



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Written Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Higher Education and  
House Committee on Health

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By

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And

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### **HB 2462 - RELATING TO USE OF TOBACCO SETTLEMENT FUNDS**

Aloha Chair Chang, Chair Yamane and members of the House Committees on Higher Education and Health. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 2462, which would repeal the sunset date on tobacco master settlement agreement monies for continued use by the John A. Burns School of Medicine.

We are grateful for the bill's purpose, as stated in section one, to enable the medical school to continue to operate and graduate new physicians.

This coming May, we will graduate 62 physicians, twelve of whom are Native Hawaiians. That gives us a great sense of pride, because we know those students – and really, all our graduates – understand the critical health care needs of Hawai'i's diverse people. Our state's Native Hawaiians citizens, in particular, are five times more likely to die from diabetes than Caucasians in Hawai'i. Other disparities exist among our citizens of Japanese and Filipino ancestry.

The legislature's investment in JABSOM is allowing us to grow MORE physicians. This year, in fact, despite a more than \$3 million dollar reduction in our state general funding, we will – without new state appropriations – increase the size of our incoming class from 62 to 64 students. This is a modest increase, to be sure, but one that required commitment from our faculty, staff and administrators, and something we would not be able to consider without the support you have given us in the tobacco settlement monies.

It is important to understand that although we graduate 62 (and soon to be 64) students per year, the school of medicine educates and trains a total of 250 medical students year-round. Through partnering with our major local hospitals, we simultaneously train another 240 medical “residents”: men and women with their medical degrees who are treating patients while mastering their skills in fields including primary care, pediatrics, obstetrics and family medicine. We have another ten students who are from disadvantaged backgrounds whom we are training for a fifth year of college study, so that they may become medical students. Additionally, we have another 120 or so undergraduate and graduate students studying health sciences, including Public Health, Medical Technology and Communication Science Disorders.

We need to keep JABSOM on a course to success because we face a rapidly growing physician shortage, because we attract major funding into the community – 42 million dollars last year – through outside sources to be spent on research and outreach to benefit our community, and because we treat Hawai'i's people for tobacco-related disease and strive to reduce the tobacco addiction that costs our state more than 350 million dollars a year and destroys the quality of our citizens' lives.

Briefly, on workforce, our latest research – reported to this legislature the past week – shows that 40% of Hawai'i's current practicing physicians are expected to reach retirement age within 10 years. According to national standards, we are already more than 500 physicians short, based on our population. Just maintaining that underserved status will require us to graduate or recruit into the state more than 150 physicians each year.

When JABSOM's Kaka'ako campus was built, the medical school also had to assume its own expenses for electricity, security and custodial services – costs that were previously absorbed by UH Mānoa. The tobacco settlement funding allows us to meet those expenses.

We are making every effort to reduce the amount of general fund support required for JABSOM. In addition to the state-imposed budget cuts this past year, we have instituted a “green initiative” that is projected to save one million dollars this year by shortening hours of operation – and at times shutting down completely – our medical education building. As you know, that is on top of the fact that our facility already is more efficient than many other state buildings because of features, including the energy saving seawater cooling system, which allowed JABSOM to be awarded a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification in 2008.

Finally, tobacco cessation and tobacco dependence treatment for the people of Hawai'i are prominent throughout the medical school's curriculum.

Our JABSOM faculty, residents, medical students, and related healthcare professionals provide daily care for patients who smoke, and routinely offer them help in quitting through interventional counseling.

Tobacco dependence and its management are taught throughout all four years of our medical school curriculum. They are integrated with patient care responsibilities in the post-graduate residency training programs. And our faculty and students are actively involved in community education, including a variety of programs that benefit Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students and through hospital-based services that benefit the people of Hawai'i. Our students also voluntarily treat Hawai'i's homeless families at four state-sponsored shelters, twice per week.

Because it is well-reported in the medical literature that smokers are almost 30% more likely to quit after being counseled by their physician, it should be recognized that

JABSOM provides the State with an invaluable resource that contributes significantly towards helping Hawai'i smokers quit: Simply put, we *are* Hawai'i's doctors:

- JABSOM clinical faculty members (paid and volunteer) represent more than one- third of the practicing physicians in Hawai'i.
- Half of all physicians practicing in Hawai'i – treating Hawai'i's people right now – are graduates of JABSOM or its post-graduate residency training program.

In setting aside a portion of the tobacco settlement to pay construction debt, the legislature allowed the medical school's new campus to be built. In allowing us to use tobacco settlement monies for some of our operating expenses, you have allowed the medical school to survive. And we are committed to treating and training Hawai'i's people today and for the future.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.