



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
Wednesday, February 25, 2026 at 2:00 p.m.

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

Chancellor

University of Hawai'i at Hilo

HB 2159 HD2 – RELATING TO HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in SUPPORT of HB 2159 HD2 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 HD2 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 APT	Salary Faculty APT	FTE Fac APT	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.



February 25, 2026 at 2:00 pm
Conference Room 308

House Committee on Finance

To: Chair Chris Todd
Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi

From: Paige Heckathorn Choy
Vice President, Government Affairs
Healthcare Association of Hawaii

Re: **Testimony in Support**
HB 2159 HD 2, Relating to Health Care

The Healthcare Association of Hawaii (HAH), established in 1939, serves as the leading voice of healthcare on behalf of 170 member organizations who represent almost every aspect of the health care continuum in Hawaii. Members include acute care hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, home health agencies, hospices, assisted living facilities and durable medical equipment suppliers. In addition to providing access to appropriate, affordable, high-quality care to all of Hawaii's residents, our members contribute significantly to Hawaii's economy by employing over 30,000 people statewide.

Thank you for the opportunity to **support** this measure, which supports requests for additional positions to strengthen Hawaii's healthcare workforce. There are material and ongoing needs for healthcare providers in the state. The Association's 2024 Healthcare Workforce Initiative Report identified over 4,000 job openings in healthcare across Hawai'i. These vacancies span nursing, behavioral health, pharmacy, social work, specialty medicine, and other high-demand roles, and they directly impact patient access—particularly in rural and neighbor island communities.

Expanding capacity and efforts to align workforce development efforts will be key to meeting the needs of patients now and in the future, especially as the state's population ages. Strong coordination between the University of Hawaii and healthcare employers is essential so that investments translate directly into providers entering the workforce where they are most needed.

We believe this measure is important to build upon the efforts our members are already undertaking and appreciate the opportunity to support this effort.



**STATE HEALTH PLANNING
AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH - KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO

JOSH GREEN, MD
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII

KENNETH S. FINK, MD, MGA, MPH
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOHN C. (JACK) LEWIN, MD
ADMINISTRATOR

February 23, 2026

TO: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Representative Chris Todd, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Honorable Members

FROM: John C. (Jack) Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA, and Sr. Advisor to
Governor Josh Green, MD on Healthcare Innovation

**RE: HB 2159-HD2 -- RELATING TO HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT**

HEARING: Wednesday, February 25, 2026 @ 2:00 pm; Conference Room 308

POSITION: SUPPORT with COMMENTS

Testimony:

SHPDA strongly supports HB 2159-HD2, with comments.

This bill is intended to strengthen Hawai'i's health care workforce by funding new full-time equivalent positions within the University of Hawai'i system to expand education, training, and clinical capacity. By investing in additional faculty, the bill seeks to help address severe statewide shortages, especially in rural and underserved communities and in high-need areas like cancer care, neurology/dementia, and behavioral health and addiction medicine.

By adding resources where they are most needed, this bill can help reduce delays in getting appointments and specialty care, strengthen services in rural and underserved areas, and improve continuity of care for patients across the state. Expanding training capacity also supports a more stable, homegrown workforce, thus helping Hawai'i recruit and retain clinicians over time, and while strengthening high-impact areas like cancer care, neurology/dementia, and integrated behavioral health and addiction services.

Thank you for hearing HB 2159-HD2.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

■ -- Jack Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA



**Testimony to the House Committee on Finance
Wednesday, February 25, 2026; 2:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 308
Via Videoconference**

RE: HOUSE BILL NO. 2159, HOUSE DRAFT 2, RELATING TO HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, 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, House Draft 2, 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 unspecified amounts of general funds for fiscal year 2026-2027 for the University of Hawaii System to establish an unspecified number of positions to support health care workforce development in Hawaii.

The bill would take effect on July 1, 3000.

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.

Testimony on House Bill No. 2159, House Draft 2
Wednesday, February 25, 2026; 2:00 p.m.
Page 2

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.

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@hawaiiipca.net.



