



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Written Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Health  
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by

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### HB 1378 RELATING TO ADVANCED PRACTICE REGISTERED NURSES

Chair Yamane, Vice Chair Nishimoto, and members of the House Committee on Health, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 1378 to recognize advance practice registered nurses as primary care providers, granting of global signature authority and prescriptive rights, and amending the definition of advanced practice registered nurses (APRN).

Access to available and quality health care is a national and state priority to ensure protection of consumers of care. Designating advanced practice registered nurses as primary care providers in Hawai'i would increase access to healthcare by Hawai'i citizens, particularly in high need and rural communities. Likewise, updating statutes to reflect global signature authority, prescriptive rights, and nationally accepted definitions for APRNs will help to address the provider shortage and ensure quality care delivery.

The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene (SONDH), as an educational program preparing APRNs in Hawai'i, is pleased to provide background information to assist in your deliberations. The UHM nursing program is fully accredited and recognized as an approved educational program by the Hawai'i State Board of Nursing. UHM's master of science in nursing program uses a community-based approach to prepare nurses for advanced practice in a variety of specialty areas including primary care options to practice as nurse practitioners or clinical nurse specialists. Using technology, we are educating students on all the islands. After successfully completing the academic program, students are eligible to take the appropriate specialty area national certification. The APRN programs are in high demand by students and many enroll with the goal of providing services to their rural community. As you are aware, the physician shortage is limiting access to primary care. Today we have available APRNS whose ability to provide this service is restricted by existing regulation.

There are several key areas of this bill which we support. The first is to designate APRNs as primary care providers in Hawai'i by all entities. This will increase access to healthcare by Hawai'i's citizens, particularly in high need areas. Currently, our State's restrictive definitions of "primary care provider" are a barrier to delivery of primary care services by qualified nurses. There are approximately 892 APRNs licensed in the State of Hawai'i who are a resource, not to mention those students in the academic pipeline. Accepting a standard definition for "primary care provider" that includes APRNs as proposed in the bill will ease the burden on the healthcare system. This collaborative approach to addressing the demand for primary healthcare is a direction that 24 states have taken to address access issues.

Second, in order to effectively and efficiently implement the APRN role, APRNs must have the ability to sign the multiple forms required to document services. The scope of an APRN includes, but is not limited to, performing acts of advanced assessment and diagnosing. Expanding global signature rights to APRNs will streamline the process at the health care system level by providing point-of-contact service to clients. Clear bill language will allow APRNs global signature rights relative to health care for their patients to further address this ongoing need. For example, the APRN signature will be accepted by insurers on the forms required for school physicals, durable medical equipment such as wheelchairs and walkers, and many other consumer needs.

Third, as we expand access we must assure quality service delivery. Because of the importance of the APRNs in caring for the current and future health needs of patients, the education, accreditation, certification and licensure of APRNs need to be effectively aligned in order to continue to ensure patient safety while expanding patient access to APRNs. Hawai'i Revised Statutes Section 457 was last approved in 1994. For this reason, we support updating the current definition of APRNs to reflect the National Council on State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) *2008 APRN Model Act/Rules and Regulations*. This model is also supported by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, the national voice for America's baccalaureate- and higher-degree nursing education programs, of which SONDH is a member. In the long term, a uniform model of regulation will also remove barriers from APRNs who relocate from other states. The proposed changes will ensure consumer safety and access by removing statutory barriers to the full scope of national practice for APRNs and by setting education and quality requirements.

Fourth, nationally we are evolving toward an APRN model that provides for only one designation of APRN recognition with prescriptive authority. Hawai'i's current statutes and administrative rules contain unnecessary additional requirements for prescriptive authority that will now be reasonably met by the certification requirement, if the new NCSBN model is adopted. We concur with the prescribing and ordering authority language from the *NCSBN APRN Model Act/Rules and Regulations* as stated in the bill, thus nullifying the verification of 1,000 clinical hours experience and the collegial working relationship agreement which has been a significant barrier to the practice of nursing in Hawai'i.

We support that the Hawai'i State Board of Nursing is the authorized entity to ensure the statutes and rules for nurse licensure/recognition are enacted. The proposed bill

language provides for the board to grant prescriptive authority to qualified or currently recognized, or both, APRNs. We recognize that a small number will be unable to demonstrate evidence of a master's degree and national certification. It is hoped that this language will enable the Board to transition the requirements to implement the new statutes accordingly while working with current APRNs that are recognized in the system.

Thank you for allowing me to provide the education perspective on this important issue. Our shared goal is to promote patient safety and public protection while increasing access to health care. By applying the NCBSN model for APRNs in Hawai'i, we will be aligned with the nation's direction in nursing and healthcare. Furthermore, by revising the definition of primary care providers to APRNs, increased access to primary care services will be available to the citizens of Hawai'i.

The University of Hawai'i Mānoa and the School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene supports a collaborative approach to addressing the healthcare provider needs of Hawai'i and looks forward to our continued partnership with the legislature and community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.