



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Written Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Health  
March 19, 2008, 10:55 a.m.

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and  
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### **HCR 138/HR 119, Requesting the formation of a task force to review the potential expansion of the current practices and equipment of Hawaii's telemedicine system.**

Chair Green, Vice Chair Mizuno, and Members of the Committee:

We support HCR 138/HR 119 as the proposed legislation serves to address a critical growing shortage of available healthcare resources throughout the State of Hawai'i. Telemedicine and Telehealth solutions offer the potential to leverage scarce healthcare resources across geographic and other boundaries which limit access to care for citizens of Hawai'i. This legislation will help build the alliances necessary for effective use of Telemedicine solutions for the mandated imperative to improve access to care in our State.

Currently, the Department of Health is requested to form a task force to explore the feasibility of further implementation of the telemedicine system for the benefit of the citizens of our state. We request that HCR 138 and HR 119 be amended to have the Telehealth Research Institute (TRI) of the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) be the supporting institution to form such a task force.

The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and the John A. Burns School of Medicine are uniquely positioned to spearhead this effort to convene a task force that will inform the legislature regarding opportunities, strategies, barriers, and recommendations for Telemedicine. The Telehealth Research Institute at JABSOM has the necessary expertise, mission, and experience to execute the mandate of this legislation. The University will enhance its ability to fulfill its commitment to improving health and meeting health care needs for the citizens of Hawai'i. We are encouraged by the trust and opportunity for JABSOM that our neighbor island communities are expressing in this proposal.

A consortium of stakeholders interested in the future of telehealth in the State of Hawai'i have proposed the following changes to HCR 138/ HR 119:

1. Moving the supporting institution from the Department of Health to the Telehealth Research Institute (TRI), John A. Burns School of Medicine, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. We are

interested in doing this for two reasons. The proposed amendments would be in keeping with the mission of the Telehealth Research Institute and JABSOM to provide outreach to the community and State of Hawai‘i. Also, the Telehealth Research Institute, John A. Burns School of Medicine, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa has been spearheading a state-wide collaborative on telehealth since July 2007, as evidenced by the successful Symposium last November. For more on the collaborative and the symposium, please visit the website: <http://www.hawaiihealth.net/>

2. Including a member of the steering committee of the Telehealth Collaborative on the task force. We are recommending this change as the committee is well informed not only on issues of telehealth policy but also on telehealth projects statewide, as well issues with and changes to the underlying hardware currently available.

3. Broadening the scope of the task force to include the following five recommended areas of focus for telehealth in the State of Hawaii as identified by the participants of the November Telehealth Symposium:

- *Business Model*
- *Reimbursement and Funding*
- *Coordination and Collaboration*
- *Added Value and Incentives*
- *Political Will and Institutional Leadership*

We are recommending this change because the Telehealth Collaborative feels that, although the originally stated areas of focus for the task force are important, the five additional areas are equally as important.

The stakeholders interested in the future of telehealth in Hawai‘i include members from the following institutions:

Telehealth Research Institute, John A. Burns School of Medicine, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa  
Telecommunications & Information Policy Group, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa  
The Queen's Medical Center  
Hawaii Pacific Health  
The Hawaii Telehealth Collaborative  
Hawaii Medical Service Association  
Hilo Medical Center  
Hawaii Department of Health  
Shriners Hospitals for Children

Specific recommended amendments as detailed above follow in bold italicized type:

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# HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

*REQUESTING THE FORMATION OF A TASK FORCE TO REVIEW THE POTENTIAL  
EXPANSION OF THE CURRENT PRACTICES AND EQUIPMENT OF  
HAWAII'S TELEMEDICINE SYSTEM.*

WHEREAS, access to knowledgeable and qualified medical doctors is arguably the single most important factor for people to live long and healthy lives; and

WHEREAS, Hawaii's unique geography as an island chain poses difficulties for patients seeking to access medical doctors without incurring significant travel costs; and

WHEREAS, other states with access-to-care issues in isolated communities are exploring ways to ease difficulties for both patients and medical doctors, by using methods that allow both parties to travel no further than their own neighborhoods to interact; and

WHEREAS, one approach to the access problem in Hawaii would be to expand the State's telemedicine system, ***including facilitation of cost effective health care services, coordination of these services and management of chronic diseases***, which is still in its infancy; and

WHEREAS, greater access to health care through telemedicine would extend medical information and physicians' care throughout the State, without requiring patients to leave their home island; and

WHEREAS, after telemedicine was first implemented in 1998 by former Governor Benjamin Cayetano as a pilot project, it became clear, even in its earliest stage, that there are endless possibilities for telemedicine ***and associated healthcare delivery*** to change lives for the better; and

WHEREAS, it would be in the best interest for the residents of Hawaii to continue to explore the possibilities of expanding the current telemedicine **and associated health care delivery** system to encompass the State's twelve hospitals; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the Twenty-fourth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2008, the Senate concurring, that the Department of Health is requested to form a task force to explore the feasibility of further implementation of the telemedicine systems' **health care services** so that citizens of Hawaii may benefit from it; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department is requested to direct the task force to examine the following issues:

- (1) Current use of telemedicine and equipment;
- (2) Costs for expansion;
- (3) Timeframe for full implementation of an expansion project; and
- (4) Potential difficulties or problems that may arise during or after implementation; and

**(5) Broader issues addressed at the November 15 2007 Hawaii Telehealth Collaborative Symposium including:**

- i. Business Model**
- ii. Reimbursement and Funding**
- iii. Coordination and Collaboration**
- iv. Added Value and Incentives**
- v. Political Will and Institutional Leadership**

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in forming the task force, the ~~Director of Health~~ **Telehealth Research Institute, John A. Burns School of Medicine, University of Hawai'i at Manoa** is requested to include:

- (1) The Director of Health or the Director's designee;
- (2) One member from the staff of the John A. Burns School of Medicine at the University of Hawaii;

- (3) One member from the Hawaii Health Systems Corporation;
- (4) One member from a for-profit health care organization;  
and
- (5) One member from a non profit hospital or health care  
organization; and
- (6) **One member from the steering committee of the Hawaii Telehealth  
Collaborative Symposium Steering committee.**

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the ~~Director of Health Telehealth~~ **Research Institute, John A. Burns School of Medicine, University of Hawai'i at Manoa** is requested to appoint all members of the task force no later than thirty days after the adjournment sine die of the Regular Session of 2008, and is requested to convene the initial meeting of the task force within thirty days after appointment of its members; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the ~~Director of Health Telehealth~~ **Research Institute, John A. Burns School of Medicine, University of Hawai'i at Manoa** is required to provide necessary administrative, professional, technical, and clerical support to the task force; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force is requested to submit a preliminary report of its findings and recommendations to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2009, and a final report of its findings and recommendations, including any necessary proposed legislation not later than twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2010; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Governor, the Director of Health, and the Chairperson of the Employer-Union Health Benefits Trust Fund.

OFFERED BY: \_\_\_\_\_