

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII



DEPT. COMM. 100-203
KENNETH S. FINK, M.D., M.P.H., M.G.A.
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
P. O. BOX 3378
HONOLULU, HI 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:
File:

December 29, 2025

The Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi,
President and Members of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 409
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

The Honorable Nadine K. Nakamura,
Speaker
and Members of the House of
Representatives
Thirty-Third State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 431
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear President Kouchi, Speaker Nakamura, and Members of the Legislature:

For your information and consideration, I am transmitting a copy of the Annual Report of Recommended Primary Health Care Incentives, Strategies, and Implementation to the Legislature, pursuant to Chapter 321, Section 1.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

In accordance with Section 93-16, Hawaii Revised Statutes, I am also informing you that the report may be viewed electronically at:

<https://health.hawaii.gov/opppd/department-of-health-reports-to-2026-legislature/>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Fink".

Kenneth S. Fink, M.D., M.P.H., M.G.A.
Director of Health

Enclosures

c: Legislative Reference Bureau
Hawaii State Library System (2)
Hamilton Library

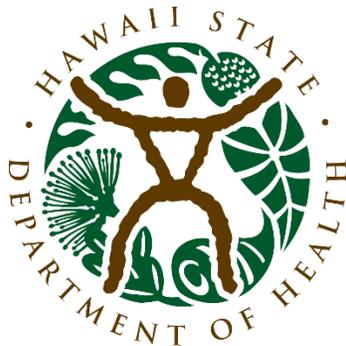
REPORT TO THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE

STATE OF HAWAII

2026

PURSUANT TO SECTION 321-1.5, HAWAII REVISED STATUTES

**REQUIRING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO SUBMIT
AN ANNUAL REPORT ON RECOMMENDED PRIMARY HEALTH CARE
INCENTIVES, STRATEGIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION**



PREPARED BY:

**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
HEALTH RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION
FAMILY HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION**

DECEMBER 2025

INDEX OF ACRONYMS

AHEC	Area Health Education Center (state, part of UH JABSOM)
BHW	Bureau of Health Workforce (federal, part of HRSA)
CAH	Critical Access Hospital
CHCSF	Community Health Centers Special Fund
CHW	Community Health Worker
CMS	Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
COFA	Compact of Free Association
DOH	Department of Health (state)
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services (federal)
DHS	Department of Human Services (state)
ECHO	Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes
EIS	Early Intervention Section (state, part of DOH)
FHSD	Family Health Services Division (state)
FLEX	Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Grant Program (state)
FORHP	Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (federal, part of HRSA)
FQHC	Federally Qualified Health Center
HAH	Healthcare Association of Hawai'i
HCAN	Hawai'i Children's Action Network
HIPA	Hawai'i Independent Physicians Association
HIPHI	Hawai'i Public Health Institute
HOHC	Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition
HOPE	Hawai'i Opioid Prevention and Education
HPCA	Hawai'i Primary Care Association
HPIC	Hawai'i Performance Improvement Collaborative
HPSA	Health Professional Shortage Designation
HRA	Health Resources Administration (state, part of DOH)
HRSA	Health Resources and Services Administration (federal, part of DHHS)
HSRHA	Hawai'i State Rural Health Association
HTAC	Hawai'i Trauma Advisory Council
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
ITU	Indian Tribal Unit
JABSOM	John A. Burns School of Medicine (state)
LAL	FQHC Look-Alike
MQD	Med-QUEST Division (state, division of DHS)
MUA	Medically Underserved Area
MUP	Medically Underserved Population
NHSC	National Health Service Corps
OPHS	University of Hawai'i Office of Public Health Studies (state)
OPPPD	Office of Program Planning and Policy Development (state)
OSHI	Office of Strategic Health Initiatives (state)
ODU	Opioid Use Disorder
PBTRC	Pacific Basin Telehealth Resource Center
PCO	Primary Care Office (state, part of DOH)
PHCP	Primary Health Care Partners
PCRH	Primary Care and Rural Health (state, part of DOH)
PHHSBG	Preventive Health and Human Service Block Grant
PIDF	Partners in Development Foundation
POL	Papa Ola Lōkahi, Native Hawaiian Health Care System
RHC	Rural Health Clinic

RHRPC	University of Hawai'i Rural Health Research & Policy Center
SHIP	Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program (state)
SHPDA	State Health Planning and Development Agency (state)
SLRP	State Loan Repayment Program (state, part of AHEC)
SONDH	School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene (state, part of UH)
SORH	State Offices of Rural Health (state, part of DOH)
Title V	Title V, the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant (federal legislation)
UH	University of Hawai'i (state college system)

IDENTIFY PRIMARY HEALTH CARE PARTNERS (PHCP)

The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) is part of a comprehensive network of organizations and associations across our state that impact primary care and rural health. These key partners represent various sectors such as public health, education, workforce development, safety-net, nonprofit, philanthropy, telehealth, priority populations, and advocacy.

Big Island Docs (aka East Hawai'i Independent Physicians Association)

Big Island Docs represents more than 60 private individual physicians on Hawai'i Island as a community working together to achieve better health. Its goal is to empower independent healthcare providers on Hawai'i Island to improve quality, increase access, and lower costs to achieve better health. With the blessing of its physician members, the organization started the Big Island Health Care Clinic, a private group whose mission is to deliver compassionate care of the highest quality with the best customer service. The purpose is to have the best of both systems of care: personalized aloha care with the financial, management, and operational infrastructure characteristic of larger systems.

Broadband Hui

The Broadband Hui is an alliance of 200 partners representing wireline and wireless carriers; federal, state, and county legislative and administrative leaders; local, national, and international nonprofits; public and private schools, universities; and private businesses that seek opportunities to expand broadband capacity and move Hawai'i toward a more equitable digital future. The Broadband Hui has made notable progress by supporting the establishment of the Hawai'i Broadband Office, making Hawai'i one of the first states across the country to prioritize digital equity.

