

Hawai'i Medical Association Advocacy Philosophy

The Hawai'i Medical Association (HMA) advocates for physicians, their patients, and public health. We support all Hawai'i physicians and believe that the care of patients, commitment to excellence, and the professional bond of organized medicine unite physicians together. HMA represents Hawai'i physicians in established and emerging practice types including academics, private practice, hospital based, independent clinics, contractors and telehealth services.

HMA is committed to collaboration and building bridges. Healthcare professionals, hospital systems, administrators, insurers and policymakers must work together to improve the health of Hawai'i's people. HMA also navigates the non-legislative world to build consensus among top healthcare stakeholders. Our HMA legislative priorities reflect these commitments. Our legislative pathway includes current clinical standards and best practices, assessment of the local healthcare landscape and political climate, as well as factors of community resources and cost. Our advocacy will remain focused, yet nimble as circumstances evolve.

While our attention is on state legislative issues, we also monitor and selectively engage on national issues, working closely with the American Medical Association (AMA), our national counterpart. HMA has two delegates to the AMA, ensuring that Hawai'i's voice is strongly represented at the national level.

2026 Hawai'i Medical Association Officers

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Elizabeth Ann Ignacio, MD - Immediate Past President • Tom Kosasa, MD - Secretary
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2026 Hawai'i Medical Association Public Policy Coordination Team

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Linda Rosehill, JD - Government Relations • Marc Alexander - Executive Director



Hawai'i Medical Association

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Hawai`i Medical Association 2026 Legislative Priorities

Access to Care

In Hawai`i, federal Medicaid funding reductions, combined with rising healthcare costs, threaten access to care across the state. Medicaid is a critical source of coverage for Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities, kūpuna, individuals with disabilities, and residents of neighbor islands, where provider shortages already limit access. Looming coverage losses, benefit reductions, and increased cost-sharing for patients, combined with higher premiums and out-of-pocket costs, are driving more residents into uninsured or underinsured status, delaying care and increasing reliance on emergency departments. These impacts are disproportionately felt on neighbor islands, and in underrepresented communities, that face higher rates of chronic disease and health disparities.

The Hawai`i Medical Association supports mitigation strategies for federal cuts; patient support and navigation services that help individuals understand and maintain coverage and the vital social safety net; protections for patient continuity of care; increased workforce capacity, particularly on neighbor islands; reduction of avoidable, higher-cost utilization; all while ensuring the long-term sustainability of Hawai`i's healthcare systems.

Quality Care

All patients deserve high quality care, regardless of their economic status or geographic location.

Team-based healthcare led by physicians, should remain the standard of care in Hawai`i, ensuring coordinated, high-quality, and patient-centered services. All healthcare professionals should deliver care within the scope of their training, education, and demonstrated competencies, supported by appropriate supervision and collaboration. As healthcare delivery evolves, the integration of artificial intelligence

(AI) and digital health tools must be transparent, evidence-based, and designed to support - not replace - clinical judgment. Patients should be clearly informed when AI tools, including chatbots or automated decision-support systems, are used in their care, and all innovation must meet standards for accuracy, privacy, and patient safety.

Behavioral Health

Approximately 23% of Hawai`i adults report any mental illness (AMI), but only 45% - 50% of those adults receive treatment, leaving roughly 200,000+ adults with AMI untreated. Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander adults reporting a mental health condition are less likely to receive treatment than White adults (16% vs 24%), highlighting racial/ethnic disparities.

While there have been improvements in overall state rankings, recent reports indicate both an increased need for behavioral health services, and persistent geographic and cultural disparities in access to care.

HMA strongly supports advanced care quality and investments for high standard Behavioral Health Integration, including emerging community behavioral health services for mental health and substance use disorders. HMA opposes the expansion of prescriptive authority to healthcare professionals without essential medical education and experience, to safely manage the significant risks, side effects, and interactions of powerful drugs.

Notably, as housing instability and homelessness are key social determinants of health that are closely linked to higher rates of substance use and psychiatric disorders, substance use disorders, HMA also supports housing solutions accompanied by comprehensive wrap-around support services for individuals experiencing homelessness.