

Testimony presented before the  
Committee on Ocean, Marine Resources, and Hawaiian Affairs  
on February 6, 2013  
by Winona K. Lee, MD

RE: HB 679

Aloha kakahiaka, Chair Hanohano, Vice Chair Cullen, and members of the committee. This testimony is submitted in support of HB 679 for appropriations to the Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence. My name is Winona Ka'alouahi Lee and I am the Director of the Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence.

The Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence is committed to improving the health of Native Hawaiians and other underserved populations by increasing the diversity of the health care workforce through education, research, and community partnerships.

As you know, Native Hawaiians continue to suffer high rates of diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and obesity while remaining severely under-represented in all health professions. Only 4% of licensed physicians in Hawai'i are of Native Hawaiian descent. Despite the small numbers of Native Hawaiian doctors in practice, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander health care providers are more likely to return to serve their home communities and provide services to those populations most in need.

By solidifying an educational pipeline for Native Hawaiian students, the Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence (NHCOE) creates paths for Native Hawaiian students to succeed in health careers. Through community and educational collaborations (i.e. Na Pua No'eau-Center for Gifted and Talented Native Hawaiian Children, and Ahahui O Na Kauka-Association of Native Hawaiian Physicians), NHCOE is able to extend its reach annually to over 2,500 students spanning K-12, undergraduate, and post-baccalaureate. For these students from underserved and rural communities, it is crucial that we seek our students out and give them the opportunity to maximize their potential.

NHCOE provides leadership in health disparities research specifically to Native Hawaiian and other Indigenous populations. Through our Summer Research Internships, we train high school and undergraduate students in research methodology and provide mentoring that assist them in pursuing careers in biomedical or clinical research. In a span of 2 ½ years, NHCOE provided 30 trainings to 20 faculty (13/20 Native Hawaiian) in cultural competency, leadership, research, and teaching, established a research training pipeline focused on Native Health Disparities for 6 undergraduate Native Hawaiian students, 28 JABSOM medical students, and 4 Native Hawaiian Research Fellows (3 MDs and one RN, PHD), published numerous peer review articles and co-sponsored 3 national conferences including the National Association of Medical Minority Educators.

Through our NHCOE's Native Hawaiian Student Pathway to Medicine program, our faculty works one on one with promising Native Hawaiian students to become competitive applicants to health professions schools, such as JABSOM. Due to

NHCOE's pipeline efforts, nearly 25% of JABSOM's `Imi Ho`ōla post-baccalaureate program applicants for the 2013 entering class are Native Hawaiian.

NHCOE believes in a multidisciplinary team approach to health care services and its Native Hawaiian Interdisciplinary program takes Native Hawaiian SW students together with NH pre-medical students to create a comprehensive approach to teaching cultural competency.

As a leader in the training of future health care providers, NHCOE leads all cultural competency initiatives in the John A. Burns School of Medicine and has provided cultural competency training to 75% of all JABSOM students (100% of all MS 1 and 2) and has created a formalized student retention and mentoring network for all NH and Indigenous medical students.

HB 679 would allow the Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence the opportunity to continue to strong pipeline work necessary to grow our own Native Hawaiian health professionals and impact the health of all communities here in Hawai'i and the Pacific.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.



## **Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs**

P. O. Box 1135  
Honolulu, Hawai`i 96807

### **HOUSE COMMITTEE ON OCEAN, MARINE RESOURCES AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS**

### **HOUSE BILL 679 MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE NATIVE HAWAIIAN CENTER OF EXCELLENCE**

Wednesday, February 6, 2013; 9:00 am; Room 325

Aloha Madam Chair Hanohano, vice chair Cullen and members of the House Committee on Ocean, Marine Resources and Hawaiian Affairs. The Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs (AHCC) supports HB 679 as part of a long-standing practice of supporting the education of Hawaiians and Native Hawaiians.

