



# Na Leo Ola

Newsletter of the Hawai'i Medical Association

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## OLA PONO IKE

Saturday, September 26, 2026

Hilton Hawaiian Village, Coral Ballroom I - III

Save the date for the 27th annual Ola Pono Ike Gala, which is scheduled for Saturday, September 26, 2026 at the Hilton Hawaiian Village, Coral Ballroom I - III. It's an opportunity to celebrate the tireless work of our physician community, and to recognize individuals who have made significant contributions to our island home.

Beginning with the cocktail reception at 5:00 p.m., you'll be able to reconnect with your fellow physicians and medical professionals, while perusing through our exhibitors and silent auction. That is quickly followed by a sumptuous dinner, program, and entertainment by our medical students!

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 contributed greatly to our profession, and every other year, we recognize a community member that has given selflessly of themselves. 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

L-R: Former JABSOM Dean Jerris Hedges, MD; Kore Kai Liow, MD; Ola Pono Ike Coordinator Ellie Ventula-Honda; HMA Executive Director Marc Alexander



### Benjamin B. Young, MD Lifetime Achievement

L-R: HMA Executive Director Marc Alexander; HMA President Nadine Tenn Salle, MD; Benjamin Young, MD; AMA Delegate Angela Pratt, MD



### Shelley Wilson Manawale'a Community Service Award

L-R: HMA Executive Director Marc Alexander; Shelley Wilson

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

**Save the date Ola Pono Ike 2026!** Watch our website and this newsletter for registration information coming soon!

## President's Message *by Nadine Tenn Salle, MD*



Aloha HMA Members,

This has been an active and important period for

Hawai'i's physician community, as discussions around the proposed Hawai'i Pacific Health–HMSA affiliation continue alongside a fast-moving legislative session.

The Hawai'i Medical Association's role is to ensure that any significant system change is evaluated through clear, patient-centered principles and grounded in the realities physicians face every day. These discussions are not occurring in a vacuum. Hawai'i's healthcare system has long experienced workforce shortages, administrative burden, access challenges on neighbor islands, and financial pressures on independent and community-based practices. The current moment reflects those underlying conditions.

To better understand physician perspectives, HMA has been actively convening members through one-on-one meetings with specialty groups and other natural physician communities. These conversations have been candid, thoughtful, and essential. Physicians across practice settings are sharing both opportunities and

concerns — from care coordination and administrative simplification to questions about market dynamics, practice sustainability, and patient access. These discussions are helping to inform HMA's ongoing engagement and ensure that physician voices remain central.

At the Legislature, HMA's public policy team continues to advocate on behalf of physicians and patients. The Association is currently tracking approximately 65 priority bills and has submitted more than 60 testimonies this session. Members are encouraged to stay engaged through the HMA website, where legislative updates, testimonies, and advocacy resources are available through the member portal.

Through all of this work, one principle remains constant: healthcare in Hawai'i must remain patient-centered. Meaningful progress will be measured not by structural change alone, but by whether patients experience better access, improved outcomes, and more coordinated care across our islands. Physician-led, team-based care remains essential to achieving these goals, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

HMA's strength lies in bringing together Hawai'i's diverse physician community — across specialties, practice models, and care settings — including employed and independent

physicians, rural and urban providers, direct care and insurance-based practices, and systems such as Kaiser and HMSA. Our role is to ensure these varied perspectives are heard, balanced, and translated into a collective voice that supports physicians broadly while advancing what matters most: equitable access, sustainable practice environments, and better outcomes for our most vulnerable patients. Continued engagement from members across specialties and islands will be critical in shaping a healthcare system that is sustainable, equitable, and accountable to the people of Hawai'i.

We also want to acknowledge the recent floods and the impact they have had on families and communities across our state. As physicians, many of you are already responding on the frontlines and in your communities. Please look out for a message from our HMA Executive Director and updates on the HMA website outlining ways members can assist, support affected patients, and stay informed.

If your group would like to meet with HMA leadership, we encourage you to reach out.

Mahalo for your continued commitment to Hawai'i's patients and communities.