Hawaii Medical Association

1360 South Beretania Street, Suite 200 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96814
Phone: 808.536.7702 • Fax: 808.528.2376 • hawaiimedicalassociation.org

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Representative Chris Todd, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Date: February 25, 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 HD2 - 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 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.

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
Laeton Pang, MD, Treasurer • Thomas Kosasa, MD, Secretary • Marc Alexander, Executive Director

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](http://KITV.com). Accessed Feb 1 2026.

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](http://Brown University School of Public Health). Accessed Feb 1 2026.

2024 Hawaii Medical Association Officers

Elizabeth Ann Ignacio, MD, President • Nadine Tenn-Salle, MD, President Elect • Angela Pratt, MD, Immediate Past President
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

**HCAOA
Hawaii Chapter Board**

Dew-Anne Langcaon
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*Vivia by Ho'okele Home
Care*

Jenny Cambra
Vice Chair
Senior Helpers

Cecilia Fong
Advocacy Chair
*Griswold Home Care for
Oahu*

Cory Kataoka
Education Co-Chair
Bayada Home Health Care

Alison Lee
Education Co-Chair
BrightStar Care of Honolulu

TO: Representative Todd, Chair
Representative Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Finance

RE: HB2159 HD2 - RELATING TO HEALTH CARE
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

HEARING DATE: February 25, 2026, 2:00 PM

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH COMMENTS

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Finance Committee:

The Home Care Association of America (HCAOA) Hawaii Chapter respectfully submits testimony in **SUPPORT WITH COMMENTS** on HB2159 HD2, which appropriates funds to the University of Hawaii for health care workforce development programs.

Support for All Inclusive Workforce Investment

HCAOA Hawaii strongly supports the legislature's continued investment in health care workforce development and request the scope be all inclusive including workforce development for the home and community. In addition to the shortages cited in physicians, nurses, dentists, pharmacists and public health workers in the state, "Hawaii, like the rest of the nation, is facing a critical shortage of direct care workers including nursing assistants, nurse aides, home health aides, personal care aides and others who provide paid, hands-on long term care and personal assistance to older adults and individuals living with disabilities or chronic conditions," as reported by the Executive Office on Aging in 2025 to the Thirty-Third Legislature of the State of Hawaii.

The Healthcare Association of Hawaii's 2022 Healthcare Workforce Initiative Report revealed that there were major increases in vacancies for Certified Nurse Aide and Personal Care Aide positions of 78% and 416% respectively between 2019 to 2022. As care is increasingly being moved into the home and community-based settings of care and patients are requiring assistance in their home with increasingly complex conditions, the need to ensure an adequate supply of direct care workers in the home is imperative. Without adequate support systems in the home, individuals who need but cannot get long-term support services stress the healthcare system, deplete family finances, overburden EMS services and cost employers the loss of employees to the demands of family caregiving.

We strongly recommend that additional resources devoted to workforce development include the programs to encourage the growth of direct care workers in the community in addition to within large institutional settings of health care.

**HCAOA
Hawaii Chapter Board**

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Bayada Home Health Care

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Education Co-Chair
BrightStar Care of Honolulu

Comments - Ensure Home Care Is Part of the Solution

The current structure of health care workforce development programs, while effective, is primarily oriented toward hospital and institutional care settings. As a result, funded programs - such as high school healthcare certificate programs and CNA-to-LPN glidepath programs - channel graduates primarily into institutional employment.

HCAOA Hawaii respectfully requests that the Committee amend HB2159 HD2, or include report language directing the University of Hawaii to ensure:

- Home Health Aide (HHA)/ Nurse Aide (NA) training and certification is included as a funded workforce pathway, with curriculum aligned to Medicare home health conditions of participation.
- Licensed home care and home health agencies are approved as clinical placement sites for health care students, ensuring graduates are exposed to community-based care delivery models.
- Workforce development metrics include tracking of graduates entering home care employment, not only hospital and facility-based employment, to provide a complete picture of program effectiveness.
- Stakeholder advisory input includes representation from home care agencies, not solely institutional providers, in shaping program design and funding priorities.

