



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Health, Human Services, & Homelessness
And
House Committee on Higher Education & Technology
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HB 1547 – RELATING TO GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION

Chairs Yamane and Takayama, Vice Chairs Tam and Clark, and members of the committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today. The John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) **supports HB 1547** which seeks funding to expand graduate medical education (residency and specialty fellowship training) to the neighbor islands, provided that its passage does not replace or impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget.

Many Hawai'i residents are unable to obtain timely and appropriate health care due to shortages of physicians and other health care providers in the State. These shortages threaten individual health and cumulatively adversely affect the State's health care costs. The State's neighbor islands, which have been designated by the federal government as medically underserved areas, have been disproportionately adversely affected by shortages of physicians in all areas of practice.

Based on the most recent data from the Hawai'i physician workforce assessment project, the State has a shortage of 537 full-time equivalent physicians. However, when island geography and unmet specialty-specific needs by county are examined, the estimated unmet need for full-time physicians increases to 732. Primary care, internal medicine, and some specialty physician shortages represent Hawai'i's greatest areas of need. Without these physicians, the people of Hawai'i do not have access to the health care they need. JABSOM has shown that eighty percent of graduates who complete their medical school and residency training in the State remain in Hawai'i to practice.

JABSOM serves as the Sponsoring Institution for the bulk of the civilian residency programs in Hawai'i, ensuring high-quality and accredited resident education programs or Graduate Medical Education (GME). The Hawai'i Island Family Medicine Residency program, sponsored by the Hilo Medical Center, plays a very important role in addressing the rural family physician shortage, but additional resources are needed to expand training, in numerous high-need specialties throughout Hawai'i. JABSOM faculty provide educational program leadership and clinical supervision of about 230 residents and subspecialty fellow trainees in nineteen specialty programs annually. In Hawai'i, GME costs are largely borne by the University of Hawai'i and its affiliated health systems. Some federal dollars have been used by the health systems to cover a portion of the GME training costs. Even pre-COVID, all health systems that support GME have been fiscally constrained and unable to make significant investments in additional GME training positions, especially on the neighbor islands which are most acutely impacted by physician workforce shortages.

In addition, the GME programs sponsored by JABSOM are considered lower priority for new CMS GME positions based on current Federal definitions and regulations. Thus, to expand residency training, especially on the neighbor islands where it is most needed and in several specialty areas, JABSOM needs annual state investment to cover resident and administrative support personnel positions as well as partial salary support for practicing physicians to supervise and evaluate the trainees.

With the state's investment, JABSOM will be able to leverage existing partnerships to educate and train more physicians who will care for Hawai'i's residents, during and following their GME training.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.