Community First Hawai'i

Community First Hawai'i is a community-based forum bringing stakeholders together for dialogue and the exchange of ideas to find solutions that will improve health and reduce medical costs on Hawai'i Island for the good of all. Community First Hawai'i convened the Hawai'i Island Healthcare Conference on October 2, 2025, to promote the exchange of ideas and collaborative goals. Other initiatives include the Community Action Network (CAN), Access to Care, Health Literacy, Network Building, and Regional Health Partnership.

Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN)

HCAN is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and the only one in the state of Hawai'i solely committed to advocating for children. They address the root causes of poverty and inequity and develop public policies that help children and their families. HCAN's mission is to build a unified voice educating and advocating for Hawai'i children. HCAN's vision is that all Hawai'i children will be healthy, safe, and ready to learn.

Hawai'i Health and Harm Reduction Center

This center serves Hawai'i communities by reducing the harm and fighting the stigma of HIV, hepatitis, homelessness, substance use, mental illness, and poverty in our community. Populations served include those living with and/or affected by HIV, hepatitis, substance use, and the LGBTQIA+ and Native Hawaiian communities. The center fosters health, wellness, and systemic change in Hawai'i and the Pacific through care services, advocacy, training, prevention, education, and capacity building.

Hawai'i Independent Physicians Association (HIPA)

HIPA represents nearly 1,275 independent primary care physicians and specialty physicians in the state of Hawai'i. The organization's mission is physicians helping physicians through education, support, and leadership to better care for people of Hawai'i. The organization's vision is to preserve independent practice by creating an engaged, connected health community that empowers our physicians and their patients. HIPA allows for a strong viable independent practice sector, which encourages competition and protects freedom of healthcare choice for patients.

Hawai'i Learning Groups (HLG) ECHO

HLG is a Hawai'i-based collaborating partner with Project ECHO® (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) of New Mexico. The goal of the program is to increase access to specialty care, especially for rural and underserved populations by providing a standardized format for clinical tele-education between interdisciplinary groups, allowing them to collaborate regardless of geographic separation.

Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition (HOHC)

The mission of HOHC is to improve the overall health and well-being of all Hawai'i residents by increasing access and equity in oral health care through collaborative partnerships, advocacy, and education. HOHC was established in the summer of 2019 but follows in the footsteps of decades of collaboration within the oral health community. HOHC is community owned with membership representation from all islands and diverse sectors. The PCRH partners with the HOHC to strengthen workforce development by participating in the public high school career fairs and volunteering on the HOHC Workforce Committee. The dental professionals, who are members of HOHC, are interested in visiting the public high schools to promote the dental professions.

Hawai'i Primary Care Association (HPCA)

HPCA is the Hawai'i membership association of Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and a FQHC Look-Alike that make up the state's safety-net of primary care providers for the underinsured and uninsured. HPCA helps FQHCs improve programmatic, clinical, and financial performance and operations. HPCA offers technical assistance and training in health center leadership and administration (including governance, fiscal, and program management), operational support, administrative assistance, and quality improvement.

Hawai'i State Center for Nursing

Hawai'i State Center for Nursing is located on the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa campus and mandated by the Hawai'i State Legislature in 2003 to address nursing workforce issues (Act 198, 304A-1406). The center compiles data on the nursing workforce supply and the nursing education capacity in the state of Hawai'i. The center also promotes advocacy and supports nurses with career and research publication goals.

Hawai'i State Rural Health Association (HSRHA)

Membership includes advocates, partners, and innovators who strive for a future where rural communities have equal access to the providers, infrastructure, and resources they need to support an equitable, healthy Hawai'i. HSRHA leads multisector initiatives that improve access to care and leverage financial and technological resources that strengthen and sustain Hawai'i rural communities. HSRHA champions the needs of rural patients and rural providers, fostering partnerships that promote collaboration, equity, and a shift of resources to better support complete systems of care in those communities.

HSRHA is a comprehensive network of local organizations. These organizations include community-based organizations, provider groups, and business and government leaders who are committed to working together to strengthen and sustain the Hawai'i rural healthcare system. HSRHA is moving toward a Chapter Format using each unique island as their own chapter of the larger association.

The Hawai'i State Rural Health Association leads efforts to improve healthcare access and address provider shortages across Hawai'i and U.S.-affiliated Pacific Islands, serving diverse communities in geographically isolated regions. HSRHA leverages its Hawai'i Rural ECHO programs—covering Pediatrics, Behavioral Health, Geriatrics, Care Home, and Health Equity—and a statewide network of over 2,000 health professionals to deliver technology-enabled learning and expert knowledge. By managing federal and state grants, HSRHA addresses critical challenges such as the opioid crisis, rural healthcare infrastructure, and digital equity, all with the goal of closing healthcare gaps and improving access in rural communities.

Hawai'i Trauma Advisory Council (HTAC)

HTAC is comprised of a broad and representative array of multidisciplinary trauma stakeholders to disseminate information and advise the Hawai'i State Department of Health on all matters related to the comprehensive statewide trauma system. Their mission is to reduce the burden of trauma in Hawai'i through collaborative programs of injury prevention, optimal treatment, research, and education. The vision is to ensure all trauma patients within the state of Hawai'i receive quality comprehensive trauma care aligned with national trauma standards.

Healthcare Association of Hawai'i (HAH)

The Healthcare Association of Hawai'i consists of 170 member organizations, including the acute care hospitals in Hawai'i, public and private skilled nursing facilities, type II adult residential care homes, the Medicare-certified home health agencies, hospices, assisted living facilities, and home infusion/pharmacies. Members also represent other healthcare providers from throughout the continuum, including case management, air and ground ambulance, blood bank, dialysis, and more.

