



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education
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By

T. Samuel Shomaker, MD, Dean, and
Lee Buenconsejo-Lum, MD, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
John A. Burns School of Medicine

And

Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 101 – RELATING TO MEDICAL SCHOOL TUITION

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide COMMENTS on SB 101, which would require graduates of the University of Hawai'i John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) who paid in-state tuition to serve as a physician in the State for at least two years following their medical residency or fellowship. We support the intent of this measure and appreciate the legislature's efforts to seek solutions to address the healthcare professional shortage in Hawai'i.

The requirement to commit to working in Hawai'i for two years after completing medical school and residency may be daunting for most applicants. This could discourage individuals from attending JABSOM, negatively affecting the number of applicants, especially residents. Typically, medical education takes four years to complete. After earning their M.D. degree, students must undergo a graduate medical education (GME) residency program, which involves three to five years of training in their chosen specialty (e.g., internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics-gynecology, psychiatry, surgery, family medicine). Furthermore, students or residents wishing to further sub-specialize need additional fellowship training, which lasts from one to four years, before they can become board-certified in that sub-specialty (e.g., cardiology, pulmonology, addiction psychiatry, geriatrics, oncology, cardiothoracic surgery, etc.). According to this proposed legislation, all medical school entrants paying in-state tuition must agree to the two-year work commitment, which could start eight or more years later. Many applicants may hesitate to make this commitment at the start of their training as they are uncertain about their specialty and the infrastructure available in the area where they would practice so many years later. Even those who state a commitment to a primary care specialty (e.g., Family Medicine, Pediatrics, Primary Care Internal Medicine) and who intend to ultimately practice in Hawai'i may still be reluctant to commit seven years into the future, especially if life circumstances lead to a change in specialty choice or make it difficult to live and work in Hawai'i immediately after completing their training.

Additionally, if applicants choose not to attend JABSOM, we will see a corresponding drop in tuition revenue. A portion of the medical school tuition funds returned to JABSOM from UH Mānoa is allocated to scholarships. Reducing this funding would jeopardize the needs-based scholarships that JABSOM provides to many medical students. Any decline in tuition revenue will threaten our accreditation and negatively impact our ability to provide the excellent medical education we currently have, including our learners who complete a portion of their training on one of our neighbor islands.

A key method to recruit accepted applicants to JABSOM and enhance medical school education in Hawai'i is through scholarships. To this end, JABSOM has developed a tuition support program that effectively acts as a scholarship and can be awarded for part or all of a medical student's tuition at JABSOM. While many scholarships are available for Hawai'i residents, there are also options for out-of-state students, some of whom choose to stay or eventually return to Hawai'i to practice. Currently, JABSOM relies on private donations to sustain this tuition support program. Approximately one-fourth of the first-year class receives four-year scholarships covering tuition and fees, many of which now include a year-for-year service commitment after completing their specialty training. In AY2022-23, 94.5% of enrolled medical students received some form of financial assistance (scholarships, loans, work-study). State support for the scholarship program at JABSOM, particularly for students from or with family ties to a neighbor island or rural regions of O'ahu, would significantly aid our collective and multifaceted efforts to retain talent in Hawai'i.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.