UNIVERSITY OF HAWAIʻI SYSTEM
Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education and the Arts
and
Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Health
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by
Robert Bley-Vroman, Chancellor
and
Jerris Hedges, MD, Dean
John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM)
University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa

SB 2388 – RELATING TO THE JOHN A. BURNS SCHOOL OF MEDICINE SPECIAL FUND

Chairs Taniguchi and Baker, Vice Chair Kidani and members of the Committees, thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support of SB 2388, which permits the JABSOM special fund to be used for loan repayment for certain health care professionals. The measure also seeks to remove the cap on expenditures from the fund and remove the sunset date.

Hawaiʻi has a shortage of over 600 doctors, and almost all other types of primary care and behavioral health providers. Without these healthcare providers, the people of Hawaiʻi will not have access to the healthcare they need. The need is most acute for those on neighbor islands and those with the least resources in the first place.

The Physician Workforce Assessment program began with legislation in 2010 and has successfully identified the unmet need for physicians across Hawaiʻi. The program has also implemented efforts to recruit and retain healthcare providers through the Hoʻokipa Welcome Wagon Program, partnering with the Hawaiʻi Physician Recruiters to share information on job openings widely, and provide continuing education to over 2,000 providers, and begin a State Loan Repayment Program.

Current Status of Loan Repayment:
Loan Repayment is the fastest and most cost effective way to recruit providers to areas of need. In 2012, the UH John. A. Burns School of Medicine Area Health Education Center created a state loan repayment program with private donations from HMSA, Queens and AlohaCare and received a grant for dollar for dollar matching funds from the federal government. ***This loan repayment program has provided repayment of up to $40,000 a year in educational debt for 19 individuals.*** The individuals funded are from all the islands except Kauaʻi (so far, but we hope to change that). Nine are

Advanced Practice Nurse Practitioners (eight FNPs and one Geriatric/Adult NP), nine are physicians (three family physicians, one pediatrician, one psychiatrist, one obstetrician and one internist) and one is a clinical psychologist. The practice locations are primarily community health centers, with two providers working the prison systems and one provider working in a rural nonprofit setting. These providers have all made a two year commitment to working in underserved areas, and we hope to extend this commitment by continuing this program.

Federal Loan Matching Money Left on the Table:
In September, 2014, Dr. Kelley Withy at JABSOM received a 4 year grant for $311,875 a year in federal funds to be spent on loan repayment in Hawai‘i for physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, psychologists, social workers and marriage and family counselors who work in non-profit settings in Health Profession Shortage Areas. But the money can ONLY be spent if there is local funding to match it dollar for dollar.

Dr. Withy has been able to match $100,000 of the funds. But over $200,000 went unused and the federal government decreased Hawai‘i’s award to $225,000 a year.

SB 2388 would:

- Allow the JABSOM Special Fund to be used for loan repayment for certain healthcare professionals;
- Remove spending cap to enable to fund to accept and use the monies for loan repayment; and
- Remove the sunset date of June 30, 2017.

Passage of SB 2388 would enable JABSOM to continue its research and intervention activities (recruitment, retention and continuing education), as well as raise the spending cap so that any money appropriated or donated can be used to bring in the dollar-for-dollar match.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.