The primary focus of HAH is working with healthcare executives and their employees on vital industry issues such as advocacy (in Washington D.C. and Hawai'i), quality and reimbursement improvement, strategic education, emergency preparedness, healthcare workforce, public relations, shared savings, and reducing costs.

In a time of unprecedented change in healthcare, the HAH is committed to working with providers across the continuum of care toward a healthcare system that offers the best possible quality of care to the people of Hawai'i.

Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)

The HIPHI is a statewide nonprofit organization that began in 1996, then known as the Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Hawai'i. In 2012, the organization moved from a singular focus on tobacco issues to a broader public health mission and became the first and only public health institute serving Hawai'i. Our work has broadened to include: food and agriculture, transportation and public safety, oral health, healthy eating + active living (HEAL), drug and alcohol prevention, tobacco, COVID-19 response efforts, and workforce development.

HIPHI continues to be a bridge between community and partners from government and healthcare so that all relevant stakeholders throughout the Hawaiian Islands are involved in decisions related to public health policy, programs, and investments. We believe we can play a significant role in the shift of public health from being primarily about treating disease to the promotion of preventing it.

Hawai'i Statewide Physician Shortage Crisis Task Force

Hawai'i Physician Shortage Crisis Task Force, a group of 60 physicians and community members who, along with local and federal lawmakers, seek to improve conditions for physicians. Efforts include working toward an improved Medicare fee schedule and lifting of state general excise tax requirements associated with Medicare and Medicaid patient visits, which physicians must pay out of the insurance payments received. For Medicare and Medicaid, physicians are not allowed to pass these required charges (taxes) on to patients so must pay them out of the billings received.

Starting in 2026, healthcare providers will no longer have to pay the state's general excise tax on health care for patients on Medicare, Medicaid, and Tricare. The new law will allow healthcare providers to take on more patients with government insurance plans.

Hilo Benioff Medical Center Foundation

Hilo Benioff Medical Center Foundation supports a wide variety of projects, capital improvements, and events that benefit Hawai'i Island and the greater community. The Foundation is dedicated to fostering philanthropy to provide programs, projects, and services that recruit and retain healthcare professionals and educate the community about health management techniques. We support initiatives that enhance the quality of healthcare and ensure that our community has access to skilled professionals. One such example is the Hawai'i Island Family Medicine Residency Program. This program fulfills a need for patient-centered, culturally responsive physicians by training evidence-based, full-spectrum family medicine physicians and leaders who are dedicated to elevating the health of the community.

Housing and Services Partnership Accelerator (HPSA)

In 2024, U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) selected Hawai'i to participate in the first cohort of the Housing and Services Partnership Accelerator (HPSA). This opportunity offers individualized technical assistance to help states reduce homelessness by addressing health-related social needs, such as services connecting older adults and people with disabilities to accessible, affordable housing. In 2024, the first round of the HPSA provided intensive technical assistance and opportunities for peer-to-peer learning to eight states (including Hawai'i) and the District of Columbia.

Hawai'i has taken a multifaceted health and housing approach towards ending homelessness. This approach brings together public and private collaborations to meet the housing and health-

related social needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. Through the Accelerator, the state's Medicaid agency and its partner organizations seek to learn from the experience of other states that have implemented or expanded housing-related supports and services for similar populations, particularly those experiencing behavioral health challenges. The Accelerator will help Hawai'i formalize the existing collaboration among various state agencies and key stakeholders to expand the implementation of housing-related supports and services in Hawai'i—particularly in geographically isolated and rural areas. The state seeks to develop a coordinated system that connects and supports individuals through all housing, health, and social care programs and systems.

The team is led by the Hawai'i Med-QUEST agency and includes agencies representing developmental disability, aging, and behavioral health services, as well as the public housing authority, housing and homeless organizations, community service organizations, and healthcare providers.

Maternal and Child Health Block Grant (TITLE V)

Title V is the only federal program devoted to improving the health of all women, children, and families. These groups comprise a large percentage of the uninsured and underserved populations. Funding is used to build infrastructure by creating linkages to healthcare and other maternal and child health services in the community; collaborating with state and local partners to assure access to preventive health services and information; assessing community health and wellness needs; and gathering data about the health status of the target population.

States decide how to use the funding. This helps them address the priority health needs in their state. Funds from the Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant help to reduce infant death; provide better access to quality health care services; and deliver family-centered, community-based systems of coordinate care for children with special health care needs.

Native Hawaiian Health Care System – Papa Ola Lōkahi (POL)

POL is charged with implementing the Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act (42 USC 122), which is the national legislation for coordinating, implementing, and updating a Native Hawaiian comprehensive master plan. POL also provides training for Native Hawaiian care practitioners, outreach workers, counselors, and cultural educators to promote health education and disease prevention within Native Hawaiian communities. POL provides local technical assistance for the Native Hawaiian Health Scholarship Program, which is administered through HRSA with the goal of increasing representation of Native Hawaiian health professionals dedicated to serving the needs of Native Hawaiian communities.

Listed below are the Native Hawaiian Health Care Centers:

- Ho'ōla Lāhui Hawai'i on Kaua'i
- Ke Ola Mamo on O'ahu
- Nā Pu'uwai on Moloka'i
- Hui No Ke Ola Pono on Maui
- Hui Mālama Ola Nā 'Ōiwi on Hawai'i Island

Office of Program Planning and Policy Development (OPPPD)

The Office of Program Planning and Policy Development (OPPPD), part of the State of Hawai'i DOH Administration, is responsible for department-wide government relations, public policy, strategic planning, and special projects. It also provides technical assistance in areas such as

compliance, administrative rulemaking, performance and practice management, and scientific services.

