



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
Friday, February 23, 2024 at 1:00 p.m.

by

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and

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HB 2759 HD1 – RELATING TO SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH SERVICES

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony **in strong support** of this measure, which aims to appropriate funds to the Department of Education to fund school health technicians. This will sustain the Hawai'i Keiki: Healthy and Ready to Learn (Hawai'i Keiki) program as it currently functions. The Hawai'i Keiki program employs 75 Health Technicians (HT); this appropriation request is to continue the services to the state by ensuring the continuation of funding by state funds once the federal funding expires.

During the initial years of the COVID pandemic, Hawai'i Keiki received federal funds to support the health and well-being of enrolled students at the Department of Education to the Hawai'i Keiki Program with a particular focus on preventing the transmission of and responding to the impact of COVID. The impact of the HT's role within the Hawai'i Keiki school nursing program has grown considerably. From school year (SY) 2019-2020 to school year 2022-2023 (see slide graphic at end of testimony):

- Hawai'i Keiki program visits increased from 8,188 to 126,994 (1,451%), due to services provided by HTs.
- Student and staff education encounters increased from 3,911 to 17,339 (343%).
- Health screenings increased from 3,962 to 11,027 (178%).

Today, Hawai'i Keiki serves all 258 public schools statewide with approximately 160 registered nurses (RNs), advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioners, health technicians (i.e., community health workers, nurse aides, medical assistants), dental hygienists, and dentists who extend the clinical reach of the Hawai'i Keiki program. The Hawai'i Keiki program's HTs impact in SY 2022-2023 is exemplary providing evidence of the continued need for this role and workforce. Additionally, without these staff, the need for these services would remain. School staff, teachers, and principals are able to dedicate their time to their primary mission of education with the confidence and knowledge that the physical health and

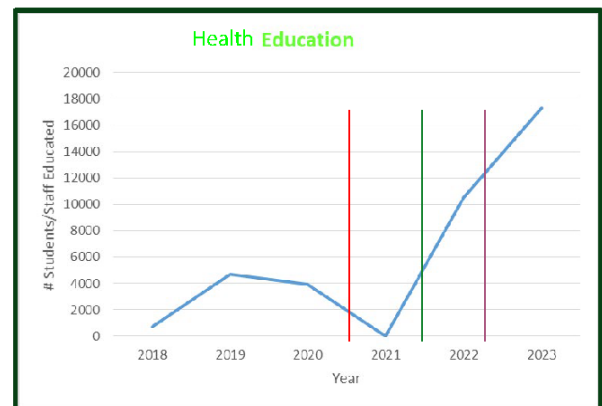
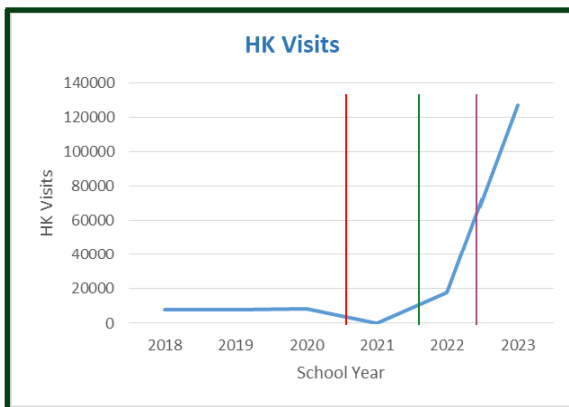
well-being of students will be supported by the excellent Hawai'i Keiki HTs, in addition to APRNs and RNs.

Thirty-six (36) of the 75 HTs statewide provide services at schools on the islands of Maui (10 HTs), Moloka'i (3 HTs), Kaua'i (6 HTs), and Hawai'i (17 HTs). A discontinuation of services, especially in these areas, would be felt harder because access to alternative resources are more limited than for those on O'ahu. The HTs provide a valuable safety net to extend the reach of the HK Program, particularly in our most underserved communities.

It is with great pleasure that the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Nancy Atmospera-Walch School of Nursing (NAWSON) partners with the Department of Education in the delivery of school nursing care so that teachers, staff, and principals may focus on delivering exemplary education. NAWSON respectfully requests favorable consideration of this measure.

Comparison of Program Impact SY19-20 Versus SY22-23

- 1451% increase in **HK Visits**
- 343% increase in students/staff **Health Education**
- 178% increase in keiki screened



Hawai'i Keiki: Healthy & Ready to Learn

COVID RNs
Complex RNs
SHSS/HTs

Note: The dip in 2021 is due to the change in school health practice related to COVID-19 protocols. All visits during this time were telehealth which is not included in the data for these graphs.