



Na Leo Ola

Newsletter of the Hawai'i Medical Association

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February 2026

Conversations AT HMA

Two Episodes In March You Won't Want to Miss

Our HMA Public Policy Committee (PPC) will lead a focused discussion on the specific bills active in the state legislature that affect primary care.

**Primary Care on the Pulse:
Policies Shaping Primary
Care in the Legislature**
Tuesday, March 3, 2026
5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.
Virtual via Zoom

Panelists include **Elizabeth Ann Ignacio, MD, Christina Marzo, MD,** and **Robert Carlisle, MD.**

Their legislative update will also cover access to primary care, mitigating federal budget cuts, covering underinsured patients, and the primary care workforce - quality care, loan repayment, and the preceptor tax credit.

You can register for both episodes of Conversations at HMA by visiting hawaiiimedicalassociation.org.

In this episode, we address current issues with the Psychiatry workforce in Hawai'i, and how this affects behavioral health access.

**The Psychiatric Workforce
and Access to Behavioral
Health**
Thursday, March 12, 2026
5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.
Virtual via Zoom

Panelists include **Regina James, MD, Steven Kemble, MD,** and **Jacob Lee, MD.**

Topics include a young psychiatrist's perspective, access in rural areas, NHPI patient demographics, suicide prevention, misconceptions regarding RxP, the QMC collaborative care model, and building a workforce pipeline that reflects the populations served.

President's Message

by Nadine Tenn Salle, MD



The proposed Hawai'i Pacific Health-HMSA affiliation is not a wake-up call to a failing healthcare system. Hawai'i's physicians have long understood the structural pressures facing our state: workforce shortages, administrative burden, fragile rural access, and payment models that strain independent practice viability. This moment should be approached with seriousness and clarity.

The Hawai'i Medical Association has not formally endorsed nor opposed the proposed affiliation. HMA's responsibility is to ensure that any significant system change — whether through consolidation, partnership, or broader reform — is evaluated through clear, patient-centered principles.

Meaningful healthcare reform must begin with the patient. In Hawai'i, aloha, pono, and mālama remind us that health is shaped by family, culture, and community.

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Save the Date for Ola Pono Ike 2026!



The 27th annual Ola Pono Ike Gala is scheduled for Saturday, September 26, 2026 at the Hilton Hawaiian Village, Coral Ballroom I - III, 5:00 p.m.

Reconnect with your fellow physicians and medical professionals over a sumptuous dinner while celebrating the work of our physician community.

The Hawai'i Medical Association has hosted the Ola Pono Ike Gala Dinner to bestow our highest honors of the year. We recognize HMA member physicians who have made a difference for the health of our island home, and every other year, we recognize a community member that has given selflessly for the betterment of others. This year, we're proud to honor three individuals who exemplify the spirit of community in Hawai'i:

Kore Kai Liow, MD - Physician of the Year

Benjamin B. Young, MD - Lifetime Achievement

Shelley Wilson - Manawale'a Community Service Award

Our Ola Pono Ike Co-Chairs Kaohimanu Dang-Akiona, MD, and Whitney Limm, MD, encourage all members to save the date and plan to join us in celebration of these amazing individuals. We'll also be raising funds for local nonprofits that affect the health of our island home.

We hope to see everyone at Ola Pono Ike 2026! Watch our website and this newsletter for registration information!

Executive Director's Message *by Marc Alexander*



Physician engagement in the Hawai'i State legislative process is essential to protecting patient care, preserving professional autonomy, and shaping a sustainable healthcare system for our communities. Decisions made at the Capitol directly impact how physicians practice medicine, how care is delivered, and how patients access needed services.

HMA provides timely, trusted resources to support informed engagement, including special webpages dedicated to the proposed HMSA-HPH alliance, and broader healthcare policy issues – with many resources available to the public. In addition, our members-only pages offer updates, analysis, all HMA testimonies, and resources/opportunities for physicians to stay informed, learn about the process, and ensure the physician voice remains central in Hawai'i's health policy decisions.

