



Na Leo Ola

Newsletter of the Hawaii Medical Association

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**Save the
Date for
Ola Pono Ike 2025!**

The 26th annual **Ola Pono Ike Gala** is scheduled for **Saturday, October 25, 2025** at the Hilton Hawaiian Village, Coral Ballroom I - III.

This year's event - chaired by Dr. Tom Kosasa and Dr. F. Don Parsa - is sure to be another magical night of celebration for our physician community. Come and reconnect with your fellow medical professionals, while enjoying a sumptuous dinner and being serenaded by the classic sounds of the Makaha Sons!

We also present our highest honors of the year as we celebrate:

Angela M. Pratt, MD
Physician of the Year

Jerry Wang Van Meter, MD
Lifetime Achievement

Kaohimanu Dang-Akiona, MD
President's Award

Save the date, and watch this newsletter and our website for ticketing information!

Executive Director's Message *by Marc Alexander*



As we go to print (2/27/25), the legislature has made steady progress having passed what is called **First Lateral** (2/14), when all bills must have reached their final committee in their originating chamber. Tomorrow, 2/28/25, is another critical deadline, **First Decking**, when all bills must emerge from their final committee in their originating chamber to be "alive" for this session. For HMA this means that our original list of 141 priority bills and resolutions has been reduced to 62, with 31 bills and resolutions identified for possible testimony, as especially impacting our priorities around access to care, quality care, and behavioral health. HMA has already submitted some 37 pieces of testimony on 28 different bills and resolutions, so we've been very busy. But it's not output or activity that matters; it's all about impact, making a difference for our physicians, their patients, and Hawaii's health.

So where are we on that front? There are some signs of promise already. Bills that proposed giving psychologists prescribing authority (**SB798** and **SB847**) have not been heard, which is good news. HMA's consistent position has been that psychologists lack the medical education, training, and experience to prescribe drugs such as psychotropics. This is about patient safety.

A bill addressing the licensing of midwives (**HB1194**) cleared the House Finance Committee (FIN) on Wednesday (2/26/25). This is good news since the bill will help to ensure quality care for expectant mothers.

Two important bills addressing prior authorization (**HB250** and **SB1449**) are making steady progress. HMA has supported these bills, asking for amendments. Prior authorization discussions can elicit intense emotions and HMA leadership, along with other key stakeholders like HMSA, have been working to ensure open discussions characterized with respect and aloha. In fact, as previously reported, discussions with HMSA have already yielded more sharing of information and a commitment to action. Legislative action would complement these efforts, and we appreciate our legislators keeping prior authorization front and center in healthcare deliberations. While FIN moved HB250 forward on 2/21/25, the chair warned that there are serious fiscal issues which the subject matter committees will need to address. On Wednesday (2/26/25), the Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection passed **SB1449** without

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Conversations

Tuesday March 4, 2025 • 5:30 p.m.
Prior Authorization Reform, with
Special Guest Dr. Stefanie Park
VP and Chief Medical Officer, HMSA

Since last year, HMA leadership has been in discussion with HMSA about prior authorization. To keep our members informed, HMA has invited **Dr. Stefanie Park, Vice President and Chief Medical Officer at HMSA**, to address the HMA membership on prior authorization reform.

To view Conversations at HMA virtually on Zoom, register at hawaiimedicalassociation.org.

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amendment, giving us vehicles in both chambers to keep the discussion on prior authorization up in front. In addition, **SCR10/SR6** have seen action, clearing the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services (HHS) on Wednesday (2/26/25). These resolutions urge the Hawaii State director of health to establish a working group "to provide recommendations for reducing the impact of prior authorization requirements on the timely delivery of healthcare in the state." As the chair of HHS noted, HB250 does a lot more, but having these resolutions in place is a good idea in case the prior authorization bills (which have the force of law) fail to pass. The legislative action on prior authorization and the very civil discourse on a sensitive subject are promising indicators of leadership and advocates being committed to constructive action, which will benefit community health.

The licensure of foreign trained physicians, another access to care issue, has garnered more attention than in recent years past, which is good news. **HB1379** proposes to exempt foreign medical graduates from Hawaii medical licensure residency requirements under certain conditions. The goal is to make it easier for qualified medical graduates of foreign schools to care for patients.

Several bills which would support additional funding to the University of Hawaii's Cancer Center by increasing the tax on cigarettes and vaping, for example, continue to move. These include **HB441** (passed by FIN on 2/21/25), **SB1528**, and **HB1085**, any of which would be very helpful to our cancer center's important work.

The very successful **HELP** (Healthcare Education Loan Repayment Program) is up for continued funding with several bills supporting such funding, including **HB213** (passed by FIN on 2/21/25) and **SB299** (which passed the Senate Ways and Means Committee on Wednesday, 2/26/25). HMA also supports other workforce development bills, even though they do not directly include physicians. HMA's position has been consistent: we believe in physician-led team healthcare where all healthcare professionals can practice to the full extent of their education, training, and experience. Programs which support the training of nurse assistants and licensed practical nurses, as in **HB714** (passed by FIN on 2/21/25), are important actions for consideration. The expansion of preceptor tax credits, such as in **SB1070** and **HB303** (passed by FIN on 2/21/25), to include dietitians, physician assistants, and social workers, are also very positive for healthcare.

Behavioral health is one of HMA's top priorities and several bills have drawn our support. **HB1131** and its companion **SB1450** seek to implement a pilot program that would provide intensive mobile treatment-type services to chronically homeless individuals suffering from serious brain disorders, although these bills may not pass First Decking. **SB1323**, which would adopt the Uniform Health-Care Decisions Act of 2023, cleared the Senate Judiciary Committee on 2/20/25, and should crossover to the House.

Other measures supported by HMA address telehealth (**SB1281** and its companion **HB557**), expanded coverage of continuous glucose monitors (**SB838**), expanded coverage of breast cancer screening (**SB189**), increased availability of bronchodilators in schools (**HB903**), and additional funding for emergency air services (**SB1426**). HMA, reflecting our membership and its diverse interests, engages a limited number of bills covering a fairly wide range of healthcare issues. But the common denominator is our physicians and their commitment to provide quality care for their patients.



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