The Case for Home Care Workforce Development

Home and community-based care is the preference of the vast majority of Hawaii's aging population and is significantly less costly than institutional alternatives. As the state prepares for potential federal reductions in Medicaid home and community-based services funding, a robust home care workforce is essential to maintaining the safety net for Hawaii's most vulnerable residents. Investing in a workforce pipeline that includes home care ensures that Hawaii is building the full continuum of care our communities need.

HCAOA Hawaii urges the Committee to pass HB 2159 HD2, with the inclusion of home care workforce pathways as a core component of this investment.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Cecilia Fong

Advocacy Chair, Home Care Association of America - Hawaii Chapter
Administrator, Griswold Home Care for Oahu

About HCAOA Hawaii Chapter

The Home Care Association of America (HCAOA) is a national trade association for home care providers. The HCAOA Hawaii Chapter, established in 2025, represents licensed home care and home health agencies throughout the state that work alongside family caregivers daily, providing professional support that enables kupuna to age safely in their homes.

February 24, 2026

House Committee on Finance
Chair Chris Todd
Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi
Members of the Committee

Re: HB 2159 HD 2 – Relating to Health Care Workforce Development – SUPPORT

Aloha kākou!

LeadingAge Pacific West is pleased to support House Bill 2159 HD 2 which would establish and fund positions at the University of Hawai‘i to support health care workforce development throughout the State.

LeadingAge Pacific West is a leading advocate for quality, mission-driven housing, care and services for older adults. Our nonprofit members include providers of affordable senior housing, residential care facilities for the elderly (assisted living), life plan communities, skilled nursing care, home and community-based services, home health and hospice care.

Currently, Hawaii is experiencing significant shortages in most health professions, with heightened shortages in rural and underserved areas and in specialties serving older adults, including neurology and dementia. HB 2159 HD 2 provides the University of Hawaii with critical staff and funding to grow the health care workforce and in turn increase access to care.

HB 2159 HD 2 is an important step toward increasing the supply of Hawaii’s health care workforce and filling much needed gaps. For these reasons, LeadingAge Pacific West is pleased to support HB 2159 HD 2 and urges your support on this important measure. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at aking@leadingagepacificwest.org.

Sincerely,
Amber King
Vice President, Legislative Affairs

February 25, 2026

To: Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the House Committee on Finance (FIN)

From: Hawaii Association of Health Plans Public Policy Committee

Date/Location: Feb. 25, 2026; 2 p.m./Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

Re: Comments on HB 2159 HD2– Relating to Health Care Workforce Development

The Hawaii Association of Health Plans (HAHP) supports HB 2159 HD2. HAHP is a statewide partnership that unifies Hawaii’s health plans to improve the health of Hawaii’s communities together. A majority of Hawaii residents receive their health coverage through a plan associated with one of our organizations.

Hawaii continues to face significant health care workforce shortages, especially in rural and underserved communities and in areas with high concentrations of minority and vulnerable populations. We appreciate the Legislature’s efforts to strengthen educational, training, and clinical translational research roles, as these investments are essential to addressing the state’s workforce crisis.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer **support** for HB 2159 HD2.

Sincerely,

HAHP Public Policy Committee

cc: HAHP Board Members



To: The Honorable Chris Todd, Chair
The Honorable Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Members, House Committee on Finance

From: Jace Mikulanec, Director, Government Relations, The Queen's Health Systems

Date: February 25, 2026

Re: Support of HB2159 HD2 - Relating to Health Care Workforce Development.

The Queen's Health Systems (Queen's) is a nonprofit corporation that provides expanded health care capabilities to the people of Hawai'i and the Pacific Basin. Since the founding of the first Queen's hospital in 1859 by Queen Emma and King Kamehameha IV, it has been our mission to provide quality health care services in perpetuity for Native Hawaiians and all of the people of Hawai'i. Over the years, the organization has grown to four hospitals, and more than 10,000 affiliated physicians, caregivers, and dedicated medical staff statewide. As the preeminent health care system in Hawai'i, Queen's strives to provide superior patient care that is constantly advancing through education and research.

Queen's appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB2159 HD2, which establishes positions and appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i to support health care workforce development in the State. Hawai'i continues to experience a shortage of healthcare workers, with a 2025 JABSOM Hawai'i Physician Workforce Report revealing a deficit of over 833 full time equivalent doctors; and while the nursing workforce appears to be stabilized according to the Hawaii State Center for Nursing's 2025 Workforce Supply Report, there continues to be a need for broader workforce development and investment on our neighbor islands. This measure correctly attempts to address this challenge by further investing in our educational workforce pipeline.

