



February 24, 2020

To: The House Committee Members on Ways and Means
The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
The Honorable Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

Re: Strong Support of SB2617, Relating to Emergency Services

Hrg: February 25, 2020 at 12:40 PM at Capitol Room 211

The Hawai'i Public Health Association (HPHA) is a group of over 600 community members, public health professionals and organizations statewide dedicated to improving public health. HPHA also serves as a voice for public health professionals and as a repository for information about public health in the Pacific.

HPHA strongly **supports** SB2617, which would appropriate \$700,000 to the Hawai'i Health Systems Corporation to expand the Ka'u Rural Health Clinic to improve access to urgent care and outpatient behavioral health services.

Behavioral health disorders (such as mental and emotional illnesses and substance abuse) account for almost one third of the overall disease burden across the country.[1] This outpaces any other disease or condition. Approximately half of the United States population will experience a behavioral health disorder in their lifetime. Additionally, significant symptoms of behavioral health disorders occur before a diagnosis can be made by 2 years and there is an average 10-year delay in receiving treatment.[2] The need for accessible behavioral health treatment is both urgent and important.

The resident population of Ka'u is approximately 52,000 people. In her February 10th testimony, Ka'u Hospital Administrator Marilyn Harris stated that the existing facility includes only four-bed emergency department, twenty-one inpatient beds for acute/rehab and long-term care, and the family practice rural health clinic. Over 4,000 patient visits are made to the family practice rural health clinic annually, illustrating the need for and use of this clinic. Increasing the clinic's ability to provide urgent and behavioral health care will improve the health and well-being of Ka'u residents. HPHA urges successful passage of this measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on important health issues affecting people in Hawai'i.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Claire Townsend Ing', is written over a horizontal line.

Claire Townsend Ing, DrPH
Legislative Committee Chair
Hawaii Public Health Association



Works Cited:

1. Kessler RC, Aguilar-Gaxiola S, Alonso J, et al. The global burden of mental disorders: an update from the WHO World Mental Health (WMH) Surveys. *Epidemiol Psychiatry*. 2009;18:23–33.
2. National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. *Depression in Parents, Parenting, and Children: Opportunities to Improve Identification, Treatment, and Prevention*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press; 2009.