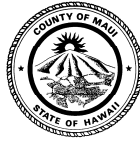


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January 28, 2024

TO: The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Alice L. Lee  
Council Chair 

SUBJECT: **HEARING OF JANUARY 29, 2024; TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2538, RELATING TO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support** of this important measure. This measure requires the Department of Health to prioritize funding for programs and services under its jurisdiction and fill vacant positions on the island of Molokai, and provide a report to the legislature on these efforts.

The Maui County Council has not had the opportunity to take a formal position on this measure. Therefore, I am providing this testimony in my capacity as an individual member of the Maui County Council.

I **support** this measure for the following reasons:

1. Molokai's remoteness and lack of efficient and affordable transportation make it difficult for residents to access adequate health services.
2. Lack of access to adequate health services adds stress to individuals which may increase negative outcomes related to their preexisting health condition.
3. Mental health care services have been identified as Molokai's most pressing health care need. According to the Department of Health, approximately 11,000 youth in the State had a major depressive episode in 2019, yet only half received mental health services. Because Molokai has a lack of staff on-island and often inaccessible transportation to neighbor islands for care, they are at a disproportionate risk for having their mental health conditions worsen.

For the foregoing reasons, I **support** this measure.