Challenges facing healthcare delivery include expanding costs and shrinking budgets, aging population, shifts to new technology solutions and AI adoption. The industry is in flux and the transition is daunting but, also ripe for innovation and opportunity in our state. QHS is committed to this effort through fellowships, residencies, and research – including ongoing funding of the 'Imi Ho'ola Program at JABSOM that ensures the next generation of providers in Hawai'i are from Hawai'i. We look forward to continued partnership with the University of Hawai'i system in expanding and training the next generation of Hawai'i healthcare professionals.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB2159 HD2.

The mission of The Queen's Health System is to fulfill the intent of Queen Emma and King Kamehameha IV to provide in perpetuity quality health care services to improve the well-being of Native Hawaiians and all of the people of Hawai'i.

HB-2159-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 7:47:24 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

2159 HB RELATING TO HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.

QUOTA PER YEAR 100

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES REGULAR SESSION OF 2026

Committee on Finance

Hearing on February 25, 2026

Testimony in SUPPORT for HB2159 HD2

To the honorable **Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi and Members of the Committee,**

I am writing to express my support for House Bill 2159-HD2, which establishes positions and appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i (UH) to support health care workforce development in the State. HB 2159 includes three new faculty positions for DKICP which specialize in cancer, geriatrics, and mental health. The DKICP currently has no faculty with PGY2 residencies or board certifications in these areas.

As a pharmacy student at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy (DKICP), I believe that these faculty positions will be critical for enhancing the delivery of quality health professional education and health care services in high need areas in the state. I would welcome and greatly benefit from the opportunity to interact with faculty in areas that are personally of high interest to me. Being able to interact in the classroom and clinics with pharmacy faculty who specialize in oncology, geriatrics, and psychiatry will provide needed role models which will be critical for helping me and my classmates prepare ourselves for future careers in these fields.

I recognize the concerns related to the costs associated with this bill, but I also recognize the amplifying value and impact of investing in clinical faculty. It would demonstrate a commitment toward strategic investments in the training of future health professionals in the state who are committed to helping to improve access to quality health care for the people of Hawai'i.

I respectfully urge your support of HB2159-HD2 and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Paola Olvera-Muñoz

Student Pharmacist, DKICP Class of 2028

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES REGULAR SESSION OF 2026

Committee on Finance

Hearing on February 25, 2026

Testimony in SUPPORT for HB2159 HD2

To the honorable **Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi and Members of the Committee,**

I am writing to express my support for House Bill 2159-HD2, which establishes positions and appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i (UH) to support health care workforce development in the State. As a faculty member at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy (DKICP), I believe that the faculty positions are timely and important for addressing critical issues facing our healthcare system.

HB 2159 includes three new faculty positions for DKICP which specialize in cancer, geriatrics, and mental health. These are high need areas in the state, and the DKICP currently has no faculty with PGY2 residencies or board certifications in these areas. These faculty would provide valuable and needed expertise in teaching, research, and service in high need clinical areas. It's hard for students to picture themselves practicing in these specialties if they don't have opportunities for regular interactions. Therefore, these positions will be critical for inspiring future pharmacists to engage in cancer, geriatrics, and mental health clinical practices to provide medication-related expertise as part of health care teams.

Although there is a financial cost to the state, it would be a strategic investment that is anticipated to generate a favorable ROI. The faculty hires would immediately provide clinical services to patients in high need specialty areas for the state. The faculty would train students in the clinic and classroom, which would inspire future generations of practitioners to enter these needed specialty areas. The faculty would also engage in scholarship to advance pharmacy practice in their respective fields, which could translate into improved access and outcomes in our state.

