



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
P.O. Box 3378  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:  
File:

## House Committee on Health

### SB 1339 SD1, RELATING TO RURAL AREAS

Testimony of Loretta J. Fuddy, A.C.S.W., M.P.H.  
Director of Health

March 11, 2013

1 **Department's Position:** The Department of Health supports this measure to amend the Hawaii Revised  
2 Statutes to create a state definition of Hawaii's rural areas for the purposes of qualifying these areas to  
3 be eligible for federal rural programs and funds.

4 **Fiscal Implications:** None to Department of Health.

5 **Purpose and Justification:** This bill will help protect existing programs that maintain valuable health  
6 care services to their communities, such as Kahuku Medical Center's critical access hospital  
7 designation, and keeps areas of Oahu that are widely considered eligible for federal rural health  
8 programs, such as the Rural Health Outreach Initiative and the Rural Network Development Program.  
9 Programs such as these help to ensure a remote community's access to primary and emergency care  
10 services. Furthermore, it permits the Department of Health's Office of Primary Care and Rural Health to  
11 continue to provide technical assistance to these communities using their federal rural funding.

12 Federal rural programs recognize that states have better understanding of its geography and  
13 demographics, and are in a better position to define their rural areas. The Department believes this  
14 definition is equitable and captures the public understanding of what constitutes rural areas in Hawaii.

15 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



**SB1339 SD1**  
**RELATING TO RURAL AREAS**  
House Committee on Health

March 13, 2013

8:30 a.m.

Room 329

---

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** SB1339 SD1, which will ensure the continued availability of federal funds to support programs in rural areas on O‘ahu, where many of OHA’s beneficiaries reside.

Hawai‘i’s rural areas are host to many cultural kīpuka, where rural community lifestyles keep alive the values and practices that form the foundation of Hawaiian culture. However, it appears that rural communities on the island of O‘ahu are now threatened with losing their recognition as “rural” under many federal laws due to the high population density of O‘ahu’s urban areas. This may put O‘ahu island’s culturally significant rural communities at a substantial disadvantage in acquiring and maintaining important, federally-funded social services, including medical services, that may not otherwise be available in such isolated regions.

By providing for a state definition of “rural area,” which recognizes the true rural nature of large portions of O‘ahu island, this bill will assist with efforts that ensure O‘ahu’s rural communities can continue to receive federal funds for services critical to their continued existence and prosperity.

Therefore, OHA urges the Committee to **PASS** SB1339 SD1. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.