

HB 1504

WRITTEN ONLY

TESTIMONY BY GEORGINA K. KAWAMURA
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
STATE OF HAWAII
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 1504, H.D. 1, S.D. 1

April 2, 2009

RELATING TO HEALTH

House Bill No. 1504, H.D. 1, S.D. 1, proposes to establish a Hawaii Health Authority administratively attached to the Department of Budget and Finance. The Hawaii Health Authority would be responsible for developing a health plan to provide health care coverage for all individuals in Hawaii.

We are opposed to this bill.

We have concerns on the feasibility of establishing a universal health care insurance system. It is uncertain how the system will be financed and if it will be able to accommodate the additional costs of providing health care for those who are not currently insured. It is also unclear how the healthcare plans of the Employer-Union Health Benefits Trust Fund and the plans of private employers will be combined into a single entity.

Further, the bill makes the proposed Hawaii Health Authority responsible for overall health planning for the State and for determining future capacity needs of health providers, facilities, equipment, and support services providers. This responsibility duplicates the functions of the State Health Planning and Development Agency.

Testimony of
Phyllis Dendle
Director of Government Relations

Before:
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
The Honorable Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
The Honorable Shan S. Tsutsui, Vice Chair

April 2, 2009
9:30 AM
Conference Room 211

HB1504 HD1 SD1 RELATING TO HEALTH (Hawaii Health Authority)

Chair Kim, and committee members; thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony on this bill which creates the Hawaii Health Authority to develop a plan for universal health care in Hawaii.

Kaiser Permanente Hawaii supports the intent of this bill.

We support passing legislation that creates the means for everyone in the United States to have access to affordable health care using all of the resources we currently have, including both public and private programs.

This why we respectfully ask that the legislature consider the actions currently being taken on the national level to provide universal access to health care and delay beginning a state effort on this important issue. We believe any action taken by Hawaii would be premature and could be preempted by federal law. The time, effort, and money used to create this authority will be better spent on implementing the federal program being proposed by President Obama.

Thank you for your consideration.



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

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The Twenty-Fifth Legislature, State of Hawaii
Hawaii State Senate
Committee on Ways and Means

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association
April 2, 2009

H.B. 1504, H.D. 1, S.D. 1 – RELATING
TO HEALTH

The Hawaii Government Employees Association supports the purpose and intent of H.B. 1504, H.D. 1, S.D. 1, which is to establish the Hawaii Health Authority. The primary responsibility of the authority is to develop a comprehensive plan to provide universal health care in Hawaii.

The health care system in Hawaii and nationally is not working very well. It is estimated that approximately 10% of the state's population does not have health insurance. We have a system that is characterized by high costs, uneven quality and limited access. It is government's responsibility to guarantee quality affordable health care for everyone, and it must play a central role in regulating, financing and providing health coverage

Our national union, AFSCME, is a leader in the movement for meaningful health care reform to address problems with the current system, which is posing a real threat to the economic security of most workers. Affordability of benefits, quality of health care services and coverage for all is a basic human right that must be recognized and fulfilled.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 1504, H.D. 1, S.D. 1.

Respectfully submitted,

Nora A. Nomura
Deputy Executive Director

A JOINT LEGISLATIVE EFFORT

E-Mail: WAMtestimony@Capitol.hawaii.gov
Regarding: Ways & Means Committee
Hearing on: Thursday, April 2, 2009; Room 211

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Hawaii Family Forum is a non-profit, pro-family education organization committed to preserving and strengthening families in Hawaii. The Roman Catholic Church in Hawaii, under the leadership of Bishop Larry Silva, represents over 220,000 Catholics in Hawaii.

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Date: April 1, 2009

To:

From: Dennis Arakaki
Executive Director
Hawaii Family Forum / Hawaii Catholic Conference

Re: Strong Support for HB 1504, HD1, SD1 Relating to Health

Honorable Chair Mercado Kim, Vice-chair and members of the Ways & Means Committee, I am Dennis Arakaki, **representing both the Hawaii Family Forum and the Roman Catholic Church in the State of Hawaii.**

I am in strong support for HB 1504, creating the Hawaii Health Authority.

Hawaii has long been known as the "Health State". Hawaii led the way in being the first state to guarantee health insurance coverage for all employees working 20 hours or more a week in the 1970s through the passage of the Hawaii Prepaid Health Act. As one of the original authors and introducer of the Universal Health Bill in the House, I know that the concept of this landmark bill was due in no small part to the tireless efforts of the recently deceased community organizer and University of Hawaii Regent Ah Quon McElrath, one of the architects of the current bill. Ah Quon recognized that the economy has changed, and the Hawaii Prepaid Health Act is no longer enough. I suggest and request that you include language in the findings of this bill to honor the tireless effort and dedication of A.Q. McElrath.