I respectfully urge your support of HB2159-HD2 and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Dianqing Sun, PhD

Professor of Pharmaceutical Sciences
Director of Distance Education

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES REGULAR SESSION OF 2026

Committee on Finance

Hearing on February 25, 2026

Testimony in SUPPORT for HB2159 HD2

To the honorable Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to support House Bill 2159-HD2, which establishes positions and appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i (UH) to support health care workforce development in the State. My name is Camlyn Masuda and I am an Associate Clinical Professor and Clinical Pharmacist with the University of Hawai'i at Hilo Daniel K Inouye College of Pharmacy. As a pharmacy faculty at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy (DKICP), I believe that the faculty positions are timely and important for addressing critical issues facing our healthcare system. My testimony does not represent the views of the University of Hawai'i at Hilo.

HB 2159-HD2 includes three new faculty positions for DKICP which specialize in cancer, geriatrics, and mental health. These are high need areas in the state, and the DKICP currently has no faculty with post graduate residencies (optional additional training in specific areas after obtaining a doctorate of pharmacy degree) or board certifications in these areas. These faculty would provide valuable and needed expertise in teaching, research, and service in high need clinical areas. It's hard for students to picture themselves practicing in these specialties if they don't have opportunities for regular interactions. Therefore, these positions will be critical for inspiring future pharmacists to engage in cancer, geriatrics, and mental health clinical practices to provide medication-related expertise as part of health care teams.

Although there is a financial cost to the state, it would be a strategic investment that is anticipated to generate a favorable ROI. The faculty hires would immediately provide clinical services to patients in high need specialty areas for the state. The faculty would train students in the clinic and classroom, which would inspire future generations of practitioners to enter these needed specialty areas. The faculty would also engage in scholarship to advance pharmacy practice in their respective fields, which could translate into improved access and outcomes in our state.

I respectfully urge your support of HB2159-HD2 and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Camlyn Masuda, PharmD, CDCES, BCACP
Associate Clinical Professor, Dept. of Pharmacy Practice, Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy, University of Hawai'i at Hilo
677 Ala Moana Blvd. Ste 1025A
Honolulu, HI 96813
Email: camlynm@hawaii.edu

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES REGULAR SESSION OF 2026

Committee on Finance

Hearing on February 25, 2026

Testimony in SUPPORT for HB2159 HD2

To the honorable **Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi and Members of the Committee,**

I am writing to express my support for House Bill 2159-HD2, which establishes positions and appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i (UH) to support health care workforce development in the State. HB 2159 includes three new faculty positions for DKICP which specialize in cancer, geriatrics, and mental health. The DKICP currently has no faculty with PGY2 residencies or board certifications in these areas.

As a pharmacy student at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy (DKICP), I believe that these faculty positions will be critical for enhancing the delivery of quality health professional education and health care services in high need areas in the state. I would welcome and greatly benefit from the opportunity to interact with faculty in areas that are personally of high interest to me. Being able to interact in the classroom and clinics with pharmacy faculty who specialize in oncology, geriatrics, and psychiatry will provide needed role models which will be critical for helping me and my classmates prepare ourselves for future careers in these fields.

I recognize the concerns related to the costs associated with this bill, but I also recognize the amplifying value and impact of investing in clinical faculty. It would demonstrate a commitment toward strategic investments in the training of future health professionals in the state who are committed to helping to improve access to quality health care for the people of Hawai'i.

I respectfully urge your support of HB2159-HD2 and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Raelynn Hashiba

Student Pharmacist, Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy Class of 2027

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Committee on Finance

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Sincerely,

Aryn Meguro, PharmD.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES REGULAR SESSION OF 2026

Committee on Finance

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah A. Taira". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Deborah A. Taira, ScD

Professor

Pharmacy Practice, DKICP

HB-2159-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 9:46:28 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bryce Fukunaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES REGULAR SESSION OF 2026

Committee on Finance

Hearing on February 25, 2026

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I respectfully urge your support of HB2159-HD2 and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bryce Fukunaga

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Committee on Finance

Hearing on February 25, 2026

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I respectfully urge your support of HB2159-HD2 and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gemmy Alegre

Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy Student, Class of 2026

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES REGULAR SESSION OF 2026

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Hearing on February 25 2026

Testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** for **HB2159 HD2**

To the honorable Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 2159, which establishes positions and appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i (UH) to support health care workforce development in the State. As a Geriatric Pharmacist and State Delegate for the American Society of Consultant Pharmacists (ASCP), I have witnessed firsthand the critical shortage of specialized healthcare providers in Hawaii, particularly those with expertise in caring for our rapidly aging population.