## JABSOM Students Assisting Flood Recovery Efforts

The JABSOM students of the Waialua Moku Learning Community are organizing a cleaning supply drive to help the Waialua Community that has suffered significant damage and

losses as a result of the recent storm. This week they will be collecting the following items in the lobby of the MEB: 5 gallon buckets, heavy duty rubber gloves, heavy duty trash bags,

bleach, stiff-bristle scrubbing brushes, large sponges, dish soap, commercial mold inhibitors, and microfiber towels.

All donations are greatly appreciated.

# Legislative Updates

by Elizabeth Ann Ignacio, MD and Marc Alexander

As the Hawai'i State Legislature approaches Second Lateral on March 30 - the deadline for all measures to advance to their final committee - the Hawai'i Medical Association (HMA) continues to engage on legislation with significant implications for access to care, workforce sustainability, behavioral health, and quality of care. The following summarizes selected measures under active consideration. With the focus of this session on fiscal matters – due to fluctuating projected state income, federal changes, and the recent Hawai'i storms – HMA has been particularly engaged with policy issues impacting physicians, patients, and public health.

## Access to Care and Workforce Sustainability

HMA supports several measures intended to stabilize Hawai'i's healthcare workforce and protect patient access. These include **HB1546**, which establishes a Health Coverage Continuity Pilot Program for individuals transitioning off Medicaid and **SB2088**, which establishes a pilot program for portable healthcare benefits for nontraditional workers, while emphasizing the need for appropriate oversight and patient protections.

HMA supports strengthening primary care through **HB1965** (Primary Care Reform Workgroup), which will make recommendations to the legislature.

HMA continues our support for education and training of future physicians including **HB1574**, which adjusts service requirements under the Healthcare Education Loan Repayment Program; and **HB1591**, which expands the preceptor tax credit to support the training of healthcare professionals. HMA support of

**HB2159**, which establishes additional positions at the University of Hawai'i, will allow for expansion of medical training necessary for Hawai'i's future healthcare workforce.

HMA continues to monitor **HB2558**, relating to telehealth expansion with our main concern that those providing telemedicine are licensed in Hawai'i.

## Behavioral Health

HMA supports **HB1562**, which advances a digital youth mental health platform to expand access to behavioral health resources for children and adolescents. Conversely, HMA opposes **SB847**, which would authorize limited prescriptive authority for psychologists under a pilot program on Kaua'i, citing concerns related to patient safety, scope of practice, and quality of care. The discussion of this sensitive issue at the legislature and in the community has been civil, enlightening, and thoughtful – for which we thank the various committee chairs in particular.

## Quality of Care

HMA supports measures that reinforce evidence based clinical care and public health infrastructure, including **HB1970**, which provides continued support for the Hawai'i Tumor Registry, and **SB2969**, which expands and sustains the Maui Wildfire Exposure Study and Maui Health Registry. HMA has submitted comments on **HB1898**, addressing alignment of vaccine guidelines with evidence-based best practices. HMA supports **SB3133** to create a preventive services advisory committee in DOH, tailoring preventive priorities to our local population's health needs and health system characteristics, while maintaining alignment with evidence-based standards.

## Other Key Measures

HMA supports **SB2816**, which expands the enterprise zones program to include “medical and healthcare services.” Both the University of Hawai'i John A. Burns School of Medicine and the University of Hawai'i Cancer Center could benefit from this legislation. HMA also supports **GM745**, which is the re-appointment of Dr. Elizabeth Ann Ignacio, HMA's Immediate Past President, to the Hawai'i Medical Board.

## Automatic Membership Renewals Now Available

Due to popular demand, HMA has now moved to include automatic renewals for HMA memberships. On your membership anniversary date, your membership will be automatically renewed through the credit card on file: **this only affects those that pay for their memberships with a credit card.**

If you pay for membership by check, this change won't affect you. You'll still receive a renewal notice via email two weeks before your anniversary date.

If you'd like to opt out of the automatic renewal program, please send a request to Mark Conching at [m.conching@hawaiimedicalassociation.org](mailto:m.conching@hawaiimedicalassociation.org).

*note: HMA doesn't store any credit card information. All credit card transactions are done through a third-party provider, and they store credit card data through encryption and tokenization, which renders data useless if intercepted.*