While unemployment levels are below the rest of the country, Hawaii has the highest rate of involuntary part-time employment. The current health care system is a poorly woven patchwork quilt, with little to show from its high costs in population health indicators. The United States is one of the only developed countries where health indicators have *fallen* in recent years. The health care system in the U.S. drastically needs reform, but politicians in Washington D.C. are offering the same tired ideas in response to the crisis. As the case of Massachusetts has regrettably shown, attempting to achieve health care for all through complicated additions to an already broken system does not work. The great state of Hawaii needs to lead by example by providing health care to all its residents through a comprehensive state health plan.

The creation of the Hawaii Health Authority is an essential step toward creating a rational plan for comprehensive health care services that lowers cost while expanding access to health services to everyone. While there is great hope with President Obama that we will soon have universal health for all of America's citizens, we have the opportunity to stay ahead of the curve and prepare for that day. Let us not be forced into accepting a lower standard of health care by upholding our already superior health care system.

The Hawaii Health Care Authority should bring together the finest minds most significant backgrounds in healthcare to plan and prepare for a Universal Health Care system. During these economic challenging times, there is also an opportunity to put all the healthcare resources on the table in order to maximize those resources and eliminate duplicity and waste. It is time to envision a comprehensive system of care for all of Hawaii's citizens where no one is left out or left behind and precious resources are balanced between health, wellness and illness.

I urge you to pass HB 1504, HD1, SD1

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony.



Thursday, April 2, 2009, 9:30 am, CR 211

To: COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair

Senator Shan S. Tsutsui, Vice Chair

From: Hawaii Medical Association

Gary A. Okamoto, MD, President

Philip Hellreich, MD, Legislative Co-Chair

Linda Rasmussen, MD, Legislative Co-Chair

April Donahue, Executive Director

Richard C. Botti, Government Affairs

Lauren Zirbel, Government Affairs

RE: HB 1504 RELATING TO HEALTH

Creates the Hawaii Health Authority to develop a comprehensive plan to provide universal health care in Hawaii. (HB1504 HD1)

Chairs and Committee Members:

Hawaii Medical Association strongly believes that every member of our society needs and deserves a core group of medical and surgical benefits. Over and above these benefits, HMA generally favors free market solutions where the insured can select additional benefits at higher premiums should they so choose. We further believe that all Hawaii citizens deserve the same options as federal employees when facing health care coverage choices.

In light of the growing numbers of uninsured and underinsured in the state of Hawaii, HMA is open to discussing additional options for ensuring health care coverage for Hawaii's citizens. It is crucial that representation from physicians, hospitals, and other providers of care be involved in this discussion.

As such, if this measure is passed we believe it is necessary to add a requirement that representatives of the Hawaii Medical Association, the University of Hawaii School of Medicine, and vital specialty medical societies be included in the membership of the Hawaii Health Authority.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

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kim2 - Arline

From: Leslie Gise [leslieg@maui.net]
Sent: Tuesday, March 31, 2009 8:47 PM
To: WAM Testimony
Subject: Support of HB1504 Relating to Health, Creates the Hawaii Health Authority to develop a comprehensive plan to provide universal health care in Hawai'i

>>Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
>>Senator Shan S Tsutsui, Vice Chair
>>Committee on Ways and Means
>>

>>Thursday, April 2, 2009

>>
>>Support of HB1504 Relating to Health, Creates the Hawai'i Health
>>Authority to develop a comprehensive plan to provide universal health
>>care in Hawaii

>>I am a medical doctor practicing in Hawai'i for 14 years. I struggle
>>daily against a "system" which interferes with patients getting the
>>care they need and deserve. We want to provide quality, affordable
>>health care to all and the Hawaii Health Authority is an important
>>first step.

>>
>>Cost is one of the most pressing problems of our current health care
>>"system". Under the Hawai'i Health Authority, medical care would be
>>paid by combining current sources of government health spending into a
>>single fund with modest new taxes which would amount to less than what
>>people now pay for insurance premiums and out-of-pocket expenses.
>>Research shows that this can be done on a state basis. This is the
>>most fiscally conservative option for reform, slashing private
>>insurance overhead and bureaucracy.
>>Private insurers spend 31 cents of every health care dollar on
>>administration. Without them, \$400 billion would be saved annually and
>>redirected into clinical care.

