



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Health
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By

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HB 1089 – RELATING TO MEDICAL EDUCATION

Chair Mizuno, Vice Chair Kobayashi and members of the committee:

House Bill 1089 requests the Department of Health to conduct a study as to the feasibility of establishing a pilot program to permit residents of Hawai'i to attend a college of medicine in the Philippines in exchange for a commitment to practice medicine in Hawai'i after graduation. The University of Hawai'i is committed to providing opportunities for students from Hawai'i to become physicians and to increase the number of physicians in Hawai'i to help address the growing physician shortage in Hawai'i.

The proposal would use Hawai'i state taxpayer dollars to fund medical education in the Philippines. Although the graduates of international medical schools can occasionally successfully compete for post-graduate medical education programs (i.e., a "residency" position) in the U.S., these graduates are much less likely to receive a residency "match" as required for subsequent licensing and practice in the U.S. The greatest challenge to increasing the supply of practicing physicians is the availability of residency positions in Hawai'i and elsewhere in the U.S. There are more applicants than there are available positions. The following factors help increase an applicant's chances of obtaining a residency position:

(1) Attending an LCME accredited medical school such as the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) - as 92% of U.S. medical school seniors at allopathic schools (such as JABSOM) are matched to a residency program in the student's preferred specialty as compared to 51% of U.S. residents who attended non-U.S. based medical schools;

(2) Superior scores on the USMLE examinations and passing all USMLE examinations on the first try are highly associated with attaining a position at the best residency training programs. Among first-time takers of the first step of three exams, U.S. medical

school graduates pass 94% on the first attempt whereas non-U.S. medical school graduates pass 78% on the first attempt. For repeat test takers, only 41% of non-U.S. medical school graduates pass on repeat attempts.

(3) Students who do not match to a residency position in their year of graduation have an even lower probability of matching (i.e., small chance of being accepted into a U.S. residency program) in subsequent years.

Hawai'i residents who are unsuccessful in this process of attaining an accredited U.S. residency position would have wasted an enormous amount of time, effort and money by attending a medical school out of the country. Thus, the return on state investment seems limited with such an international program.

Nonetheless, there are elements of the proposal worthy of consideration if enacted WITHIN Hawai'i. Specifically, were the state to fund a full-tuition scholarship program for Hawai'i residents admitted to JABSOM that was coupled to a subsequent practice payback requirement, the school could attract more of the approximately 20 Hawai'i residents who take medical school offers elsewhere in the U.S.

We have learned that 80% of students who obtain their medical degrees from JABSOM and go on to complete their residency with JABSOM remain in the state to practice. With more stable and enhanced investment in the operations of JABSOM, further expansion of the class size and support of neighbor island practice and training programs could be enhanced. The University of Hawai'i looks forward to further conversation with the legislature regarding effective approaches by which the state can invest in its medical school.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this matter.