



SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH
Senator David Ige, Chair

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair

Conference Room 016
March 19, 2009 at 1:45 p.m.

Testimony in support of HB 1373 HD 1

The Healthcare Association of Hawaii advocates for its member organizations that span the entire spectrum of health care, including acute care hospitals, two-thirds of the long term care beds in Hawaii, as well as home care and hospice providers. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 1373 HD 1, which appropriates funds for non-profit, community-based health care providers to care for uninsured persons.

Hawaii's community health centers constitute a vital component of Hawaii's health care system. These health centers serve 100,000 of the most needy people in the state, many of whom do not have health care insurance and would otherwise not have access to health care.

The uninsured population in Hawaii has increased in recent years, and is expected to further increase during this economic crisis. Ten years ago the percentage of uninsured in Hawaii was in the low single digits, and Hawaii was proud of having the lowest proportion of uninsured in the nation. At that time, Hawaii was justifiably known as the "Health State." Since then there has been a troublesome increase in the numbers of uninsured people. Today the uninsured population stands at about 10%, and a number of other states now have smaller populations of uninsured people than Hawaii.

Hawaii's community health centers have proven to be effective in providing comprehensive primary care services to residents of poor and disadvantaged communities. In doing so, these health centers help to keep other components of the health care system viable by, for example, reducing the numbers of patients who go to emergency departments in hospitals and reducing the impact of uncompensated care on other providers. Hawaii needs our community health centers to keep its health care system financially viable.

For the foregoing reasons, the Healthcare Association of Hawaii strongly supports HB 1373 HD 1.