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Media Note:

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Local funders award \$50,000 in grants for conference on health care coverage expansion

HONOLULU (July 14, 2003)—Grants from the HMSA Foundation and Kaiser Permanente Hawaii will fund a major conference on the mounting problem of Hawai'i's medically uninsured.

Two grants totaling \$50,000—\$40,000 from HMSA Foundation and \$10,000 from Kaiser Permanente Hawaii—are underwriting The Hawai'i Uninsured Project's "Coverage for All" conference, slated for Wednesday, October 29 at the Hilton Hawaiian Village. Gathering policy makers, community leaders and national health policy experts, the conference will present a clear picture of Hawaii's uninsured population, discuss barriers to health coverage, unveil the latest research on models for coverage expansion, and explore solutions.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, Hawaii's uninsured population has doubled from 5 percent in the 1980s to nearly 10 percent in 2001. The problem is larger than the 120,000 people who are directly affected. Healthcare costs of the uninsured are paid for by every taxpayer. In 2002, Hawaii's hospitals lost an estimated \$95 million due to uncompensated care. Hospitals and community clinics shoulder the burden of providing care with little or no reimbursement, while businesses and individuals are affected with higher insurance premiums.

"Lack of health insurance is an issue that affects all of us. We gratefully acknowledge our conference funders, without whose support this milestone event could not take place," Joan White, executive director of The Hawai'i Uninsured Project, said. "The Coverage for All Conference is a huge step toward our ultimate goal of expanding coverage for Hawai'i's people."

HMSA Foundation's funding will support general conference costs, while Kaiser's grant is earmarked to bring Emily Friedman, independent health policy and ethics analyst and one of healthcare's "100 Most Powerful People" (Modern Healthcare, August 2002), to the conference as a keynote speaker. Friedman has been studying the Hawaii healthcare system since 1986 and is the author of *The Aloha Way: Health Care Structure and Finance in Hawaii*, a history of health care financing in Hawaii (HMSA Foundation, 1993), among many other titles.

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HMSA Foundation was established in 1986 to extend HMSA's commitment to health promotion, education and research; and the promotion of social welfare. Kaiser Permanente Hawaii is the state's largest and most experienced health maintenance organization. Its 350 physicians and 4,000 employees serve more than 233,000 members statewide. Kaiser Permanente operates 16 outpatient clinics on Oahu, Maui, and Hawaii, and contracts with the Kauai Medical Group to provide care for its Garden Island members.

The Hawai'i Uninsured Project's mission is to ensure access to health coverage in Hawaii. The project is spearheading solutions through community collaboration and fact-based research. The project is supported by grants from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - Health Resources and Services Administration and local funders such as Hawaii State Department of Health and HMSA Foundation.



The Hawai'i Uninsured Project is a program of the Hawai'i Institute for Public Affairs (HIPA), an independent, nonpartisan and nonprofit organization dedicated to elevating Hawaii's public decision-making process through sound public policy analysis, research and community collaboration.

For more information, visit www.HipaOnline.com or call (808)585-7931.

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