



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

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by

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HB 1440 HD1 – RELATING TO EDUCATION

Chairs Kidani and Green, Vice Chairs Harimoto and Wakai, and members of the Senate Education and Health Committees, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of HB 1440 HD1.

Hawai'i Keiki: Healthy & Ready to Learn (Hawai'i Keiki Program), a program of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa School of Nursing (UH Mānoa Nursing), is supporting the Department of Education (DOE) to achieve student, school, and system success by building school nursing services. This effort is a safety net partnership to increase access to healthcare for a vulnerable population – pre-kindergarten to high school keiki – by providing school health nursing and when required, primary care services in the public schools. The goal is building a fiscally sustainable healthcare delivery model using public funding, cost recovery, and community engagement to moderate the impact of social determinants of health of children attending public schools. Further, we know that academic success leads to economic achievement - the major determinant of a healthy population.

The purpose of this bill is to expand the program from five to all 15 DOE complex areas and to build the infrastructure needed to develop a sustainable program. Our goal is to be self-sustaining in two years, but we need the support from the Hawai'i State Legislature to launch this program to meet our goals.

Through the partnership of two sister public agencies - the DOE and UH Mānoa Nursing, we have a tremendous opportunity to bring health care to the setting where children spend 90% of their day - the public schools can become the gateway to health for children, their families and the school teachers and staff.

The Hawai'i Keiki Program uses school nurses and advanced practice nurse practitioners (APRNs) to provide evidence based school health services to ensure

screening for common conditions, up to date immunizations, and collaboration with community care providers to manage chronic conditions that impact readiness to learn. Further, the program partners with both state agencies and the health care delivery sector to forge innovative partnerships to support building a robust system to improve health and achievement of students, schools, and communities.

Since our launch in July 2014 - just eight months ago - Hawai'i Keiki nurses in the five complex areas have created school and student health policies, integrated school wellness planning, participated in Hawai'i Smiles, developed health content for newsletters and blogs, and enhanced regular communication with Public Health Nursing (PHN) and the Department of Health (DOH). We need a nurse in each of the complex areas to expand and grow these services to every area of our State.

Evidence from around the country shows that when a school nurse is present, student attendance improves, as does academic performance. Children spend more time in school (seat time). Additionally, principals and teachers are not called upon to address health concerns and can focus on helping children learn.

The Hawai'i Keiki Program is working at the school level with parents, teachers, and principals to lead the school wellness plan effort, ensure continuity of care for children with chronic conditions, and provide emergency care on site. As a resource and point of contact for health and wellness in the school, the nurse supports the school community to help children learn. The nurse is the "school health coordinator" for the implementation of an organized approach to school health and wellness. We help facilitate health programming in the district and school and between the school and community.

UH Mānoa Nursing is well positioned to build public sector cross agency collaboration to weave the discrete school health efforts into a strong quilt by engaging with the DOH, Department of Human Services, and DOE schools to:

- Eliminate gaps and reduce redundancies across the many initiatives and funding streams;
- Build partnerships and teamwork among school health and education professionals in the school;
- Build collaboration and enhance communication among public health (DOH), school health (DOE), higher education (University of Hawai'i) and health professionals in the community; and
- Focus efforts on helping students engage in protective, health-enhancing behaviors and avoid risk behaviors.

The legislature is to be applauded for your willingness to invest in the partnership of the DOE and UH Mānoa Nursing to improve student success through improved health screening, monitoring, and management of chronic conditions that impact learning.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB 1440 HD1.