



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Health
and

Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection
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SB 131 – RELATING TO PSYCHOLOGISTS

Chairs Keohokalole and Baker, Vice Chair Chang, and members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on SB 131. The University of Hawai'i at Hilo (UH Hilo) offers **comments** on SB 131 that proposes a pilot program allowing for prescriptive authority for clinical psychologists working in areas populated by < 100,000 residents.

UH Hilo is aware of the challenges that patients with behavioral and mental health face given the shortage of specialist providers and the access to care, especially in rural areas. We appreciate the didactic and experiential requirements outlined in the bill in order to support and educate a specialty trained psychologist, however, we are not financed or equipped to address the physical or administrative requirements during a time of diminishing resources.

UH Hilo respectfully suggests that in order to address, in a more timely manner, these extremely complex patient care issues require medical, emotional/psychological and pharmacological expertise, a best practice approach would be through a team of providers that include psychiatry, psychologists and pharmacist practitioners who specialize in behavioral health and psychiatry.

Psychiatry and mental health providers have utilized telehealth even prior to the pandemic and telehealth allows for the use of specialty trained psychiatric pharmacists as a viable option to work collaboratively with the mental health team to improve access to care.

The College of Psychiatric and Neurological Pharmacists (CPNP) (info@cpnp.org) provides links to the role of psychiatric pharmacists who play a role in:

1. Preventing Veteran Suicide
2. Assisting with Medication-Assisted Therapy (MAT) for substance abuse
3. Improving access to care in the face of Psychiatric Shortage

Through the pharmacy academy, the pharmacy profession has 1300 pharmacists who are Board-certified in psychiatry (BCPP, <https://www.bpsweb.org/media/psychiatric-pharmacy-fact-sheet/>) These psychiatric specialty pharmacists specifically care for patients not only in prescribed medications for psychiatric illness but also manage the complex list of other medications prescribed for medical diseases and make for drug-drug and drug-disease interactions among other medical issues.

An example of effective care teams has been long demonstrated at the Veterans Administration Clinics. Care teams are structured with psychiatrists, psychologists, nursing, social work and pharmacists. Pharmacists do not diagnose but are able to initiate and manage pharmacotherapy as long as it is within their scope of practice. Pharmacists are credentialed under the facility. Clinical Pharmacists are allowed to prescribe under a collaborative practice agreement as part of their scope of practice.

We respectfully recommend that this bill be deferred and urge additional exploration of possible solutions as mentioned above.