Pacific Basin Telehealth Resource Center (PBTRC)

PBTRC is funded by the U.S. DHHS HRSA Office for the Advancement of Telehealth, which is part of the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP). The PBTRC is a federally funded technical assistance center located at the University of Hawai'i as part of the Telecommunications and Social Informatics Program / Pacific Health Informatics Data Center (TASI/PHIDC). The goal of the Pacific Basin Telehealth Resource Center (PBTRC) is to support the development and expansion of telehealth networks by providing education, training, strategic planning, and technical guidance on telehealth technologies, medical information systems, infrastructure, mobile health applications, and the implementation and sustainability of telehealth services.

Partners in Development Foundation (PIDF)

With its expansive and multigenerational reach among Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander families, PIDF is a centralized resource for Hawai'i rural and underserved communities in the areas of education, social services, Hawaiian language and culture, and the environment. Their mission is to inspire and equip families and communities for success and service using timeless Native Hawaiian values and traditions.

Primary Care and Rural Health (PCRH)

PCRH is part of DOH's Health Resources Administration (HRA), Family Health Services Division (FHSD). Funding is provided by the United States Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), specifically the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) and the Bureau of Health Workforce (BHW). These federal agencies provide funding for the State Offices of Primary Care (PCO); State Offices of Rural Health (SORH); Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program (FLEX); and Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program (SHIP). Also housed within FHSD is the Community Health Center Special Fund, which is the repository of cigarette tax revenues providing subsidies for uninsured and underinsured patients statewide.

Preventive Health and Human Services Block Grant (PHHSBG)

This federal program allows State of Hawai'i DOH to address emerging health issues and gaps; decrease premature death and disabilities; work to achieve health equity and eliminate health disparities by addressing social determinants of health; support local programs to achieve healthy communities; and establish data and surveillance systems to monitor the health status of targeted populations.

The PHHSBG is used to support outpatient clinical services, preventive screening, laboratory support, outbreak control, workforce training, and public education. Additionally, it supports data surveillance and program evaluation. The PHHSBG is used to address a wide range of health problems, including injury and violence prevention, nutrition, infectious diseases, heart disease and stroke, maternal and child health, and oral health.

Rural Health Service Providers Network

This organization is a national network of healthcare service providers offering clinical, behavioral, recovery, and/or mental health services but are not designated as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs); FQHC Look-Alikes (LALs); Indian Tribal Units (ITUs) of the

Indian Health Service; Tribal Hospitals; Dual-Funded Community Health Centers/Tribal Clinics; or CMS-Certified Rural Health Clinics (RHCs).

Rural Health Service Providers (RHSPs) are a critical part of the U.S. public health infrastructure, often serving as the first point of contact for vulnerable populations who might not otherwise access health or social services. RHSPs include domestic public or private organizations—nonprofit or for-profit—as well as faith-based and community-based entities. While they may be located in rural, suburban, or urban areas, they deliver healthcare services specifically in rural counties designated by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), or in rural census tracts within urban counties. These providers do not meet existing federal designations established by HRSA, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), or other federal funding agencies.

University of Hawai'i – Hawai'i/Pacific Area Health Education Center (AHEC)

AHEC focuses on recruiting, placing, and retaining health professionals to meet community, state, and regional workforce needs. Its work also includes conducting health and workforce needs assessments and enhancing the use of distance learning and telehealth technologies. AHEC provides local technical assistance for the State Loan Repayment Program (SLRP), which is an incentive program for primary care providers working at approved healthcare sites and funded by HRSA with matching contributions from public and private resources. Between October 2024 and September 2025, there was a total of 64 SLRP awards made to a variety of eligible health professionals in Hawai'i.

During the 2025 legislative session, Governor Josh Green approved two additional years of Hawai'i Healthcare Education Loan Repayment Program (HELP) payments worth another \$30 million. Awards will be distributed beginning March 2026. HELP provides qualified educational loan debt repayment to health professionals licensed, or otherwise certified, to practice in and provide care to patients in Hawai'i. The Internal Revenue Service defines Qualified Educational Loans under 26 USC 221(d)(1). The State expects HELP to help improve the number of providers in medically underserved areas of Hawai'i, as well as improve the recruitment and retention of healthcare workers caring for the people of Hawai'i by lessening the burden of large educational debt. In 2023 and 2024, HELP was funded \$30 million. Between October 2024 to September 2025, there were approximately 325 HELP awardees.

University of Hawai'i Office of Public Health Studies (OPHS)

OPHS's mission is to advance and protect the health and well-being of the peoples of Hawai'i and Pacific, Asia, and Indigenous peoples through teaching, discovery, innovation, community engagement, inclusion, and leadership. OPHS is part of the Thompson School of Social Work and Public Health and offers specializations in epidemiology, health policy and management, Native Hawaiian and Indigenous health, and social and behavioral health sciences.

University of Hawai'i Office of Strategic Health Initiatives (OSHI)

The University of Hawai'i (UH) System plays a critical role in educating and training the Hawai'i health workforce, as well as researching and addressing health challenges throughout Hawai'i and the Pacific. Established in 2018, the UH Office of Strategic Health Initiatives (OSHI) is dedicated to improving health and healthcare in Hawai'i and the Pacific through strategic partnerships, community engaged activities, federal strategies, and research and service opportunities.

University of Hawai'i Rural Health Research & Policy Center (RHRPC)

The RHRPC is focused on improving rural healthcare challenges in Hawai'i through policy-relevant research and actionable, evidence-based strategies and recommendations, specifically on health workforce and health equity. The center will collaborate with key rural health partners, including the Hawai'i State Rural Health Association, DOH Family Health Services Division (Primary Care and Rural Health Grant programs), Hawai'i/Pacific Basin Area Health Education Center, and Pacific Basin Telehealth Resource Center. The RHRPC was launched in September 2022 and is housed in the UH System Office of Strategic Health Initiatives as part of the UHealthy Hawai'i Initiative. Focus groups and site visits to impacted regions across the state and with key stakeholders will provide the Center with critical information to support its research and policy efforts.

