



March 16, 2021

To: House Committee on Pandemic and Disaster Preparedness
Rep. Linda Ichiyama, Chair
Rep. Stacelynn K.M. Eli, Vice Chair

Re: **Strong Support** of SB970, SD2, Relating to Telehealth

Hrg: March 18, 2021 at 11:30AM at Capitol Room 309 & 329 and Videoconference

The Hawai'i Public Health Association (HPHA) is a group of over 400 community members, public health professionals, and organizations statewide dedicated to improving public health. Our mission is to promote public health in Hawai'i through leadership, collaboration, education and advocacy. Issues around social justice and equity in areas that extend beyond the traditional context of health (e.g., education, digital equity, cultural sensitivity), can have profound impacts on health equity and well-being.

HPHA strongly **supports** SB970, SD2, which authorizes the establishment of a physician-patient relationship via a telehealth interaction when the physician is licensed to practice medicine in the state. This bill clarifies HRS §453-1.3 such that a physician-patient relationship may be established via telehealth, provided that the physician is licensed to practice medicine in the State of Hawai'i.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted both the need for telehealth and its viability, this need and viability predates the current crisis. Hawai'i has a persistent physician shortage in rural areas where many of the state's highest risk residents live. Additionally, patients that suffer from multiple co-morbidities often time have transportation barriers as well. The ability to establish a physician-patient relationship via telehealth will help to address these health care accessibility limits.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on important issues affecting the health of people in Hawai'i.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Claire Townsend', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Claire Townsend Ing, DrPH
Legislative Committee Chair
Hawai'i Public Health Association