



Na Leo Ola

Newsletter of the Hawaii Medical Association

Volume 4, Issue 1

January 2024

Hawaii Medical Association 2024 Legislative Priorities

The Hawaii Medical Association is committed to long-term and systemic changes in public policy that advance community health, improve the care of patients, and ensure Hawaii physicians can practice medicine with integrity and excellence. Our priorities reflect these commitments, while taking into account the current political climate and the ongoing need to provide support for recovery efforts on Maui.

Our Public Policy Committee influenced a number of successful pieces of legislation in 2023, most notably:

- Increasing Medicaid reimbursements to 100% of Medicare levels
- Adopting the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact
- Adding \$10 million in 2024 and \$20 million in 2025 to the Hawaii State Loan Repayment Program for Healthcare Professionals
- Approving taxation of electronic smoking devices
- Passing bills positively affecting telehealth, provider protections and reproductive care

To maximize continued successes in this challenging legislative session, the Public Policy Committee will primarily focus on the following priorities:

2024 Public Policy Coordination Team

Beth England, MD - Chair

Linda Rosehill, JD - Government Relations

Marc Alexander - Executive Director

Access to Care

Address the critical Hawaii physician shortage using a sustainable, multifaceted approach. This includes removing barriers that make the practice of quality medicine economically and personally unfeasible, reexamining prior authorization, and expanding incentives to recruit and retain physicians.

Quality of Care

Ensure all patients receive high quality care by promoting team-based healthcare led by physicians. Support non-physician providers in offering care within the scope of their training and under the appropriate supervision of physicians.

Behavioral Health Treatment

Advocate for improved and expanded behavioral health services to address the growing crisis of mental health disorders present in our community. Support comprehensive, wrap-around services for substance use disorder treatment and homelessness as these are inextricably connected with psychiatric disease.

Visit hawaiimedicalassociation.org for the latest news and updates on our legislative progress. Sign in as a member, and you'll see a "legislative updates" section in the Advocacy tab.

Have legislative ideas or concerns? Send them to m.alexander@hawaiimedicalassociation.org.

President's Message

*by Elizabeth Ann Ignacio, MD,
FSIR, FACP*



Aloha kakou,

HMA has worked hard in 2023 with substantial gains in health

advocacy, education and outreach. But our work is far from done, and HMA will continue to press forward in 2024.

22+ years of clinical practice, service and leadership have afforded me much opportunity for professional growth, and I continue to learn the complexities of practice development, practice models, workforce challenges and compound forces and drivers within healthcare ecosystems. Patients, doctors, clinics, hospitals, policymakers and administrators all play a part. Add to this the nuanced variability of healthcare delivery in our state with its richly diverse population and unique geographical challenges, particularly in the neighbor islands. Healthcare in Hawaii has its own dynamic!

One can easily see that Hawaii physicians face complex challenges that need thoughtful multilateral solutions and focused commitment. Toward this purpose and as we begin 2024, I will work hard as your HMA President for the two year term, maintaining our mission goals to serve doctors and patients by prioritizing the following:

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Welcome Arnold Cristobal

As we welcome 2024, we also welcome HMA's new bookkeeper, Arnold Cristobal. He came aboard toward the end of December, having the opportunity to work with Jim Morris, for a warm handoff.

Arnold was born and raised on the Waianae Coastline, relocating to San Francisco, CA for about a decade during the dot com boom years for professional pursuits. He is a graduate of Hawaii Pacific University with an MBA in Accounting and Human Resources Management, and spent the majority of his career in public utility regulatory accounting and non-profit health care accounting. Please welcome Arnold to our ohana!

Executive Director's Message *by Marc Alexander*



Physicians who have not yet joined HMA will often ask, why should I join? What's the proverbial return on investment?