Legislative Updates

As of February 27, 6:55am, legislative activity continues to advance across several priority measures.

SB847 (oppose) passed CPN on February 26 but reduced to being a pilot on the Island of Kauai. It advances to the full Senate chamber.

HB1970 (support; tumor registry) and **HB2159** (support; UH health workforce expansion) both cleared FIN on February 25 and will now go to the full House. **HB1546** (support; health coverage pilot) passed FIN on February 26 unamended, while **HB1591** (support; preceptor tax credit expansion), **HB1574** (support; adjusting HELP service requirements for larger loans to three years), and **HB1965** (support; primary care reform workgroup) are scheduled for February 27. **HB1965** will serve as the vehicle for primary care reform, replacing **SB2690**. Several bills remain active but unscheduled, including **HB2141/SB2816** (support; JABSOM/UHCC enterprise zone), **SB2087** (support; health coverage pilot), and **SB877** (support; Medicaid in-home services). **SB2491** (support) has been designated as the sole legislative vehicle for defining a qualified health provider, with the House companion discontinued, though the bill is still awaiting scheduling. Both **HB2558** (oppose; telehealth expansion) and **HB2305** (oppose; nutrition requirement for physician CME) are awaiting CPC as we report.

HMA will continue to monitor these measures and update our members through our website.



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President's Message

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Policies must be judged not by how they shift financial risk, but by whether they improve outcomes, protect access from Ka'u to Kalihi to Kaua'i's North Shore, and strengthen continuity of care through physician-led, team-based models.

If this affiliation proceeds, important questions must be asked: Will it measurably stabilize the workforce? Reduce administrative burden? Transparently reinvest efficiencies into frontline care? Improve Medicaid access and equity across islands?

HMA's public policy team continues active engagement at the 2026 Hawai'i State Legislature. HMA is currently tracking approximately 65 priority bills and has submitted more than 60 testimonies to date. Members can follow and engage the 2026 legislative session, review Advocacy Updates, and access extensive policy resources — including past testimonies from 2023–2025 and materials for the current session — through the HMA member portal.

In parallel, HMA is convening physicians through specialty-based and natural group meetings to discuss system changes and shared concerns. If your group would like to meet, please reach out.

HMA's strength depends on physicians collaborating. A unified voice ensures Hawai'i's healthcare future remains patient-centered, physician-led, sustainable, and accountable to our communities.

DCCA Warns Medical Professionals About New Phone Scams

The State of Hawai'i Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA) is warning the public about phone scammers impersonating state officials and government agencies to target medical professionals. These scammers make false threats of investigations in an attempt to obtain sensitive personal information.

Reports have surfaced of individuals pretending to be government officials contacting licensees, falsely claiming an investigation is being conducted into their professional license. Scammers have been impersonating state and federal officials to include the Drug Enforcement Administration, Hawai'i Medical Board, and respective states' Departments of Health and Human Services.

A few tips to consider:

- Government agencies will not call to solicit payments or threaten arrests. They will never ask for payments with gift cards, wire transfers, or cryptocurrency.
- If you suspect fraud, never give out personal information.

Congratulations to Dr. Laeton Pang

The American College of Radiation Oncology (ACRO) Gold Medal is awarded annually at the ACRO Summit Awards Ceremony by the President on behalf of the Board of Chancellors, to individuals in recognition of distinguished service to the College and the profession for which it stands. There have been 33 recipients named since its inception in 1995.

We are proud to announce HMA member Laeton Pang, MD as a Gold Medal Awardee in 2026.

ACRO represents radiation oncologists in the socioeconomic and political arenas. With a current membership of more than 1,200, ACRO is dedicated to fostering radiation oncology science; improving patient care services; studying the socioeconomic aspects of the practice of radiation oncology; and encouraging education in radiation oncology.

Congratulations Dr. Pang, for receiving this well-deserved recognition! We're proud to have you as one of our HMA physician leaders.



Dr. Laeton Pang (middle) with Dr. AJ Mundt ('79 Punahou) & Dr. Cate Yashar (ASTRO President-Elect & Fellow Gold Medalist)