

# Resolution

No. 22-241

## URGING THE COUNTY OF MAUI'S SUPPORT FOR KAISER PERMANENTE TO RESOLVE MENTAL HEALTH CLINICIAN DISPUTE

WHEREAS, according to the Hawai'i and Pacific Basin Area Health Education Center, the State of Hawai'i is short hundreds of mental healthcare providers with many practitioners not taking new patients or backlogged with individuals often waiting months for care – putting them at increased risk; and

WHEREAS, according to “Prescribing Hope Part II: Trapped On The Streets,” a Hawaii News Now special report, a large portion of Hawai'i's houseless population suffers from schizophrenia, severe substance abuse, and other incapacitating mental illnesses; and

WHEREAS, the mental health crisis in the United States has been called the “invisible crisis” and has been heightened by the isolation, stress, and other adversities many individuals experienced during the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, despite a surging demand for mental health services in Hawai'i, Kaiser Permanente (“Kaiser”) employs only 57 mental health care workers including psychologists, social workers, psychiatric nurses, and chemical dependency counselors to care for over 264,000 members across Hawai'i; and

WHEREAS, earlier this year, the National Committee for Quality Assurance (“NCQA”), a private nonprofit organization that accredits and rates health care providers, downgraded Kaiser's accreditation status in Hawai'i and placed the Kaiser Health Maintenance Organization (“Kaiser HMO”) under “corrective action” for deficiencies in providing accessible mental health care; and

WHEREAS, the NCQA found that Kaiser's lack of accessible mental health care “poses a potential safety risk” and prior efforts to improve access “have been largely ineffective”; and

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WHEREAS, in a 57-page complaint to the U.S. Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, Kaiser mental health clinicians cited internal Kaiser HMO documentation that shows patients were waiting months for initial therapy sessions, which is a clear violation of clinical standards, and that only 28 percent of Kaiser HMO's out-of-network mental health providers were accepting new Kaiser patients; and

WHEREAS, in its December 2021 response to the complaint, Kaiser referenced its plan to hire 44 additional therapists; however, the number of full-time Kaiser employees providing direct mental health therapy in Hawai'i has actually decreased since that time; and

WHEREAS, Kaiser is one of the largest nonprofit healthcare organizations in the United States and reported an \$8.1 billion profit last year, up from \$6.4 billion in 2020 and \$7.4 billion in 2019; and

WHEREAS, mental health clinicians employed at Kaiser will march on picket lines this week as they have every weekday since August 29, 2022, to compel Kaiser to address its mental health care understaffing crisis; and

WHEREAS, as Andrea Kumura, a licensed clinical social worker at Kaiser stated in the press release announcing the initial strike: "People's lives are at stake"; now, therefore,

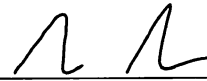
BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the County of Maui:

1. That it urges the County of Maui's support for Kaiser Permanente to: (1) improve the recruitment and retention of therapists by settling a contract that provides them with the same wage increases and benefits received by nearly 2,000 other unionized Kaiser Permanente workers in Hawai'i; and (2) increase staffing so Kaiser Permanente can provide timely appointments to mental health patients;
2. That it supports the rights of Maui County workers and residents seeking mental health support and finds that one mental health clinician for every 4,600 patients is detrimental to the health and lives of Maui County residents; and

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3. That certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to Greg A. Adams, Chair and Chief Executive Officer, Kaiser Permanente; Dr. John Yang, President and Medical Director, Hawaii Permanente Medical Group, Inc.; Izeah R. Garcia, Political and Community Organizer, National Union of Healthcare Workers; the Honorable Brian E. Schatz, United States Senator; the Honorable Mazie Hirono, United States Senator; the Honorable Kaiali'i Kahele, United States Representative; the Honorable Ed Case, United States Representative; the Honorable David Y. Ige, Governor, State of Hawai'i; and the Honorable Michael P. Victorino, Mayor, County of Maui.

INTRODUCED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of two stylized, cursive 'A' characters.

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GABE JOHNSON