

May 5, 2020

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

We write in support of the COVID-19 Telehealth Program applications submitted by the Lanai Community Health Center (LCHC) and Kokua Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Family Services (KKV) to the Federal Communications Commission.

The COVID-19 Telehealth Program will award \$200 million to health care providers to assist in providing connected care services and connected devices to their patients in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This program is especially important for health care providers like LCHC and KKV who have a large majority of patients that live in areas where access to health care facilities and internet services are limited.

LCHC provides critical health care services to the residents of rural Lanai, and its planned expansion of telehealth services fit squarely within the goals of the COVID-19 Telehealth Program. Since 2008, LCHC—the only federally-qualified health center on the island of Lanai—has served the uninsured and low-income residents in its small, rural, and remote community. LCHC provides evidence-based, culturally sensitive services to the 2,800 residents of Lanai, the most of whom are minorities. About 50% of Lanai’s residents live below 200% of the federal poverty level, and many rely on LCHC to provide essential health care services that are otherwise not available.

Given its rurality and the shortage of health care providers on the island, comprehensive health care on Lanai is limited. Because of these challenges, LCHC utilizes telehealth services, which have been instrumental in improving access to specialty care services for Lanai’s residents. LCHC’s application to the COVID-19 Telehealth Program would allow it to increase capacity to monitor and treat patients on Lanai while still reducing the number of who would visit the physical health center and risk being exposed to COVID-19.

Similarly, KKV is a community health center that serves the people of Kalihi Valley, located on the Island of Oahu. KKV provides community health services to the 15,000 residents of Kalihi Valley, including the 4,564 low-income residents of Kalihi public housing and the 1,500 residents who are home-bound. Kalihi Valley has the highest density population in the state of Hawaii, making it highly susceptible to a COVID-19 outbreak should community spread begin in the area. Due to their age, pre-existing conditions, and socioeconomic status, the majority of

KKV patients are high-risk for COVID-19. These patients are further jeopardized by the pandemic because of increased difficulty in accessing health resources for their non-COVID-related alignments during this crisis. Expansion of its telehealth services would allow KKV to better service its community and combat the effects of COVID-19. Unfortunately, many patients lack the internet access and connected devices that would allow them to benefit from such an expansion of telehealth services. Funding from the COVID-19 Telehealth program would allow KKV to expand its care online and provide connected devices to patients in need.

Throughout the Hawaiian Islands, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for internet services and connected devices to treat patients remotely. Funding through the FCC's COVID-19 Telehealth Program will allow LCHC and KKV, two community care facilities with longstanding records of success, to provide vital services to communities in critical need. Accordingly, we request your full and fair consideration of their grant requests. If you need additional information, please contact Christianna Barnhart at 202-224-3233 (Christianna_Barnhart@schatz.senate.gov) or Jeff Hantson at 202-224-4724 (Jeff_Hantson@hirono.senate.gov).

Sincerely,



BRIAN SCHATZ
United States Senator



MAZIE K. HIRONO
United States Senator

cc: The Honorable Brendon Carr, Commissioner
Kris Monteith, Chief, Wireline Competition Bureau