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Social Science Research Institute (SSRI)
Telecommunications and Social Informatics Research Program (TASI)
Pacific Basin Telehealth Resource Center (PBTRC)

April 1, 2021

Aimee Malia Grace
Director, Office of Strategic Health Priorities
University of Hawai'i (UH) System
2425 Campus Road, Sinclair 10
Honolulu, HI 96822

Subject: Letter of Support for the University of Hawai'i Rural Health Research Center

Dear Dr. Grace,

On behalf of the Pacific Basin Telehealth Resource Center (PBTRC), I am writing to express my full support and strong endorsement of the University of Hawai'i's (UH) to establish a Rural Health Research Center.

The PBTRC is one of 14 Telehealth Resource Centers with an aim to increase the availability of health care to underserved and rural populations. The PBTRC provides technical assistance and program support for Hawai'i and Pacific Island communities for the development, implementation, and integration of telehealth including program development, education, training, tracking information on legal and regulatory issues, evaluation, business models, and strategic planning.

Major components of our mission are to advance health equity and to assist rural health care providers and communities to improve access to quality and cost-effective health care services. We have seen first-hand the challenges in these regions with addressing health disparities and ensuring that rural areas have the health workforce they need. As such, we confirm the dire need for a UH Rural Health Research Center and would be pleased to work collaboratively with this center to advance rural health workforce policy and health equity.

As you know, we have worked closely together as part of the UHealthy Hawai'i initiative to leverage the UH System to improve health and health care in Hawai'i and the Pacific through various telehealth initiatives. We appreciate our ongoing partnership with the UH System Office of Strategic Health Initiatives, which would direct the Rural Health Research Center, and would look forward to advancing data analysis and evidence-based policymaking together if this project were funded.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our strong support of UH's proposed Rural Health Research Center.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christina Higa', written in a cursive style.

Christina Higa, PhD
Co-Program Director
Pacific Basin Telehealth Resource Center