



HO'ŌLA LĀHUI HAWAI'I

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November 18, 1999

Aloha Kakou,

Greetings from the garden Isle of Kaua'i. I am David Peters, Executive Director for Ho'ola Lahui Hawaii the Native Hawaiian Health system serving the islands of Kaua'i and Ni'ihau. I am pleased to submit this testimony on behalf of the board, staff and clients of our organization.

In providing health care services to Hawaiians we are faced with a daunting task. Our Hawaiian people are living with great illness and lack the resources they need in order to be well. As we glean from Olelo No'eau: "Pu'ali kalo i ka wal'ole" Taro for lack of water grows misshapen meaning for lack of care one may become ill.

Kaua'i has no community health center as identified in recent federal appropriations legislation to care for those who have no health insurance or who do not feel comfortable receiving care in a western medical facility. Ho'ola Lahui Hawai'i provides preventive and some limited primary care services, but we cannot accommodate the needs of Hawaiians living in our service given the limited resources we receive. Expanded primary care services are desperately needed especially care that is culturally appropriate and centered.

The lack of primary care coupled with the costs of ancillary services and medications make accessing existing services difficult. Many of our Hawaiians cannot afford the costly medications they need in order to live especially our Kupuna. Laboratory services and other medical procedures are too expensive for those who seek this type of care. Increasingly the number of individuals asking our organization for help has lead us to provide some limited services in the Anahola Community twice per month. We also have instituted a mobile dental care clinic to assist with the growing need for dental care.

Some 30% of all Hawaiians have no health insurance coverage. Many do not qualify for public health benefits for a myriad of reasons including kuleana land constraints by failing the assets test even though they have no money. Many Hawaiians must make the decision of whether to buy

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food or to pay for medical care. This is unacceptable in the modern day world in a land with its current resources.

As our problem continues to swell we are faced with a bureaucracy that is non-responsive to our needs and a state government that is unable to address the health concerns facing Hawaiian families every day. The current services lack the cultural base to work with our families. Establishing a center specifically for services to Hawaiians is crucial to achieving wellness.

As a health organization we are not comfortable in addressing reparations or sovereignty issues. Rather we believe that we must help Hawaiians and their families become pono so that they can determine what is most appropriate to address their concerns.

I close with another proverb from Olelo No`eau: "Loa`a ke ola i-Halau-a-ola" Life is obtained in the house of life. One is happy, safe, well again. A play on ola (life, health, healing, contentment, and peace after a struggle) Hawaiians continue to struggle and the time has come for healing. It is our kuleana to ensure the health of all Hawaiians so self-determined aspirations according to Hawaiian culture and values can be achieved.

Respectfully Submitted,



David Peters
Executive Director