



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education
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By

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And

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HB 285 – RELATING TO THE JOHN A. BURNS SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Chair Choy, Vice Chair Ichiyama, and members of the committee:

The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) appreciates the efforts of the legislature and the intent of HB 285, which creates a scholarship program for the medical school. The measure establishes a scholarship for a full course of study at JABSOM in exchange for which the recipient must practice in the state for five (5) years following the completion of the recipient's residency.

There is no doubt that Hawai'i is facing a significant shortage of physicians. This has been effectively documented by the Physician Workforce Assessment and research efforts of Dr. Kelley Withy at JABSOM's Area Health Education Center. According to the study, the gap between doctor need and availability has widened by 20 percent over the past year. Moreover, the large debt medical students now face upon completion of their medical studies discourages many from remaining in Hawaii or practicing in rural areas where the need for physicians is greatest. We believe HB 285 would be helpful in attracting the most qualified students to the field of medicine.

We respectfully offer the following suggestions to enhance the effectiveness of the scholarship program:

The five year post-residency practice should be performed in areas in the state that are underserved. This would direct medical care to regions where the need is urgent;

Scholarships should be awarded to students who have expressed interest in areas of practice or specialties for which physician-shortages exist in order to effectively grow the doctors Hawai'i needs

Assigned funding must support an administrative position at JABSOM to enable JABSOM can track the progress of scholarship recipients as well as monitor the program, including any collection efforts that may be necessary;

As retention of such scholarship students in Hawai'i will be enhanced if their residency training is provided in Hawaii, establish additional, separate funding on an annual basis for JABSOM's graduate medical education (GME) program. Such funding should be separate from the medical student scholarship program and would use the Hawai'i Medical Education Special Fund. These funds will be used to support and expand the residency and fellowship programs offered through the JABSOM graduate medical education program.

As the 2015 Annual Report on the Hawai'i Medical Education Council indicates, historically GME funding has come from the federal government and Hawai'i's private teaching hospitals/clinics. However, the changing healthcare financial environment, including implementation of the Affordable Care Act, has limited the capacity of the teaching hospitals/clinics to fund GME training. The JABSOM GME program is a core component of our efforts to train and retain new doctors for Hawai'i.

We appreciate the Committee's consideration of our comments. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.