partners, several state agencies (DOH, DHS, DOE, DOC), and utilizes community-based and/or community-advised approaches to team-science research, curriculum development, and interprofessional education. Positions requested in hematology-oncology (cancer) fellowship and the neurology residency programs slightly exceed the minimum accreditation requirements to ensure strong program leadership and enhance research and other scholarly activities that lead to the provision of high-quality, safe, and competent patient care. Additional nursing, social work, and pharmacy positions, as well as two APTs for simulation-based physician and nursing education, also address core requirements in all health professions for interprofessional education, competency-based education, and robust assessment of medical and nursing learners to ensure safe patient care.

Total Request Amount (for the three areas identified above combined):

FY27-29 Budget (personnel only) \$3,724,600 annually

Personnel FTE 18.5 FTE (2.0 are APT)

	Cancer		Neurology / Dementia		Behavioral / Addiction Med		Total by unit
	FTE Fac	Salary Faculty APT	FTE Fac	Salary Faculty APT	FTE Fac	Salary Faculty	FTE Salary
JABSOM (UOH 110/PP)	0.6	\$119,400	2.4 1	\$439,200 75,000	1.75	\$333,000	FTE 5.75 \$966,600

	Cancer		Neurology / Dementia		Behavioral / Addiction Med		Total by unit
	FTE Fac APT	Salary Faculty APT	FTE Fac APT	Salary Faculty APT	FTE Fac	Salary Faculty	FTE Salary
UHCC (UOH 115)	2.75	\$1,000,000					FTE 2.75 \$1,000,000
SONDH (UOH 100)	1 0	\$200,000	1 1	\$200,000 \$93,000	1	\$200,000	FTE 4.0 \$693,000
TSSWPH (UOH 100)	1 0	\$160,000	1	\$160,000	1	\$160,000	FTE 3.0 \$480,000
DKICOP (UOH 210)	1 0	\$195,000	1	\$195,000	1	\$195,000	FTE 3.0 \$585,000

This coordinated request for faculty positions will have the following impacts:

- **Workforce Pipeline:** Expanding training for physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and behavioral health providers in cancer, neurology & dementia, behavioral health, addiction medicine, and primary care improves access to care across all islands. These positions support the growth of team-based training.
- **Access to Care:** Additional faculty providing direct clinical services will reduce shortages in underserved communities. The positions requested in dementia and behavioral health-primary care integration will create and provide continuing education training to numerous disciplines across the state and are aligned with legislative and DOH mandates for UH.
- **Leveraging Partnerships:** These positions build on existing collaborations with the Department of Health (addiction medicine/behavioral health), Queen's and HPH (neurology residency program, oncology fellowship programs, family medicine rural track in North Hawaii), and the Department of Education (Hawaii Keiki). They also align with the anticipated role of UH in the state's Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) starting in January 2026 and continuing for the next five years. Collectively these efforts will help support and expand the State's many proposed workforce development initiatives and some of the telehealth initiatives focused on behavioral health.

The appropriation and establishment of positions at UH contained in this measure will support statewide community assets, and is in the best interests of our community. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.



Hawaii Medical Association

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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair
Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair

Date: February 6, 2026

From: Hawaii Medical Association (HMA)
Elizabeth Ann Ignacio MD - Chair, HMA Public Policy Committee
Christina Marzo MD and Robert Carlisle MD, Vice Chairs, HMA Public Policy Committee

RE HB 2159 - RELATING TO HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT- University of Hawai'i; Health Care Workforce Development; Appropriation

Position: Support

This measure would establish positions and appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i to support health care workforce development in the State.

According to the UH JABSOM 2026 Annual Report on Findings from the Hawai'i Physician Workforce Assessment, the Hawaii physician shortage continues with unmet need of 833 FTE physicians. The ongoing workforce crisis is most critical in the neighbor islands.

	Hawai'i County	Honolulu County	Kauai County	Maui County	Statewide
Shortage	224 (201)	379 (328)	50 (43)	179 (174)	833 (768)
Percent	43% (40%)	15% (13)	28% (24)	41% (41)	23% (21)

Physician Shortage by County (Prior year numbers in parentheses)

University of Hawai'i at Manoa John A. Burns School of Medicine Area Health Education Center. Annual Report on Findings from the Hawai'i Physician Workforce Assessment Project. Dec. 2025.

Establishing university clinical faculty positions supports rural workforce needs when those positions expand supervised training, residency slots, and community-based rotations in underserved areas, as physicians are far more likely to practice where they train and build professional ties. HMA supports this measure that may address critical healthcare workforce shortages by filling key educational, training, and clinical-translational research roles.

Thank you for allowing the Hawaii Medical Association to testify in support of this measure.

2026 Hawaii Medical Association Public Policy Coordination Team

Elizabeth A Ignacio, MD, Chair • Robert Carlisle, MD, Vice Chair • Christina Marzo, MD, Vice Chair
Linda Rosehill, JD, Government Relations • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

2026 Hawaii Medical Association Officers

Nadine Tenn-Salle, MD, President • Jerald Garcia, MD, President Elect • Elizabeth Ann Ignacio, MD, • Immediate Past President
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REFERENCES AND QUICK LINKS

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa John A. Burns School of Medicine Area Health Education Center. Annual Report on Findings from the Hawai'i Physician Workforce Assessment Project. Dec. 2025. University of Hawai'i Government Relations. https://www.hawaii.edu/govrel/docs/reports/2026/act18-sslh2009_2026_physician-workforce_annual-report_508.pdf Accessed Jan 25 2026.