University of Hawai'i School of Nursing & Dental Hygiene

The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene is the premier nursing and dental hygiene school in the state of Hawai'i. Located on the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa campus—the state's only doctoral/research-intensive institution—the school is committed to advancing health through education, research, and service. It offers instructional, clinical, and research programs designed to improve the health and well-being of diverse populations across Hawai'i and the Asia-Pacific region.

DESCRIBE FY25 ACTIVITIES (07/01/24 – 06/30/25)

Our Primary Health Care Partners (PHCP) gather the most current best practices from nationwide sources and share it with each other to implement programs and offer incentives for our state healthcare workforce as they provide the highest quality healthcare to the people of Hawai'i. The sharing of information with partners concerning policies and topics that impact our communities is vital to the strength and integrity of our healthcare infrastructure. PHCP collaborates to increase health workforce capacity, assess health professional shortages statewide, and bolster the healthcare delivery system. PHCP partnered on a wide range of activities in 2024–2025, including Advocacy, Funding, Health Systems Planning and Collaboration, Shortage Designation, Telehealth/Telemedicine/Tele-Education, Training and Technical Assistance, and Workforce, which are all described in this section.

ADVOCACY AND LEGISLATION

Acts in 2025

- SB1429 SD2 HD3 CD1 RELATING TO MEDICAL CANNABIS - Authorizes the Department of Health to impose penalties and take enforcement actions for violations of the medical cannabis laws. Increases the maximum number of qualifying patients a primary caregiver is authorized to care for from one to five patients. Retroactive to 1/1/2025, repeals the prohibition against primary caregivers cultivating medical cannabis for their qualifying patients, and authorizes primary caregivers to cultivate cannabis in an amount not to exceed an adequate supply for the qualifying patient; provided that each location used to cultivate cannabis shall be used to cultivate cannabis for not more than five qualifying patients. Extends for two years the sunset date for the interim rules adopted by the Department of Health and extends for four years the sunset date for the exemption from civil service of personnel hired by, or contracts entered into by, the Department of Health related to the medical cannabis dispensary system. (CD1)
- HB951 HD2 SD1 RELATING TO PRESCRIPTION DRUGS - Allows a patient who has been seen in person by a health care provider who is in the same medical group as the prescribing provider authorized pursuant to section 329-33, HRS, to be prescribed an opiate prescription for a three-day supply or less via telehealth. (SD1)
- HB341 HD1 SD2 CD1 RELATING TO THE ISSUANCE OF SPECIAL PURPOSE REVENUE BONDS TO ASSIST HAWAII ISLAND COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER - Authorizes the issuance of special purpose revenue bonds to assist Hawaii Island Community Health Center to purchase or lease land on the island of Hawaii and develop primary care health care facilities. (CD1)
- HB799 HD2 SD2 CD1 RELATING TO HEALTHCARE -Clarifies that a physician may practice at an organized ambulatory health care facility even if the physician does not have hospital privileges at a licensed hospital in the same geographic location as the ambulatory facility. Applies to counties with populations of less than five hundred thousand. Requires the Department of Health to report to the Legislature. Sunsets 6/30/2028. (CD1)
- SB1431 SD1 HD2 CD1 RELATING TO VIRAL HEPATITIS - Authorizes the Department of Health to establish a Hepatitis Prevention Program. Requires the Department of Health to develop and implement a statewide educational program to inform the public on how to identify and prevent hepatitis and aid in its early diagnosis. Requires the Department of Health to develop a statewide comprehensive hepatitis prevention plan. Repeals outdated

provisions related to hepatitis. Appropriates funds and establishes positions for the Hepatitis Prevention Program. (CD1)

- SB532 SD2 HD2 CD1 RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION -Authorizes school staff and agents trained by a health care professional to volunteer to administer medication to students at Department of Education public schools under certain conditions. Clarifies who may prescribe medication to be administered to students in schools. (CD1)
- HB712 HD2 SD2 CD1 RELATING TO HEALTH - Prohibits drug manufacturers from denying, restricting, or prohibiting the acquisition, shipping, or delivery of a 340B drug to pharmacies contracted with 340B covered entities under the federal 340B Drug Pricing Program. Authorizes 340B covered entities and the Attorney General to bring a civil action for enforcement within four years of a violation. Beginning 7/1/2026, requires each 340B covered entity in the State to report certain information annually to the hospital trade association operating in the State and requires the hospital trade association to prepare and publicly post an aggregate report of reports submitted by each 340B covered entity. (CD1)
- HB1179 HD1 SD2 CD1 RELATING TO RURAL EMERGENCY HOSPITALS - Creates a framework for the licensure of rural emergency hospitals at the state level by the Department of Health. Clarify Medicaid reimbursement policies for hospitals transitioning from a critical access hospital designation to a rural emergency hospital designation. (CD1)
- HB250 HD2 SD2 CD1 RELATING TO HEALTH - Requires utilization review entities to submit data relating to the prior authorization of health care services to the State Health Planning and Development Agency. Establishes the Health Care Appropriateness and Necessity Working Group within the State Health Planning and Development Agency and requires the working group to submit annual reports to the Legislature. (CD1)
- HB1379 HD2 SD1 RELATING TO HEALTH - Allows a pathway for foreign medical school graduates to be licensed as physicians that was previously only available to graduates who passed the qualifying examination of the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates before 1984. Establishes an alternative pathway for the licensure as physicians for foreign medical graduates who passed certain examinations, possess an Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates certificate, and have completed two years of post-graduate medical training. (SD1)
- SB1434 SD1 HD1 CD2 RELATING TO UNIVERSAL IMMUNIZATION FUNDING PROGRAM - Establishes the Universal Immunization Funding Program as a universal funding model for immunization purchases by the Department of Health, to increase statewide access to immunizations for all persons under age sixty-five. Establishes the Universal Immunization Purchase Special Fund, into which fees collected from assessed entities and other sources of funding will be deposited, for purposes of bulk purchasing immunizations and administering the program. Appropriates funds. (CD2)
- SB1442 SD2 HD2 RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS - Clarifies and updates the responsibilities of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division of the Department of Health to reflect the current mental health systems of care that address the mental health needs of children and adolescents in the State. (HD2)

