



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the Senate Committees on Health and Education

February 12, 2007

by

Mary G. Boland, DrPH, RN, FAAN
Dean and Professor
School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 1437, Relating to Nursing

Chair Ige, Chair Sakamoto, and members of the Senate Committees on Health and Education, I thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of SB 1437, Relating to Nursing. The School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene supports this bill provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in the University's Board of Regents Approved Executive Biennium Budget.

We applaud the Legislature and Governor's commitment to address the nursing workforce shortage through the introduction of bills related to building nursing education program capacity and innovative teaching strategies for healthcare professionals with appropriations to the University of Hawai'i nursing programs. These initiatives are multi-faceted and respond to the complex nature of our growing nursing shortage.

First, Geriatric Nursing

SB 1437 emphasizes the important health issue of geriatric care for the elderly, in particular nursing care of our kupuna in Hawai'i. Many of the fragile elderly reside in rural communities where specialized geriatric health services are stretched to the maximum. As these adults "age in place" either by choice or lack of options, the health care delivery system will be challenged to develop strategies to provide them with services and supports for wellness in the face of chronic illness and dementia. The quality of health care our older adults receive is dependent on a strong, vibrant, and competent nursing workforce.

Given the growth in the aging population in Hawai'i, we have the opportunity to contribute to the national and global understanding of healthy aging, ethnic and cultural influences, and caregiver burden on family, health system and community. Research has shown that Advanced Practice Nurses (APNS) educated in geriatrics improve care outcomes, promote quality of life, and reduce health care costs (Hartford Foundation). While Geriatric APNs are highly valued by employers and are in great demand, the

number of geriatric APNs is insufficient to meet even current needs locally and nationally. Our gerontology nurse practitioner program pays special attention to the geographic, cultural, racial and ethnic diversity of our state's population. However, we lack the critical mass of faculty required to lead the school in education, practice, and scholarship for this effort. Initiatives, such as the Geriatric Nursing Institute, are required to promote and sustain careers in geriatric nursing.

The development of the Institute at the School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene will build the academic nursing capability required to inform sound public policy, conduct research, and produce practitioners competent and improve healthcare delivery to Hawai'i's older adults. The appropriation of funding will enable us to strengthen the curriculum in geriatric nursing from undergraduate education through doctoral studies, and partner with the university and community to implement activities with overall outcomes to:

- Enhance nurse competencies and skills in gerontology
- Increase the nursing workforce in settings that provide the majority care for Hawai'i's older adults
- Disseminate findings and best practices from research and academia to benefit older adults through prevention and patient care.

Second, Workforce

SB 1437 provides support for the Statewide Nursing Consortium and provides for faculty and program support to increase the number of nursing graduates from the UH Mānoa School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene.

With data indicating that 60% of the nursing workforce and faculty will have retired by 2020, we must begin to fill the pipeline. Hawai'i is fortunate that many students want to enter nursing. They are correct that it will provide them with a stable salary beyond the state average, allow them to buy homes, build their families, and be available to care for their kupuna. As in other professions, when forced to leave the state to pursue their education, they settle on the mainland and are a brain drain that we cannot afford.

In response, the six UH nursing programs are taking a collaborative approach to meet this present and future need for nurses in our community. Within their respective campuses and collectively as the Hawai'i Statewide Nursing Consortium, each program is making strides to build capacity and enhance the curriculum with innovative learning strategies. We are committed to efficient, innovative and effective approaches and a statewide curriculum that expands access at every level of education.

This bill is a complement to the University Biennium Budget request for nursing workforce development and provides additional funds for the School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene at Mānoa to increase the number of graduates from both entry and graduate level programs using traditional and master's entry programs. The funding proposed for the School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene will increase enrollments using a fast track accelerated degree program pathway for those with bachelor degrees to transition into nursing. A three-year Master's entry program for second degree students can provide accelerated basic nursing education followed by specialty graduate nursing

education in a shorter time than it takes to prepare students in the existing B.S. nursing program.

The Legislature and University of Hawai'i provided support to the UH Mānoa School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene (SONDH) during the last budget biennium to begin efforts to build capacity and increase enrollment to meet Hawai'i's nursing workforce needs. We appreciate your vision and support which has resulted in an enrollment increase of 25% from Fall 2003 in our programs.

Each nursing bill introduced in this session is important. I urge you to provide full funding of the UH Biennium Budget request and address the nursing shortage using the approaches described in this bill. We support the funding in SB 1437 and wish to express that to efficiently address the nursing shortage, funding is urged to support all UH nursing programs as provided for in part of the UH budget and SB 91. I would be pleased to work with you and your staff to reconcile the bill differences highlighting the different and unique elements that each provides, all contributing to a multifaceted response to the nursing shortage.

Ultimately, this is a public health issue with serious implications for us all and requires collective action. The proposed solutions will contribute to a diversified economy, strengthen the health care industry, and help retain our brightest young people.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.