



Hawaii Medical Association

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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

Date: February 18, 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 SB 2261 RELATING TO HEALTH. Huli Au Ola; Physician and Dentist Retention; Molokai; Study; Grant; Appropriation.

Position: Support

This measure would require Huli Au Ola to conduct a study on physician and dentist recruitment and retention to serve the island of Molokai, appropriate funds, effective 7/1/2026.

HMA supports this measure. Molokai's limited transportation options and high cost of travel compound patient access challenges, leading to delayed care and poorer health outcomes for Molokai families. A structured assessment of the barriers to recruiting and keeping physicians and dentists on Molokai covering workforce, housing, transportation, and support systems will equip policymakers with the information needed to design effective incentives, partnerships, and long-term strategies to improve access to continuous medical care for Molokai.

HMA supports this comprehensive study on recruitment and retention of physicians and dentists to serve the island of Molokai. Systematic root cause analyses for our rural and underserved communities are essential to achieving health equity across our islands.

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

continued

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

MacDougall, H., et al. "Recruitment and Retention of Rural Health Professionals in Underserved Settings." *Health Services Research*, 2025.

Fritsma, T. "Factors Associated With Health Care Professionals' Choice to Serve in Underserved Areas: A Systematic Review." *JAMA Network Open*, 2023.

Arredondo, K., et al. "Addressing the Rural-Urban Imbalance in Health Care: Recruitment and Retention Workforce Development Policies." *JAMA Network Open*, 2024.

Juarez R, Phankitnirundorn K, Ozorio Dutra SV, Bond-Smith D, Lee AG, Maunakea AK. Health and Social Support in the Aftermath of the Maui Wildfires. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2025 Aug 1;8(8):e2525430. doi: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2025.25430. PMID: 40768146; PMCID: PMC12329611.

Maunakea, Alike, et al. "Invisible Battles: Maui Survivors Struggle With Mental Health Two Years Post-Fire." *Hawaii Public Radio*, 5 Aug. 2025.

From Crisis to Recovery: Health and Resilience Two Years After the Maui Wildfires. MauiWES Report, June 2025.

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

SB-2261

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 12:47:32 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/18/2026 1:02:00 PM

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

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

2261 SB RELATING TO HEALTH.

To: The Honorable Donna Kim, Chair
The Honorable Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Education

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

Hearing: Wednesday, February 18, 2026, 1:02pm, Conference Room 220

RE: **SB2261 Relating to Health**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of SB2261**. This measure would require Huli Au Ola to conduct a study on physician and dentist recruitment and retention to serve the island of Moloka.

AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan founded by Hawai'i's Community Health Centers and the Queen Emma Clinics. We serve over 66,000 Medicaid and Medicaid-Medicare dual-eligible residents on all islands. Since 1994, AlohaCare has partnered with providers, government entities, and community-based organizations to meet the evolving needs of our safety net community as Hawai'i's only health plan focused solely on Medicaid-eligible individuals. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for equitable access to quality, whole-person care for all.

AlohaCare is committed to improving access to care. We serve over 2,200 residents on Molokai, and we continue to be very engaged in bolstering access to care despite provider shortages and travel challenges. We support a multi-faceted approach to improving access to care. This measure to conduct a study toward developing a long-term strategy and plan for services on Molokai would be a good step forward.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support of SB2261**