- HB713 HD1 SD1 CD1 RELATING TO A RATE STUDY FOR HOME HEALTH SERVICES - Appropriates funds for the Department of Human Services to conduct a rate study for Medicaid home health services in Hawaii. (CD1)
- SB1281 SD2 HD2 CD1 RELATING TO HEALTH - Extends the sunset date of Act 107, SLH 2023, which allows for the reimbursement of services provided through telehealth via an interactive telecommunications system, until 12/31/2027. (CD1)
- SB1322 SD2 HD2 CD1 RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH - Requires the Department of Health to submit annual reports to the Legislature on emergency transportations and assisted community treatment petitions and orders, based on information provided by service providers and the Department of the Attorney General. Clarifies the procedures for emergency transportation, examination, and hospitalization for individuals who may be mentally ill or suffering from substance abuse who are imminently dangerous to self or others. Requires treatment providers to provide relevant information to the Attorney General for purposes of preparing an assisted community treatment petition. Amends the procedures for involuntary hospitalizations and assisted community treatment petitions. Clarifies the circumstances under which a subject of an assisted community treatment order can be administered medication over objection. Allows a single psychiatrist, rather than a panel of three, to provide administrative authorization for medical treatment over the objection of a patient who is in the custody of the Director of Health and in a psychiatric facility. (CD1)
- SB1245 SD2 HD2 CD1 RELATING TO PHARMACISTS - Beginning 7/1/2026, mandates reimbursement for services provided by participating registered pharmacists practicing within their scope of practice by private and public health plans in the State and requires the health plans to recognize pharmacists licensed in the State as participating providers. (CD1)
- HB302 HD2 SD2 CD1 RELATING TO CANNABIS - Part I: Authorizes DOH to inspect qualifying patient medical records held by the physician, advanced practice registered nurse, or hospice provider who issued a written certification for the qualifying patient. Amends and adds definitions for purposes of the medical use of cannabis law. Clarifies the conditions of use for the medical use of cannabis. For purposes of issuing written certifications, authorizes the establishment of a provider-patient relationship via telehealth and limits the maximum amount of fees that can be assessed by providers. Authorizes the sale of hemp products and accessories for the medical use of cannabis at retail dispensing locations, except in waiting rooms. Clarifies transportation requirements for certain inter-dispensary sales of cannabis and manufactured cannabis products. Part II: Establishes criminal penalties for the unlicensed operation of a medical cannabis dispensary. Part III: Authorizes expenditures from the Medical Cannabis Registry and Regulation Special Fund to fund programs for the mitigation and abatement of nuisances related to illegal cannabis and hemp products and medical cannabis dispensaries and appropriates funds from the Special Fund to the AG's Drug Nuisance Abatement Unit for these purposes, including establishing positions. Part IV: Beginning 1/1/2028, prohibits the cultivation of cannabis without a cannabis cultivator license issued by DOH. (CD1)

Bills that became law without Governor's signature in 2025

- HB1194 HD2 SD3 RELATING TO MIDWIVES - Makes laws regulating midwives and the practice of midwifery permanent. Clarifies the scope of practice of midwifery. Establishes licensure requirements for certified midwives and certified professional midwives.

Establishes continuing education requirements. Grants global signature authority to midwives. Grants prescriptive authority to licensed midwives practicing as certified midwives and amends the list of approved legend drugs that may be administered by midwives. Establishes peer review and data submission requirements. Affirms that the practice of midwifery does not include Native Hawaiian traditional and customary practices. Clarifies exemptions from licensure and grounds for refusal to grant, renew, reinstate, or restore licenses or for revocation, suspension, denial, or condition of a license. Clarifies medical record availability and retention requirements for the purposes of medical torts. (SD3)

FUNDING

Fiscal Year 2025 is the first year of the contract cycle for the Comprehensive Primary Care contracts, which are funded by the Community Health Centers Special Fund (CHCSF). These contracts provide safety-net comprehensive primary care services, as the payer of last resort, to uninsured and underinsured individuals whose income is at or below 250% of the Federal Poverty Level. Services include medical care, behavioral health care, dental treatment, support services, and pharmaceutical services. The contracts are being improved and strengthened to better utilize the CHCSF.

Primary Care and Rural Health (PCRH) is organizationally placed within the Family Health Services Division (FHSD). The four federal grant programs (PCO, Flex, SHIP, SORH) have complementary goals in their interaction with and support of healthcare providers and partner organizations. This integration strengthens the capacity and outreach of all grant programs, supports the leveraging of scarce resources, and provides a more comprehensive and broader array of services over time.

Under the Flex Program, the Medicare Beneficiary Quality Improvement Project seeks to improve the quality of care provided in CAHs by voluntarily reporting measures not required by CMS. The Flex Program also works with CAHs on financial improvement and provides education on improving the revenue cycle, cost reports, and charge masters. States coordinate technical assistance based on the needs of hospitals in their state.

SHIP funds are used by state governments to support rural hospitals with 49 beds or fewer. SHIP enables small rural hospitals to become or join accountable care organizations (ACOs); participate in shared savings programs; and purchase health information technology (hardware and software), equipment, and/or training to comply with quality improvement activities, such as advancing patient care information, promoting interoperability, and payment bundling. SHIP funds are also used to help small hospitals prepare for ICD-11 implementation and other upgrades.

