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January 28, 2020

Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair
Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair
Committee on Health

Representative Takashi Ohno, Chair
Representative Dale T. Kobayashi, Vice Chair
Committee on Interstate Commerce

Dear Chairs Mizuno and Ohno, Vice Chairs Kobayashi, and Committee Members:

RE: HB 39, Relating to Health (Assistant Physicians)

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on a bill which deals with a crucial issue facing our State.


“Making Hawai‘i a nice place to live” is simple to say, and almost too obvious a goal to highlight, but nevertheless that phrase sums up the most important task facing our elected leaders. For this reason alone, I want to thank and praise any effort to deal with one of the most critical issues that we must confront, and that is the crisis in our healthcare system caused by our physician shortage.

We are justly proud of the Hawai‘i Prepaid Healthcare Act, but how valuable is insurance if you cannot find a provider? How can we expect our people, especially our aging population, to live comfortably, if they believe that quality healthcare is only available if they have the time and ability to travel to the mainland? How can we attract more providers when they realize that they will be expected to work extraordinary hours because there is not a reasonable number of other providers to share the burden?

And the ramifications are important, too. To what extent do we limit our primary economic driver, tourism, when visitors are warned “Don’t get sick in Hawai‘i”?

I do not pretend to know how to entirely solve our physician shortage problem, but I look at HB 39 and think it could be a positive step in increasing the number of competent healthcare professionals in Hawai‘i, perhaps encouraging existing providers to stay in practice longer, and enticing new providers to join us. If the experts in the field agree, and the statistics from other states are supportive, I hope you will give this pilot project a chance.

Respectfully Submitted,


For
Harry Kim
MAYOR