The appropriation in House bill 679 is particularly important as it would support Native Hawaiians who wish to take up careers relating to medicine and health professions at a time when the health statistics of the Native Hawaiian population are discouraging.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.  
Contact: [JalnaKeala@hawaiiintel.net](mailto:JalnaKeala@hawaiiintel.net)

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Unity, Equality, Aloha for All

To: OMH, FIN  
From: Kenneth R. Conklin, Ph.D.  
Re: HB1329  
Date: February 4, 2013

#### TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION

1. All Hawaii's people should be treated equally regardless of race. Why should there be a "Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence" when there is not also a "Filipino Center of Excellence" and similar centers of excellence for Caucasians, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and other ethnic groups? Indeed, why must we think in ethnic or racial terms at all? The University of Hawaii and the community colleges should be centers of excellence for everyone.
2. Despite propaganda to the contrary, a comparison of enrollment data by race shows that ethnic Hawaiians are the most OVERrepresented ethnic group on each and every campus. Some of those levels of overrepresentation are HUGE. See Census 2010 racial population data and UH racial enrollment data, and analysis, at <http://tinyurl.com/b5pncvo>
3. If ethnic Hawaiians are to be singled out for special attention, to the exclusion of people who lack Hawaiian native ancestry, then there is a state agency that was created for the purpose of supporting and financing such racially exclusionary operations -- the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. Let OHA pay for any ethnic-exclusive "Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence."
4. Taking tax dollars out of the general fund to pay for a "Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence" will take money away from Hawaii's social welfare programs that provide help to truly needy people. Or do you believe that you can keep raising taxes?

RE: In Support of HB679 – Making an Appropriation for the Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence

Aloha e,

I believe in purpose – that each person has a reason for being on earth. We are all puzzle pieces that fit into a grand masterpiece, and each piece is shaped differently. Not everyone is destined to be the President, yet the mailman who faithfully delivers mail with a smile is no less validated in his position. We all have a role in life, and fulfillment is finding that purpose and living it.

For generations my family has called windward O‘ahu home. Kahiapo means first born, and I also happen to be the eldest of five. In my close-knit community, nobody I knew went to college. People worked hard and lived simply, and it seemed that I would do much of the same. Many traditional pre-med students preparing to be doctors have aspirations planted early in life and are nurtured into that position with role models, family members, and mentors to guide them along the way. There are people within their social and cultural “class” with whom they can relate that are doctors, so naturally they can visualize themselves into that role. While their road is still a difficult one, the pathway is completely reasonable – indeed some are even “pushed” along in that direction.

For an entirely different subset of the local population (the one that I grew up in), college is a vague and unrealistic dream, and absolutely no thought is wasted on things like medical school. Becoming a doctor is for others – not for one of us. You might as well dream about winning the lottery; your chances for that are about the same. Perhaps this feeling of doctors being “others” is precisely why many of my family and local community are reluctant to go visit one, even when in dire need. Having the chance to volunteer overseas in a medical clinic planted the seed of an idea within me. Perhaps I, too, might have a future in medicine. However, I felt like I was standing on the shores of England hearing about a New World across the sea with absolutely no idea what it actually looked like or how I would ever get there.

Perchance I came across information about the Native Hawaiian Student Pathways to Medicine, and the trajectory of my life was forever changed. While I had little idea what kind of steps to take in order to attend medical school, the NHSPM program offered by Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence was invaluable in guiding me on the path. This course was my first introduction to medical school, and everything about it resonated with me. The many staff and faculty I met were not only helpful and full of aloha, they were also eager to tell me their stories and hear mine. For the first time in my life I actually felt like it was possible for someone like me from MY little corner of O‘ahu to be a doctor, and that was a huge thing not only for myself but for my entire family as well. NHSPM provided the tools and structure for me to logically map out a path to medical school, and they also offered (and continue to provide long after) invaluable support and advice throughout the entire process. Just as importantly, they brought in local doctors as peer advisors that we native Hawaiian students could look to for inspiration. With the guidance of NHSPM, I have navigated through the years of preparation and application for medical school, and I absolutely would not be here if not for that program.

