



Hawai'i Primary Care Association

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Senate Committee on Human Services

The Hon. Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair

The Hon. Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Transportation, International and Intergovernmental Affairs

The Hon. J. Kalani English, Chair

The Hon. Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2934

Relating to Medicaid

Submitted by Beth Giesting, Chief Executive Officer

February 9, 2010 1:30 p.m. Agenda, Room 016

The Hawai'i Primary Care Association strongly supports this measure which would ensure continuing Medicaid eligibility for migrants under the Compacts of Free Association (COFA). There are compelling humanitarian, legal, and economic reasons to continue to ensure that COFA migrant adults get all the health care they need.

The Department of Human Services is proposing to terminate access to Medicaid for this group, substituting a limited benefit program with limited enrollment. It is clear that both COFA migrants who are beneficiaries of such a program and the providers of care to them will be negatively affected. For the migrants, many of whom come here for health care because it is not available to them otherwise, the proposed limited benefits will cover but a fraction of what they need. Because of the enrollment cap, it is likely that not all migrants will have access even to the limited services in the proposed basic state program.

We are also concerned about the financial effect on community health centers (CHCs) if migrants are no longer Medicaid-eligible. CHCs are by far the most likely providers of care to migrants because they specialize in language and cultural access and provide a host of other support, management, and coordination services that migrants are likely to need in order to get better. These services are costly to the health center but save the Department and hospitals a considerable amount of money. Medicaid does pay a higher rate to health centers in recognition of this but the proposed rates for the limited benefit plan would not. Health centers will be in jeopardy of losing millions of dollars as they serve this special population.

We do acknowledge the considerable financial burden that this places on the State and, like the Legislature and Administration, continue to advocate with the federal government to take responsibility for the affects of the Compact on our state.

We urge you to pass this measure and restore this essential health service. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of this very important bill.