While HMA has a list of benefits and reasons to join HMA and even a new group discount program (see hawaiiomedicalassociation.org/page/membership), the main reason I hear for why physicians belong to HMA is very simple: **physicians need to support each other**. We have over 12,000 licensed physicians here in Hawaii, with 3,599 providing patient care, and since not all are full-time clinicians, the full-time equivalent number of clinical physicians is only 3,022. Since the USA has more specialties than any other country – one count is over 135 specialties and subspecialties – physicians are being pushed and pulled to join specialty and sub-specialty organizations for their continuing medical education needs and professional advancement. Then you have growing numbers of employed physicians versus private practice physicians which has its own tensions. The bottom line is that physicians are being fractured as a profession, communications among the specialties and between clinicians and non-clinicians are becoming less frequent and more difficult, and physicians are losing their power because their organizational numbers are so diluted. Physicians can feel more isolated and disconnected, which contributes to the loss of joy and comradery in medicine. Last year when I asked a non-clinician physician to join HMA, this physician asked whether they would be welcomed since they were not in clinical practice. I said, absolutely – HMA is, in the words of one of our physician leaders, the Switzerland for physicians – where all physicians are welcomed and supported. Physicians need this more than ever. This is why every physician should join HMA – physicians need to come together!

In this issue of our newsletter, HMA is releasing its 2024 Legislative Priorities. While our Public Policy Committee, under the leadership of Dr. Beth England, continues to monitor bills from the 2023 session which remain active, our focus for this session is especially on new bills which may impact access to care, quality of care, and behavioral health treatment. HMA members, please remember to bookmark our "Legislative Updates" page to access member-only resources including testimonies and information sheets on key legislation. Also, don't forget to sign up for VoterVoice under the "Action Center" to receive action alerts and to share your views with your elected officials.

CME@HMA

January 26 & 27, 2024

Presented In-Person at the HMA Office and Virtually via Zoom
Presentations will cover five (5) hours of CME credits. Topics are:

Friday, January 26, 4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder: Basics for Clinicians

by Anthony Guerrero, MD

Trauma-informed Care: Awareness and in Response to the Maui Wildfires

by Anthony Guerrero, MD and Matthew Layug, BSN, RN

Saturday, January 27, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

Pediatric COVID-19 Hospitalizations in Hawaii

by Jessica Kosut, MD and Kyra Len, MD

Adult COVID-19 Hospitalizations in Hawaii

by Dominic Chow, MD, PhD, MPH

Long COVID: Where Are We Now?

by Gehan Devendra, MD

Immunization Updates: RSV and COVID-19

by Jennifer Mbuthia, MD, FACP

Register Today!

Visit hawaiimedicalassociation.org for more information and to register.

Hawaii State of Reform Health Policy Conference 2024 Well Represented by HMA

The eighth annual Hawaii State of Reform Health Policy Conference focused on the opportunities and challenges facing healthcare in one of the nation's most unique regions at a time of increasing change.

Beth England, MD, Chair of the HMA Public Policy Committee, was a panelist on the topic of "Insights into the Hawaii Legislature." Kelly Withy, MD is a member of the conference's advisory panel.

Other HMA members who spoke at the conference include Governor Josh Green, MD (opening keynote speaker), Matthew Koenig, MD, Michael Champion, MD, Aimee Grace, MD, and Jack Lewin, MD (closing keynote speaker).



L-R: Paige Heckathorn Choy (Healthcare Association of Hawaii), Jennifer Diesman (HMSA and Hawaii Association of Health Plans), and Beth England, MD (Hawaii Medical Association)

President's Message

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- Coordination with health system leaders to recover the joy in medicine, and implementation of programs and policies that support Hawaii physician well being.
- Collaboration with academic and research partners, to support population health analyses that inform policy solutions and address specific healthcare disparities for our diverse state.

HMA's present programs for education and advocacy along with our progressive relationships with local and national healthcare stakeholders and academia are at the foundation of these initiatives, and we can begin to enhance and strengthen support along a timeline for change. These are endeavors that cannot be achieved alone, and I am excited for the next steps in further advancement of physician wellbeing and data driven solutions for healthcare disparities in 2024.