Hay, Jeremy. "Need A Doctor? Hawai'i's Physician Shortage Keeps Getting Worse." *Honolulu Civil Beat*, 8 Jan. 2026, www.civilbeat.org/2026/01/hawaii-physician-shortage-getting-worse/. Accessed Jan 25 2026.

Yip C. Hawaii faces shortage of 800 physicians, with neighbor islands hit hardest. KITV.com. May 20 2024. Accessed Feb 1 2025.

Lu A. Factors Exacerbating the Physician Shortage in Hawaii: What is Hawaii Doing to Stem the Tide? Brown University School of Public Health. April 3 2024. Accessed Feb 1 2025.

2024 Hawaii Medical Association Officers

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Jerris Hedges, MD, Treasurer • Thomas Kosasa, MD, Secretary • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

2024 Hawaii Medical Association Public Policy Coordination Team

Beth England, MD, Chair
Linda Rosehill, JD, Government Relations • Marc Alexander, Executive Director



HPCA

HAWAII PRIMARY CARE ASSOCIATION

Testimony to the House Committee on Higher Education
Friday, February 6, 2026; 2:05 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 309
Via Videoconference

RE: HOUSE BILL NO. 2159, RELATING TO HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the 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** House Bill No. 2159, RELATING TO HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.

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 \$3,724,600 in general funds for fiscal year 2026-2027 for the University of Hawaii System to establish eighteen and a half full-time equivalent (18.5 FTE) positions to support health care workforce development in Hawaii.

The bill would take effect on July 1, 2026.

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.

The same can be said for registered and practical nurses, community health workers, social workers, pharmacists, and other disciplines in the field of health care.

Testimony on House Bill No. 2159
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The HPCA believes this bill would provide a needed resources to our community by preparing students for meaningful employment, diversifying their learning opportunities, and promoting responsible citizenship. In addition, this bill would help students receive practical experience that will enable them to be productive members of our labor force. This is critical for the field of health care, especially in rural communities.

Accordingly, the HPCA respectfully urges your favorable consideration of this measure.

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@hawaiipca.net.



Testimony to the House Committee on Higher Education

Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair

Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair

Friday, February 6, 2026, at 2:05PM
Conference Room 309 & Videoconference

RE: HB 2159 Relating to Health Care Workforce Development

Aloha e Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports House Bill 2159 (HB2159), which establishes positions and appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i to support health care workforce development in the State.

HB2159 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Economic Action. This bill represents a high impact workforce development investment: wherein strengthening healthcare workforce pathways improves community health and quality of life. By better enabling our healthcare systems to provide care, communities become healthier and community members can maintain their presence and contribution to the broader workforce. The Chamber believes that a strong healthcare workforce is fundamental to broader economic productivity and competitiveness. Reliable access to timely, high-quality health services improves worker attendance and performance across all sectors, reduces employer health-related costs, and enables older residents to remain active in communities.

With health systems suffering severe shortages, this bill offers a viable solution for addressing a persistent systemic workforce dilemma faced by the industry. According to a 2024 study referenced by the Honolulu Star-Advertiser, the Hawaii's healthcare industry was short more 4,600 workers (14% industry job vacancy rate). The Chamber recognizes this unsatisfied industry demand for labor as a threat to community health and healthcare economies. The expansion of local training capacity supports job fulfilment, strengthens the state's innovation ecosystem in clinical research, and stimulates demand for support services that accompany a robust health care sector.

We respectfully ask to pass House Bill 2159. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.



February 6, 2026

House Committee on Higher Education
Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair
Rep. Terez Amato, Vice Chair

RE: HB2159, Relating to Healthcare Workforce Development

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the committee –

Navian Hawaii is a nonprofit organization supporting the needs of Hawai'i's aging population, including through hospice, palliative care, and integrated support services. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony **in support of** HB2159, Relating to Healthcare Workforce Development. This bill would establish positions and appropriate funds to the University of Hawaii to support health care workforce development in the State.

The ongoing shortage of healthcare workers in Hawai'i has significant implications for access to care. As Hawai'i's population of individuals 65 and over increases, many of whom require specialized services for illnesses such as cancer and dementia, the impacts of this shortage will only become more acute.

By establishing new positions and appropriating funds for workforce development, this bill helps address a critical barrier to expanding and sustaining high-quality care. Enhanced workforce development efforts can help ensure that future healthcare providers are prepared to serve in diverse settings, including home- and community-based care that is vital for kupuna.

Navian Hawaii is a nonprofit organization supporting the needs of Hawai'i's aging population, including through hospice, palliative care, and integrated support services. The name "Navian" blends "Navigator" and "Guardian," reflecting our mission to guide individuals and their families through the physical and emotional challenges that often accompany aging and serious illness.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

HB-2159

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 2:45:51 PM
Testimony for HED on 2/6/2026 2:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Megan Blazak	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee,
As a constituent of House District 2, I support this measure.