



DATE: 13 Mar 2022

To: Senator Jarret Keohokalole, Chair
Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health

RE: **Testimony in Strong Support of HB 1575 HD2, RELATING TO PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS**

Hrg: 14 Mar 2022, 1:00 PM conference room 225 & Videoconference

Dear Chair Keohokalole, Vice Chair Baker and Committee Members,

The Hawai'i Public Health Association (HPHA) is a group of over 450 community members, public health professionals, and organizations statewide dedicated to improving public health. Our mission is to promote public health in Hawai'i through leadership, collaboration, education and advocacy. Additionally, HPHA aims to call attention to issues around social justice and equity in areas that extend beyond the traditional context of health (e.g., education, digital equity, cultural sensitivity), which can have profound impacts on health equity and well-being. Therefore, as stewards of public health, HPHA is also advocating for equity in all policies.

We are providing this testimony in **strong support of HB 1575 HD2**, which seeks to improve patients' access to care by reasonably expanding the scope of practice for physician assistants (PAs). In 2021, the annual report on the physician workforce in Hawai'i estimated a shortage of over 700 full time physicians. Physician shortages are a barrier to access timely medical care, especially for remote rural communities, and can lead to significant health disparities and poor community health outcomes. PAs are an essential part of the solution to expand access to healthcare and reduce health disparities.

The people of Hawai'i deserve access to safe, timely, and nearby medical care. Hawai'i PAs remain committed to this kind of quality healthcare delivery in our community. The PA profession has had significant growth both nationally and in the state of Hawai'i over the last decade. PAs have demonstrated the ability to deliver high quality medical care along with physicians and advanced practice nurses, fill gaps in care, and reduce health disparities by expanding access to quality health care. PAs are highly educated and trained in the medical curriculum and model, and are nationally certified to provide a wide range of clinical services. This bills help to reduce barriers to PA practice and thus, improve community access to quality medical care.

We support HB 1575 HD2 and respectfully ask that you pass this measure. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important public health issue as it relates to access to health care.

Sincerely,

J. Leocadia Conlon, PhD, MPH, PA-C
Legislative Committee Chair
Hawai'i Public Health Association