



Global Leadership for Health Education & Health Promotion

January 31, 2013

Hawaii State Legislature
House Committee on Health Hearing
Date: February 1, 2013
Time: 8:30 A.M.
HB 1098

The Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) is writing in support of Hawaii HB 1098. We strongly encourage the Hawaii legislature to request a sunrise review of health educators to help protect the health of the public.

The Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) is a 501 (c)(3) professional organization founded in 1950 to provide global leadership to the profession of health education and health promotion. SOPHE contributes to the health of all people and the elimination of health disparities through advances in health education theory and research; excellence in professional preparation and practice; and advocacy for public policies conducive to health. SOPHE is the only independent professional organization devoted exclusively to health education and health promotion. Members include behavioral scientists, faculty, practitioners, and students engaged in disease prevention and health promotion in both the public and private sectors. Collectively, SOPHE's 4,000 national and chapter members (including those in Hawaii) work in universities, medical/health care settings, businesses, voluntary health agencies, international organizations, and all branches of federal/state/local government. There are currently 19 SOPHE chapters covering more than 30 states and regions across the country.

Health educators work to improve the health status of individuals, communities, states, and the nation through primary, secondary and tertiary prevention; enhance the quality of life for all people; and reduce costly premature deaths and disability. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), there were an estimated 63,410 health educators in 2010. Additionally, DOL estimates that employment of health educators will grow by 37 percent from 2010 to 2020, much faster than the average for all occupations. Thus, it is timely that Hawaii is seeking to address health educators' roles in individual and population health and to ensure the public is protected from unregulated or incompetent practice.

There are some 250 professional preparation programs in colleges and universities that formally train health educators at the baccalaureate, master's and doctoral levels. Health education curricula include a unique combination of instruction from the behavioral/social, epidemiological, environmental, and biomedical sciences, as well as health administration and public policy. The Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) designation signifies that an individual has met eligibility requirements for and has successfully passed a competency-based examination demonstrating skill and knowledge of the Seven Areas of Responsibility of Health Education Specialists, upon which the credential is based. MCHES, the master's level certification, includes a set of advanced eligibility requirements. Health educators maintain an ongoing commitment to continuing education throughout the career span.

With the enactment of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) new opportunities exist for health education professionals to broaden their impact and participate in the various new models of service delivery to achieve or further the goals of health promotion for all through education. Improvement in quality and efficiency within health care organizations are expected to occur through the establishment of Accountable Care Organizations (ACO's) through Medicare and Patient-Centered Medical Homes (PCMH) through Medicaid. In 2010 an *American Journal of Preventative Medicine* article compared the core competencies of a health educator and demonstrated how well they could contribute to the core principles of a patient-centered medical home. In addition to the well-established multiple roles a health educator fulfills on community, family and individual levels, health educators also possess knowledge and skills that can strengthen the physician-directed team and lead to improved patient health outcomes. Following are a few examples:

- Health educators can assist the physician-directed team by coordinating and integrating care and using a more holistic approach to prevention and disease management and promoting health literacy.
- Health educators possess skills such as providing self-management support coaching, serving as a bridge to other health care and community resources, helping patients adopt and maintain healthy behaviors, helping families build social and physical environments that support behavior change, assisting patients in navigating the health care system, providing emotional support, and providing assistance with practice-level quality improvement.
- Health educators are trained to know the process of improving patient safety by identifying a health problem, developing a plan of action to resolve the problem and evaluating the success of the proposed intervention.

Chronic conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer, consume more than 75 percent of the \$2.2 trillion spent on health care in the United States each year. It is estimated that spending as little as \$10 per person on proven preventive interventions could save the country over \$16 billion in just five years. We must ensure that patients, families and consumers are not harmed or put at risk by misinformation or advice on disease prevention or treatment.

Thank you for consideration of these comments in support of HB 1098. Please contact Jerrica Mathis at jmathis@sophe.org or 202-408-9804 with any additional questions.

Sincerely,



Kelli McCormack Brown, PhD, CHES
President



Elaine Auld, MPH, MCHES
Chief Executive Officer