

Hawaii's Doctor Shortage

The state of Hawaii has 2,819 active physicians but needs at least 3,481 to care for an aging population (Consillio). A shortage of doctors has been a recurring problem in Hawaii, specifically on the Big Island. This has led to various problems such as higher prices for consultations, overworked practitioners, and even lower quality care. Significantly, people on the Big Island who are in need of trauma care, orthopedic care, or other surgeries often have to fly to Oahu (Mangieri). This inconveniences patients, as well as delays much needed medical appointments for up to months. In order to address this problem of the shortage of doctors on the Big Island, the state must partner with hospitals to give incentives for doctors to work on the Big Island.

Overall, the shortage of physicians in Hawaii has caused numerous problems for the state. Hawaii's physicians are constantly moving to the mainland where opportunities seem to be greater. Significantly, cities and states across the mainland are taking aggressive recruiting steps that lure Hawaii doctors and medical students, offering benefits such as tax breaks and medical school loan payoffs (Mangieri). Specifically, the Big Island has the most severe shortage at a whopping 41% ("Study: Hawaii's Physicians Shortage"). This issue has caused the Big Island to lack the medical care that it needs to provide to citizens. Lacking the medical care it needs to provide to its people, physicians are often overworked, wait lists for appointments can take months, and overall quality of care is lower. Moreover, a national study found that in Hawaii, largely because of the Big Island and the lack of medical care, Hawaii is the sixth worst state for medical experts to work (Kaholokula). If this issue is not resolved in fifty years, the Big Island could see a continuation of this unhealthy trend. Physicians will continue to leave the island,

further increasing the shortage of physicians on the Big Island. As a result, wait times for medical appointments will only increase, and the Big Island's overall health care will only become worse.

In order to address the shortage of physicians, the County of the Big Island must provide incentives for doctors on the Big Island through a partnership between the state and local hospitals. Similar to the shortage of physicians, the Hawaii State Department of Education faces the problem of teacher shortages in certain locations. The DOE recognizes the staffing challenges in remote areas, and in hard-to-staff locations, it provides a yearly \$3,000 incentive bonus to licensed teachers (Lee). Similarly, through a partnership between hospitals and the County of the Big Island, hospitals could give incentives, such as lucrative recruitment offers and job dependability to entice physicians to go to the Big Island. These enticing offers, similar to the offers teachers receive, could include yearly bonuses and signing bonuses. However, in order to keep the physicians on the Big Island, they should be offered job security and even mentorship from other doctors. In fifty years, the Big Island could see its physicians provided with attractive incentives, and they would not be so inclined to move elsewhere for other opportunities. Rather, the Big Island's physicians would receive incentives from hospitals through a partnership with the County of the Big Island, and the physician shortage on the Big Island would dissipate.

Clarence T.C. Ching cared deeply about his community and the well being of Hawaii's people. Mr. Ching founded the Kukui Gardens to provide low income housing for the less fortunate, extending much needed aid to the community. Moreover, listed in the Clarence T.C. Ching Foundation's Mission Statement includes the goals to provide financial grants to assist hospitals, as well as provide financial grants for the research and study in science. By finding

ways to provide medical care for the Big Island, we are living out Mr. Ching's legacy by providing for Hawaii's people and supporting healthy communities.

By providing physicians with incentives through a partnership between the government and hospitals, physicians are more inclined to both work and stay on the Big Island. By bringing physicians to the Big Island, it will be able to provide its people with adequate health services. If people are cared for and healthy, the community will flourish and contribute to a better society.

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