

United States Senate

February 14, 2020

Dr. Lynda Dolan
President
East Hawaii Independent Physician Association
670 Ponahawai Street, Suite 117
Hilo, HI 96720-7831

Dear Dr. Dolan,


Thank you for reaching out to me and for your kind words. I share your concern about Hawaii's physician shortage, which is exacerbated by low Medicare physician reimbursement rates.

I recognize the difficulty in recruiting and retaining physicians in Hawaii, especially on neighbor islands and in rural areas. It is important that providers who practice in these areas are adequately reimbursed for the health care services they provide to patients, and that barriers to accessing care are removed. I appreciate your support for the Hawaii congressional delegation's letter to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' requesting that they increase the Medicare physician reimbursement rate to reflect the cost of practice in Hawaii. You can be assured that I will continue to fight for adequate and fair reimbursement of physicians in Hawaii.

I also support other efforts to address the physician shortage. I am a proponent of expanding access to telehealth services in Medicare, which is particularly important to the neighbor islands. I recently introduced the *CONNECT for Health Act of 2019* (S. 2741), which would expand telehealth services to promote higher quality of care and increase access to care. In addition, I introduced the *Ensuring Access to General Surgery Act of 2019* (S. 2859), which would produce high quality data on where general surgeons are in short supply around the country. This bill would be an important first step in addressing the shortage of surgeons in rural and under-served areas.

Please be assured that I will continue to advocate for access to quality, affordable health care, as well as working to ensure fair Medicare reimbursement for Hawaii's physicians. I appreciate the great work of the EHI IPA, and I will be sure to keep your organization in mind as I continue to work on this issue. Mahalo again for taking the time to contact me.

Sincerely,


BRIAN SCHATZ
U.S. Senator