HEALTH SYSTEMS PLANNING AND COLLABORATION

The goal of the SORH Program is to strengthen the rural healthcare delivery system in Hawai'i and sustain a focal point for rural health across the state. PCRH, in partnership with local community organizations, has implemented a variety of programs. The programs are listed below.

- Hawai'i Children's Action Network's (HCAN) Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) and Community Outreach Family Initiative (COFI) – These programs supported recruitment and training for PLTI, COFI and 'Ohana Leadership programs.

- Maui County Healthcare Stakeholder Summit – PCRH partnered with the Hawai'i State Rural Health Association (HSRHA) to plan and coordinate the Maui County Healthcare Stakeholder Summit at the Maui Arts and Cultural Center. This summit convened Maui County's stakeholders to address workforce shortages and community health needs and provide innovative partnerships and solutions.
- Hawai'i Healthcare Workforce Summit's Rural Health Track – PCRH presented to the summit attendees about community assessments, rural health initiatives, and rural health policies.
- Dementia Initiative
 - Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI) - HIPHI will work with the Hawai'i BOLD Coalition to facilitate the Community Clinical Linkages Action Team and coordinate multisector collaborations between the community and clinical providers to improve the processes and structures to increase coordination between sectors. HIPHI will coordinate and facilitate at least twelve (12) one-hour in-service sessions for rural healthcare workers. Responsibilities include providing Zoom technical support, managing registration and attendance reports, organizing meetings, coordinating speaker honorariums, and applying for continuing education (CE) credits in seven disciplines: nursing, medicine, pharmacy, social work, health education, substance abuse, and dietetics. HIPHI will collaborate with community stakeholders to develop and deliver culturally sensitive dementia training curriculum for Community Health Workers.
 - Kula No Nā Po'e Hawai'i – Convene community meetings (Kaua'i, O'ahu, Maui, Moloka'i, Lāna'i, Hilo, Kona) annually to educate each island's Native Hawaiian community on Alzheimer's Disease and related Dementias, dementia caregiving strategies, and facilitate multisector collaborations to implement Native Hawaiian Road Map recommendations.
 - Alzheimer's Association, Aloha Chapter – This chapter will deliver educational programs on dementia, brain health, and caregiving to targeted populations in rural, low-income, and underserved communities across the state, including the islands of Hawai'i, Maui, Lāna'i, Moloka'i, and Kaua'i. They will also provide educational resources to these communities and collaborate with the State and multisector partners to implement public awareness and education strategies outlined in the Hawai'i 2035: State Strategic Plan on Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD), with the goal of informing the public, healthcare providers, and professionals.
- PCRH partnered with Community First Hawai'i to implement the third annual Hawai'i Island Healthcare Conference, which brought together leaders from across Hawai'i island and the state to develop plans for more effective delivery of healthcare and increased community collaboration.

SHORTAGE DESIGNATION

Throughout the U.S., there are geographic areas, populations, and facilities with too few primary care, dental, and behavioral health providers and services. In conjunction with State Primary Care Offices, HRSA determines which of these should be "shortage designations" and are therefore eligible to receive certain federal resources. These federal resources take the form of scholarships and loan repayment programs that recruit and retain licensed healthcare

professionals in rural and underserved areas and populations. In addition, Medicare pays a 10% quarterly bonus to certain healthcare providers who furnish services in the health professional shortage areas, which is one type of shortage designation.

The Maternity Care Target Area (MCTA) is the newest shortage designation. MCTAs are areas within an existing Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) that are experiencing a shortage of maternity healthcare professionals. The licensed obstetrician gynecologists (OB/GYN) and certified nurse midwives are counted to measure the provider to population ratio within the MCTA. MCTAs are allocated federal funding to address the shortage of licensed maternity care providers.

PCRH partnered with Hawai'i Health Data Warehouse to develop the Hawai'i Primary Care Needs Assessment Data Tracker on their Hawai'i Health Matters website. This convenient online tool allows users to compare common health statistics across the state. It includes 49 indicators of population characteristics and health status to monitor an area's social determinants of health. All data values come from the American Community Survey, 2014-2018, unless otherwise noted. It uses the latest public health information from a variety of sources to present health data at the community level. The digital format allows users to track trends as well as view interactive maps and charts, which can be downloaded for use in other documents. Source data is continuously being updated to the tracker, allowing users to get an overview of data on demographics, access to health services, and identify barriers and populations of highest need to bring awareness to health disparities.

TELEHEALTH / TELEMEDICINE / TELE-EDUCATION

Project ECHO Hawai'i is a multiorganizational partnership between the Hawai'i State Rural Health Association, University of Hawai'i, and Hawai'i State Department of Health. This telehealth program serves Hawai'i residents' needs across the state by expanding access to care while reducing specialist referrals and lowering overall medical costs. Project ECHO Hawai'i currently manages four clinical series, including behavioral health, geriatric care, pediatric care, and opioid use disorders. This past year, continuing medical education and training were offered through 115 teleclinics.

TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

PCRH provides training and technical assistance to organizations and individuals on diverse topics such as scholarship and loan repayment applications, health facility applications, health system expansion, shortage designation, needs assessment, data sharing, and much more.

The Hawai'i Performance Improvement Collaborative (HPIC) provides training to the state's critical access hospitals on matters of clinical quality improvement, financial improvement, operational improvement, and transitioning to population health. There are three quarterly meetings and one annual conference each year. The meetings and conference are in-person events. Critical Access Hospital staff from all islands are invited and provided financial assistance to attend.

A Rural Health Clinic (RHC) Technical Assistance conference has provided training to the state's rural health clinics. Training topics at the in-person event have included regulation, compliance, quality and measurement, program evaluation, emergency preparedness, RHC billing best practices, RHC cost report basics, scheduling and staffing, and other related topics. Four online webinars have been scheduled after the conference to provide additional training requested by the conference attendees.

