



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Human Services  
March 16, 2021 at 3:00 p.m.

By  
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SCR 70/SR 52 – REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO CONVENE A TASK FORCE TO PLAN THE CERTIFICATION AND TRAINING PROCESS FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS TO HELP ADDRESS THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF POOR HEALTH THAT DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECT LOW-INCOME, MINORITY POPULATIONS

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Ihara, and members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i (UH) supports the intent of Senate Concurrent Resolution 70/ Senate Resolution 52 (SCR 70/SR 52), which requests the establishment of a community health worker certification task force to plan the certification and training process for community health workers.

Community health workers assist individuals and communities to adopt healthy behaviors via outreach to promote, maintain and improve individual and community health. Labor market information about community health workers, including employment projections and average wages may be found on the UH Community Colleges' Career Explorer site: <http://go.hawaii.edu/tdJ>.

During this pandemic, community health workers have served as community navigators, working with clinical healthcare professional contact tracers to reach high risk populations affected by COVID-19, such as Pacific Islanders and homeless individuals. During pandemic, as part of its contract for contact tracing funded by federal Coronavirus Relief Funds, the State of Hawai'i Department of Health contracted UH to train 100 community health workers.

UH has two Community Health Worker training programs: one at Kapi'olani Community College and one at Maui College. Both programs award Certificates of Competence to students who successfully complete the program of 4 courses plus a practicum of field experience. Students who complete the program may continue in their education via Maui College's Associate in Science for Human Services or UH West O'ahu Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration with a concentration in Community Health.

The Community health worker occupation is a broad title that also encompasses outreach workers, patient navigators, community health educators, and case managers. A recent survey of employers by the Hawai'i Public Health Institute (February 2021) indicated that most responding employers required a high school diploma or GED as a minimum

qualification though at least one responding employer required an Associate's degree. Wages can also range widely with 25% of employers indicating compensation at \$12-15 per hour to 17% compensating at more than \$20 per hour.

If a task force is convened, UH recommends that the task force include leaders from UHCCs' Community Health Worker training programs and a range of employers of community health workers.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on SCR 70/SR 52.