Health care is a basic human right, yet 10% of Hawai'i people have no health insurance. We have seen the results of for-profit health care nationally and here in Hawai'i with nurses positions being cut and institutions going bankrupt. The private health insurance industry is a burden for employers who have to pay for their employees and a burden to the employees who have to work less than 20 hours and get no health insurance. As long as we have private insurers, there is no sustainable cost control.

>>A single fund like the Hawai'i Health Authority is the basis of the
>>popular Medicare program which has been working for over 40 years.
>>It is not government-run. It is not socialized medicine. People go to
>>the doctor or hospital of their choice. Care is delivered privately and
>>paid fee-for-service. Everyone eligible is covered automatically for
>>life regardless of their medical condition.
>>For-profit private insurance companies are not involved.

>>
>>This kind of reform is supported by most Americans, most doctors, the
>>Hawai'i Medical Association, over 450 labor organizations and dozens
>>of other national organizations. I urge the committee to pass
>>HB1504 and take an important step toward providing quality, affordable

>>health care for all with the only kind of reform which has sustainable
>>cost control. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

>>

>>Leslie Hartley Gise MD

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kim2 - Arline

From: jorywatland@att.net
Sent: Tuesday, March 31, 2009 9:56 PM
To: WAM Testimony
Subject: HB 1504

Decision Making, April 2,2009 9:30am Room 211

Chair Kim and members of the Committee:

I urge your passage of HB 1504. With passage of this bill creating the Hawaii Health Authority, Hawaii will be the first State in the U.S. to develop a model system of Health Care for All. The work begins after passage of this bill. When passed, the Legislature will be presented with a comprehensive, affordable, health focused, accountable plan to adopt in January 2011.

Passage of this bill will memorialize Ah Quon McElrath and honor her life long quest to improve the Health of All in Hawaii.

Jory Watland

Member, Health Care for All Hawaii

Testimony in Support of HB 1504
Thursday April 2 2009

TO: Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Shan S Tsutsui, Vice Chair
Committee on Ways and Means

Re: Support of HB 1504

Hawaii has long been acknowledged as a leader in Health Care in the United States. We achieved this position not by resting on our laurels, and not by burying our heads in the sand but rather by the vision, hard work and commitment of leaders like the late Ah Quon McElrath. We speak of a system of health care, but what we have now is no longer a system as much as it is a patchwork quilt of too many pieces which is looking rather torn and tattered. Health care costs too darn much! Insurance based on ones' employment means that precisely when you most need insurance, you are least likely to have it. Folks are tired of playing games with the insurers. Doctors are spending too much time figuring out what they can and can not provide to their patients and too little time with their patients! Many of our communities are suffering from poor access to care. Patients are having to decide every day whether or not to forgo expensive tests or medicines that they can't afford, and run the risk of getting sicker and sicker. We are falling further and further behind other nations in health while spending twice as much or more!

The Hawa'i Health Authority will consolidate Medicaid, Medicare, the State Health Insurance Programs, the State Health Trust Fund, and other Private, State and Federal Funds for Health. We can have a comprehensive state health plan and provide quality affordable health care to all. Lets show real leadership to the rest of the nation. Ah Quon's spirit is here with us today as we take this momentous step forward to ensure the well being of ALL of Hawaii's citizens! Now is not the time to wait for the Feds but to show the leadership that Hawaii has rightly been proud of for the past 50 years! We can show the nation how this can be done.

I urge the committees to pass HB 1504. Thank you in advance for your attention.

Sincerely,

David Derauf MD MPH
2239 N School Street
Honolulu, HI 96819

Gina Williams

From: Leslie Gise [leslieg@maui.net]
Sent: Friday, March 20, 2009 9:34 PM
To: Sen. Donna Mercado Kim
Subject: HB1504

Aloha Senator Kim,

Our health care system desperately needs comprehensive reform. HB1504 inspired by AQ McElrath is a significant first step to improving care for people in Hawai'i. As a practicing physician here in HI for 14 years, I see people every day who cannot get the care they need because of our current system. Please schedule HB 1504 for a hearing ASAP.

Thank you in advance for your attention.

Sincerely,

Leslie Gise MD

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Gina Williams

From: beverly [bartlett@hawaiiantel.net]
Sent: Sunday, March 22, 2009 11:01 AM
To: Sen. Donna Mercado Kim
Subject: HB1504

I believe that HB1504, currently in the Ways and Means committee, should be supported as it will help to improve medical care delivery, which is of vital importance to individuals and businesses in these very difficult economic times. I urge you to schedule the bill for hearing at the earliest opportunity.

Thank you. Beverly Bartlett, Haiku, Maui