UNIVERSITY OF HAWAIʻI SYSTEM LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

SB 2590 Relating to Health Care in Rural Communities

Written Testimony for the
Senate Committee on Health and
Senate Committee on Education

February 6, 2008 at 1:15 p.m.

by
Virginia S. Hinshaw, Chancellor
and
Dr. Gary K. Ostrander
Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education &
Interim Dean for the John A. Burns School of Medicine
University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa

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Chair Ige, Chair Sakamoto, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. The John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) is sensitive to the needs of rural communities regarding access to health care. However, we do not feel that this bill requiring each graduate of the medical school to perform mandatory service in a rural community offers an appropriate solution to the problem.

Such a requirement would negatively impact our ability to recruit the best and brightest students to come to our medical school. While some outstanding students would welcome the opportunity to serve in rural areas of need, these same students would likely do so by choice. This bill would not provide incentive to more students to make the choice to work in rural areas,, but rather require it of all graduates. Students not willing to make such a commitment would seek to complete their medical school training elsewhere. For these reasons, this solution seems counterproductive to the long-term solution of motivating the best and brightest doctors to choose to settle and practice in these areas. We believe that such a requirement would dramatically hurt interest among both local and non-resident applicants.

This commitment will also result in an unavoidable negative impact on our graduates' income as well as place significant family burden (relocation, disruption of school and work for family members, etc.) during the proposed two-year service period. These factors will also likely influence applicant interest in our medical school.

There are also issues of monitoring responsibility, such as who would make the assignments, how to consider graduate specialty choices, and more that would also play into this. These are significant issues that would be very complicated to address.

We would like to offer a balanced view of this bill, but don't see that it offers positives for our students. While it could provide a rolling supply of practitioners in some rural areas, the cost may be too extreme to justify this model.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.