The Growing Need for Geriatric Healthcare Expertise

Hawaii faces a unique and urgent challenge. With the highest life expectancy in the nation at 80 years, our State's elderly population is growing at an unprecedented rate[1]. By 2035, an estimated 38,000 seniors will require long-term care, yet current projections indicate that only 30% will be able to receive it [2]. This gap is not merely a statistical concern—it represents thousands of kupuna who may lack access to essential healthcare services.

As of 2026, Hawaii's healthcare system is grappling with 4,600 vacant medical staff positions across hospitals and care facilities[3]. This severe workforce shortage directly impacts the quality and accessibility of care for our seniors, particularly in rural and underserved communities across all islands. Every county in Hawaii contains regions designated as medically underserved areas by federal standards[4].

The Critical Role of Specialized Geriatric Pharmacists

As a geriatric pharmacist, I specialize in medication management for older adults. This population often presents with multiple chronic conditions, including diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, and increasing rates of Alzheimer's disease and dementia[5]. The complexity of medication regimens for these patients requires specialized expertise to prevent drug interactions, adverse effects, medication errors, and hospitalizations.

HB 2159 includes three new faculty positions for the Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy (DKICP) specializing in cancer, geriatrics, and mental health. I am particularly encouraged by the inclusion of a geriatrics-focused faculty position. Currently, DKICP has no faculty members with PGY2 residencies or board certifications in geriatrics—a glaring gap given Hawaii's aging demographics. This position would provide invaluable expertise in teaching, research, and clinical service in an area of tremendous need.

Impact on Future Workforce Development

The lack of specialized geriatric faculty creates a concerning ripple effect. Students cannot envision themselves practicing in specialties where they have limited exposure and mentorship. Without regular interactions with board-certified geriatric pharmacists during their training, pharmacy students are less likely to pursue advanced residencies or certifications in this field. This perpetuates the workforce shortage cycle.

The proposed faculty positions will serve multiple critical functions:

- **Clinical Services:** Immediately provide specialized pharmaceutical care to elderly patients in high-need areas, helping to address medication-related problems that lead to hospitalizations and adverse outcomes
- **Education and Training:** Train the next generation of pharmacists in geriatric medication management through both classroom instruction and clinical rotations, inspiring students to enter this specialty field
- **Research and Scholarship:** Advance evidence-based geriatric pharmacy practice through research that can improve medication safety and outcomes for Hawaii's elderly population
- **Workforce Pipeline:** Create role models and mentors who can guide students toward advanced training and board certification in geriatrics

Alignment with State Healthcare Initiatives

This legislation aligns perfectly with Hawaii's recent recognition of pharmacists as healthcare providers. Beginning July 1, 2026, pharmacists in Hawaii will receive reimbursement for clinical services, including chronic disease management, medication therapy management, and point-of-care testing[6]. However, to fully realize the potential of this expanded role—particularly for our vulnerable elderly population—we need specialized faculty to train pharmacists in geriatric-specific competencies.

As the ASCP State Delegate, I can affirm that geriatric medication management is a national priority in pharmacy practice. ASCP, the leading organization for senior care pharmacy, emphasizes that pharmacists with specialized geriatric training are essential for ensuring appropriate, safe, and effective medication use in the elderly[7]. Hawaii's investment in geriatric pharmacy faculty demonstrates a commitment to this standard of care.

A Strategic Investment with Measurable Returns

While HB 2159 requires financial investment from the State, it represents strategic workforce development with tangible returns:

- **Reduced Healthcare Costs:** Specialized geriatric pharmacists prevent costly medication-related hospitalizations, adverse drug events, and inappropriate prescribing that are common in elderly patients
- **Expanded Access to Care:** Faculty will provide direct clinical services to underserved elderly populations while simultaneously training the next generation of specialists
- **Long-Term Workforce Growth:** Each faculty member will influence hundreds of students over their career, multiplying the impact on Hawaii's geriatric healthcare workforce
- **Enhanced Quality of Life:** Proper geriatric medication management helps seniors maintain independence, avoid nursing home placement through programs like Kupuna Care[8], and age in place with dignity

Personal Perspective

In my practice as a geriatric pharmacist, I regularly encounter medication-related problems that could have been prevented with specialized expertise—polypharmacy leading to falls, inappropriate medications causing cognitive decline, and drug interactions causing hospitalizations. Each case reinforces the urgent need for more geriatric-trained pharmacists in Hawaii.

