



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

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Senate Ways and Means Committee
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by
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HB 1440 HD1 – RELATING TO EDUCATION

Chair Tokuda, Vice Chair Kouchi, and members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, 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), a program of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa School of Nursing (UH Mānoa Nursing), is partnering with 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 primary care services, when needed, in the public schools. The goal is to build a fiscally sustainable school health program using public funding, cost recovery, and community engagement. Further, we know that academic success leads to economic achievement - the major determinant of a healthy population.

Through the partnership of two sister public agencies - the DOE and UH Mānoa Nursing - we will 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 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 partnered with superintendents, principals, and teachers to create school 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 DOH.

This bill will expand Hawai'i Keiki from five to all 15 DOE Complex Areas and build the infrastructure needed to develop a sustainable school health program. With initial support from the Hawai'i State Legislature, our goal is to be self-sustaining in two years. We will place a school nurse at each of the complex areas, implement an electronic school health office record in each Complex Area, and train the Hawai'i Keiki Program nurses to obtain national certification

in school nursing. In addition, we will organize undergraduate and graduate student clinical learning opportunities to align with the strategic goals of the DOE and engage our colleagues in the College of Health Sciences and Social Welfare to participate in the program.

We request \$3.5 million per year in the FY 2017-2018 biennium budget. Over this time, Hawai'i Keiki will establish cost recovery with third-party payers, initiate public reimbursement options for school health and primary care services, and initiate student health plan tracking of DOE children. A recent federal policy reversal, long-sought by states and health care advocates, could enable schools to take a lead role in managing chronic childhood diseases and result in the hiring of many more school nurses. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) notified state Medicaid directors in December 2014 that for the first time since 1997, they will allow public schools to receive Medicaid money for health services they provide to eligible students. Our state Medicaid plan allows for billing for some school based services. We believe that, with the support of the Department of Human Services, we can expand billing for services provided in the schools.

In 2014, the state of Massachusetts reported a \$2.20 cost benefit for every \$1 spent on school nursing services¹. In an accompanying editorial, Dr. Howard Tars noted that "By virtue of their training in the medical and educational sectors, school nurses are the best bridges between these sectors. With their feet in both worlds, school nurses understand the occupational culture and jargon of educators as well as the culture and language of the health sector."²

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 Department of Health, 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.

¹ Li YanWang, MBA, MA; Mary Vernon-Smiley, MD, MPH; Mary Ann Gapinski, MSN, RN, NCSN; Marie Desisto, RN, MSN; Erin Maughan, PhD, MS, RN, APHN-BC; Anne Sheetz, MPH, RN, NEA-BC. (2014) *JAMA Pediatr.* doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2013.5441. Published online, May 19, 2014.

² Taras H. School nurses_beyond medications and procedures. 2014) *JAMA Pediatr.* doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2013.5441 Published online, May 19, 2014.