



# **UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM**

## **Legislative Testimony**

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Written Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Health  
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by

Robert Bley-Vroman, Chancellor

and

Mary G. Boland, DrPH, RN, FAAN

Dean and Professor

School of Nursing & Dental Hygiene

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

### **HB 1440 – RELATING TO EDUCATION**

Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Creagan, and members of the House Committee on Health, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony regarding HB 1440.

The Hawai'i Keiki: Healthy & Ready to Learn Program (HK Program), a partnership between the Hawai'i Department of Education (DOE) and University of Hawai'i at Mānoa School of Nursing (UHM Nursing), is supporting the DOE to achieve student, school, and system success by building school based health services. This effort is a safety net partnership to increase access to healthcare for a vulnerable population – pre-kindergarten to high school keiki – by providing school health nursing and primary care services in the public schools. The long-term goal is building a fiscally sustainable healthcare delivery model using public funding and cost recovery to moderate the impact of social determinants of health of children attending public schools.

Through the partnership of two sister public agencies - the DOE and UHM Nursing, we have a tremendous opportunity to use our public schools as the gateway to health for children, their families and the school teachers and staff. The HK Program uses school nurses and advanced practice nurse practitioners (APRNs) to provide evidence based school health services to ensure screening for common conditions, up to date immunizations, and collaboration with community care providers to manage chronic conditions that impact readiness to learn. Further, the program partners with both state agencies and the health care delivery sector to forge innovative partnerships to support building a robust system to improve health and achievement of students, schools, and communities.

Evidence from around the country shows that when a school nurse is present, student attendance improves, as does academic performance. Children spend more time in

school (seat time). Principals and teachers are not called upon to address health concerns and can focus on helping children learn.

The HK Program is working at the school level with parents, teachers, and principals to lead the school wellness plan effort, ensure continuity of care for children with chronic conditions, and provide emergency care on site. As a resource and point of contact for health and wellness in the school, the nurse supports the school community to help children learn. The nurse is the "school health coordinator" for the implementation of an organized approach to school health. We help facilitate health programming in the district and school and between the school and community.

School health programs and policies in Hawai'i have resulted from a wide variety of federal, state and local mandates, regulations, initiatives, and funding streams. The result is a "patchwork" of policies and programs with differing standards, requirements, and populations to be served. In addition, the professionals who oversee the different pieces of the patchwork come from multiple disciplines: education, nursing, social work, psychology, nutrition, and school administration, each bringing specialized expertise, training, and approaches.

Coordinating the many parts of school health into a quilt by engaging in a - systematic approach - will enable schools to:

- Eliminate gaps and reduce redundancies across the many initiatives and funding streams;
- Build partnerships and teamwork among school health and education professionals in the school;
- Build collaboration and enhance communication among public health (DOH), school health (DOE), higher education (University of Hawai'i) and health professionals in the community; and
- Focus efforts on helping students engage in protective, health-enhancing behaviors and avoid risk behaviors.

The legislature is to be applauded for your willingness to invest in the partnership of the DOE and UHM Nursing to improve student success through improved health screening, monitoring, and management of chronic conditions that impact learning.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.