I currently work full time in the education field. My parents still live on Hawaiian Homestead land in Waimānalo right across from an elementary school where I work at, so this community has deep personal significance to me. I also work at Olomana School with students who are no longer permitted to attend regular public schools. These students and this community

have their many difficulties, but this is where I am from. I am one of the ‘ohana. I also have just built my first home here on O‘ahu on Hawaiian Homestead land this past fall, so my roots will continue to grow deep. People here know my parents, my story, and my dream to become a physician. NHSPM helped nurture that dream within me, and an entire community is watching. Maybe if “one of their own” can become a doctor, their son or daughter can have a chance, too.

Publicly declaring intentions to be a doctor is a unique experience. Harboring intentions in your head and releasing them to the winds of public opinion are two different matters entirely. NHSPM helped hone my focus and chip away doubts or hesitations that lingered. Something about openly declaring a goal shifts it from a thought to intent. I am now accountable to this dream. I always wondered what my piece of the puzzle looked like; and now thanks to NHSPM, it is materializing into something I would have never imagined a decade ago. Within me resides both the desire and ability to pursue medicine and thereby share my personal flavor of aloha with those around me. That is the shape of my puzzle piece – my purpose.

Mālama pono,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dalen Keolalaula Kahiapo".

Dalen Keolalaula Kahiapo

February 5, 2013  
Senate Committee on Health  
**RE: HB 679**

Committee on Ocean, Marine Resources, & Hawaiian Affairs,

I am a proud graduate of Konawaena Schools where I grew up picking coffee and macadamia nuts. Here, my father devoted 50 years of his life as a primary care and county physician in Kealahou-Kona. He is a humble man that never turned a patient away with financial hardships and never shied away from a challenging case. He tells amazing stories from doing pregnancy tests with rabbits in the old days and in recent years doing tracheotomies using ball point pens in emergencies.

Furthermore, he deeply cared for the Native Hawaiian community. He served patients from Milolihi to Napo'opo'o to Waimea often making house calls and working with their methods of la'au lapa'au. I have learned over the years that health care is not about financial gains, it is about caring deeply for the community.

In honor of my father's work serving his community, I strongly support **HB 679: Making an Appropriation for the Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence (NHCOE)** which appropriates funds to address the severe health disparities of Hawaiian communities through *growing our own healers*.

As you may already know, Native Hawaiians suffer the highest mortality rates due to diabetes are three times higher for Native Hawaiians; infant mortality rates are amongst the highest; and Native Hawaiians are diagnosed with cancer at a younger age and experience lower survival rates compared to other racial groups. In addition to the health disparities faced by our Native people, Native Hawaiian youth must overcome disparities in educational opportunities that may be compounded with socioeconomic challenges that make it very difficult for youth to succeed in the current educational system. Native Hawaiians remain severely under-represented in the health professions (i.e. only 4% of licensed physicians in Hawaii are of Native Hawaiian descent).

The statewide shortage of physicians and healthcare professionals especially in rural communities greatly concerns me. **The Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence (NHCOE)** is working hard to ensure healthcare for all, especially empowering initiatives to grow our own healers and return to their communities to serve.

Your support of **HB 679** would allow them to continue their efforts. Mahalo for your time.

Sincerely,

Sachi Kaulukukui  
skkaulukukui@yahoo.com

## omhtestimony

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, February 04, 2013 11:26 PM  
**To:** omhtestimony  
**Cc:** kmaquino@hawaii.edu  
**Subject:** \*Submitted testimony for HB679 on Feb 6, 2013 09:00AM\*

**Categories:** OMH 02-06-13 9am

### **HB679**

Submitted on: 2/4/2013

Testimony for OMH on Feb 6, 2013 09:00AM in Conference Room 325

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Kamakana Aquino	Individual	Support	No

### Comments:

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