Meetings and consultations have been conducted during the open application cycle for National Health Service Corps (NHSC). NHSC offers three loan repayment programs and two scholar programs that provide funding to medical students and healthcare providers to support their educational goals and achievements in exchange for service obligations in rural and underserved areas.

WORKFORCE

There are a variety of federally funded and state funded workforce recruitment and retention programs. The PCRH is responsible for promoting the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) and Nurse Corps scholarship and loan repayment programs to recruit and retain licensed health professionals in rural and underserved areas. The NHSC and Nurse Corps are federally funded by HRSA. The PCRH also administers the Conrad 30 J-1 waivers which addresses the shortage of qualified doctors in medically underserved areas.

In 2025, the NHSC maintained the loan repayment award amount for primary care providers. The primary care providers eligible are physicians, nurse practitioners, certified nurse midwives, and physician assistants and other licensed health professionals who provide primary care services in high-need communities that are located in a primary care HPSAs. The loan repayment award amount is \$75,000 for a full-time, two-year service commitment. The loan repayment award amount has been maintained at \$37,500 for a half-time, two-year service commitment. Also, there is a one-time enhancement award of \$5,000 for new loan repayment awardees who speak Spanish. More Spanish speaking awardees will address language access barriers to healthcare.

In FY2024, a total of 121 NHSC health professionals were serving at multiple sites statewide, including Hawai'i FQHCs, RHCs, substance use disorder facilities, correctional facilities, and school-based clinics. The dental practitioners include 17 dentists and 1 registered dental hygienist. The mental health professionals include 16 health service psychologists; 2 licensed clinical social workers; 2 licensed professional counselors; 1 nurse practitioner; 2 pharmacists; 1 physician; 1 physician assistant; 1 psychiatric nurse specialist; 2 registered nurses; and 1 substance use disorder counselor. The primary care professionals include 1 certified nurse midwife; 32 nurse practitioners; 1 pharmacist; 29 physicians; 9 physician assistants; and 2 registered nurses. (note: data as of 9/30/2024 was available on <https://data.hrsa.gov/topics/health-workforce/program/field-strength>).

PCRH continues to be an active 3RNet member site. PCRH shares this online network with organizations providing healthcare to rural and medically underserved communities and routinely promoted utilization at events such as the Hawai'i Health Workforce Summit. This is the third year PCRH has contracted with 3RNet to implement Provider Retention and Information System Management (PRISM). PRISM offers a standardized, state-of-the-art platform that enables states to collect real-time data from clinicians participating in state and National Health Service Corps (NHSC) loan repayment, scholarship, and other incentive programs.

Clinicians in the NHSC Loan Repayment Program in Hawai'i: End of Year and End of Contract Questionnaire Data (note: 18 clinicians responded to the survey)

Clinicians' plans to apply to extend/renew their current service contract *				
Definitely not	Unlikely	50-50; Unsure	Probably	Definitely
3 (19%)	4 (25%)	1 (6%)	2 (13%)	6 (38%)

In FY2024, a total of 11 Nurse Corps professionals were serving at multiple sites statewide. Nurse Corps eligible critical shortage facilities cover primary care settings, which include the FQHCs; community mental health centers; RHCs; state or local health departments; small rural hospitals; outpatient facilities; American Indian health facilities; home health agencies; school-based clinics; nurse managed health clinics/centers; Native Hawaiian health centers; and free and charitable clinics. Other eligible critical shortage facilities include disproportionate share hospitals; public hospitals; private hospitals; urgent care centers; ambulatory surgical centers; end-stage renal disease dialysis centers; hospice programs; and residential nursing homes. Of the 11 Nurse Corps professionals, 3 are nurse practitioners and 8 are registered nurses (note: data as of 9/30/2024 was available on <https://data.hrsa.gov/topics/health-workforce/program/field-strength>).

The State Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) is administered by the Hawai'i/Pacific Basin Area Health Education Center (AHEC) and is funded by HRSA and the State of Hawai'i. Over the past year, there were 41 SLRP awards (note: data as of 9/30/2024 was available on <https://data.hrsa.gov/topics/health-workforce/program/field-strength>).

Hawai'i/Pacific Basin AHEC administers the Hawai'i Healthcare Education Loan Repayment Program (HELP) and is fully funded by the State of Hawai'i. HELP has received \$30 million from the state legislature to award and distribute to healthcare licensed professionals over a two-year period. Approximately 773 individuals have received a HELP award, and many more individuals are expected to receive a HELP award.

The Native Hawaiian Health Scholarship Program (NHHSP) is administered by Papa Ola Lōkahi and funded by HRSA. Established in 1988 within the Native Hawaiian Health Care Act, the NHHSP provides awards to Native Hawaiian students seeking degrees in healthcare professions. The purpose is to increase the number of Native Hawaiians in health and allied health professions, thereby increasing access to acceptable healthcare delivery for those who seek it.

HRSA reported in FY 2024, Hawai'i received \$1,546,347 for loan repayment and scholarship programs. The breakdown is listed within the table (<https://data.hrsa.gov/data/fact-sheets>).

Program	FY 2024 Funding
National Health Service Corps	\$1,342,641
Nurse Corps	\$19,148
Native Hawaiian Health Scholarship Program	\$184,558
Total	\$1,546,347

J-1 Waiver applications are an important component of PCP's health workforce development. Similar to states across the country, Hawai'i DOH recommends international medical graduate physicians to waive the two-year home residency requirement in exchange for working in rural and underserved areas. PCRH processes applications for Conrad 30 J-1 waivers to place international health professionals at medical facilities throughout the state to provide patient care in primary care, internal medicine specialties, infectious diseases, behavioral health, and trauma surgery.