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March 18, 2019

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair
Committee on Higher Education

Dear Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Committee Members:

RE: SCR 82/SR 59 Teaching Hospital in West Hawai'i

I strongly support SCR 82/SR 59.

The concept of establishing a teaching hospital in West Hawai'i is a masterstroke. It will serve as a focus for recruiting, training and retaining the healthcare workers – physicians, nurses and others – that are so sorely needed on Hawai'i Island. It will be core to the healthcare infrastructure enhancements needed to care for our growing population, predicted by DBEDT to reach 300,000 by 2040.

A West Hawai'i teaching hospital will attract physicians, nurses, physiotherapists, pharmacists, phlebotomists, x-ray technicians, all the ancillary staff needed to run a hospital. It will become the anchor of a robust, coordinated healthcare system, key to sustaining and retaining the healthcare workers currently lacking on the Big Island.

It will enhance and diversify our economy, presently so dependent on tourism. It may have a positive impact on tourism itself, assuring older or medically fragile tourists that West Hawai'i is a safe place to be, and perhaps even bringing "medical tourists" seeking treatment.

Most of all, it will mean that clinical services and medical services presently absent on-island will be available to our residents, allowing local families to receive care and support at home, often a big part of any recovery.

Teaching hospitals are known to raise the standard of care in the communities they serve, providing opportunity and employment, while better addressing everyday healthcare needs of residents and visitors alike.

This Legislature approved a feasibility study once, but the funds lapsed. I sincerely hope that your encouragement of JABSOM to look into the feasibility of a teaching hospital in West Hawai'i can move this project forward.

Respectfully Submitted,

Harry Kim
MAYOR