The faculty position in geriatrics at DKICP will ensure that future pharmacists graduate with the knowledge, skills, and inspiration to serve our kupuna with the specialized care they deserve. This is not merely about filling a faculty line—it is about addressing a critical healthcare workforce gap that affects the well-being of thousands of elderly residents across our islands.

Conclusion

House Bill 2159 represents a timely and essential investment in Hawaii's healthcare infrastructure. The inclusion of specialized faculty positions in geriatrics, cancer, and mental health directly addresses the most pressing workforce shortages affecting our most vulnerable populations. As a Geriatric Pharmacist and ASCP State Delegate, I strongly urge your support of this legislation.

Our kupuna have built the foundation of our communities and deserve access to specialized, expert healthcare in their golden years. By supporting HB 2159, you are investing in the faculty who will train the healthcare workforce capable of meeting this moral and practical imperative.

I respectfully urge your support of HB2159-HD2 and thank you for your consideration.

Mahalo,

Chad Kawakami Pharm.D., BCPS
Geriatric Pharmacist
Hawai'i State Delegate, American Society of Consultant Pharmacists (ASCP)

References

- [1] Malama Mai Kai. (2025, June 4). Why aging in place is gaining popularity among Honolulu seniors. <https://malamamaikai.com/why-aging-in-place-is-gaining-popularity-among-honolulu-seniors/>
- [2] Malama Mai Kai. (2025, December 3). Hawaii senior care statistics: The growing need for in-home support. <https://malamamaikai.com/hawaii-senior-care-statistics/>
- [3] Galiher Law. (2025, August 17). Hawai'i's caregiver shortage is putting seniors in danger. <https://galiherlaw.com/hawaii-caregiver-shortage-is-putting-seniors-in-danger/>
- [4] LegiScan. (2025, January 26). Bill Text: HI SB1579 | 2025 | Regular Session | Introduced. <https://legiscan.com/HI/text/SB1579/2025>
- [5] Malama Mai Kai. (2025, December 3). Hawaii senior care statistics: The growing need for in-home support. <https://malamamaikai.com/hawaii-senior-care-statistics/>
- [6] American Pharmacists Association. (2025, July 1). Hawai'i Pharmacists Association and APhA celebrate passage of landmark legislation. <https://www.pharmacist.com/About/Newsroom/hawaii-pharmacists-association-and-apha-celebrate-passage-of-landmark-legislation>
- [7] American Society of Consultant Pharmacists. (2011). Geriatric care as an introductory pharmacy practice experience. *ASCP Geriatric Pharmacy Curriculum Guide*. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3175681/>
- [8] Elder Justice Honolulu. (2025, June 28). The rising cost of healthcare for senior citizens in Honolulu County, Hawaii: A comparison. <https://www.elderjusticehonolulu.com/the-cost-of-healthcare-for-senior-citizens-in-honolulu-county-hawaii-a-comparison>

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I respectfully urge your support of HB2159-HD2 and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shaun-Marie Aquino', written in a cursive style.

Shaun-Marie Aquino

HB-2159-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 12:25:20 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jayden K Wagner Kailiawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES REGULAR SESSION OF 2026

Committee on Finance

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Jayden Wagner Kailiawa

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I respectfully urge your support of HB2159-HD2 and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Christina Reguelman
Christina Reguelman

HB-2159-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 2:31:19 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bryce Nishida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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Committee on Finance

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Sincerely,

Bryce Nishida

HB-2159-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 2:31:32 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alina Ramos	Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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Sincerely,

Alina Ramos

Student Pharmacist, DKICP Class of 2026

HB-2159-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 2:33:16 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nicole young	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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Sincerely,

Nicole Young