



Advocacy Efforts for Mandating Pharmacy Services Reimbursements in the State of Hawai'i



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Background

Nationwide, there are ongoing efforts to advocate for pharmacists' recognition as healthcare providers. In the 2022 state legislative sessions, 178 bills were introduced in 38 states related to the pharmacist scope of practice, reimbursement for pharmacy services provided by pharmacists, and/or the designation of pharmacist provider status. Many of the bills included the services: immunization, contraceptive and HIV PrEP and PEP prescribing authority (Table 1).

Table 1. Pharmacy related bills introduced across the States in 2022

2022 Provider Status End-of-Year Legislative Update	State Abbreviations
Collaborative Practice Authority	AK, AZ, CT, ID, NH, NY, WV
Contraceptive Prescribing Authority	MA, CS
Opioid Antagonist and OUD Authority	CA, DE, FL, MO
Point-of-Care Testing Treatment Authority	AK, DE, KS, NY
Provider Designation & Payment of Services	AK, IL, MD
Vaccine Authority	AK, AZ, CT, FL, IA, IL, IN, PA, TN, VA, WY
Additional Authorities to Address Public Health Issues	AK, ID, IL, MD, WY

Locally and nationally, pharmacists, student pharmacists, and pharmacy technicians were granted regulatory approval to provide childhood vaccinations, COVID-19 vaccines and COVID testing to ages 3-18 during the pandemic due to availability of access to patients. Each county in the state of Hawai'i has a region that is medically underserved, and state legislatures recognizes that pharmacists can help bridge the gaps created by the physician shortage (Figure 1).

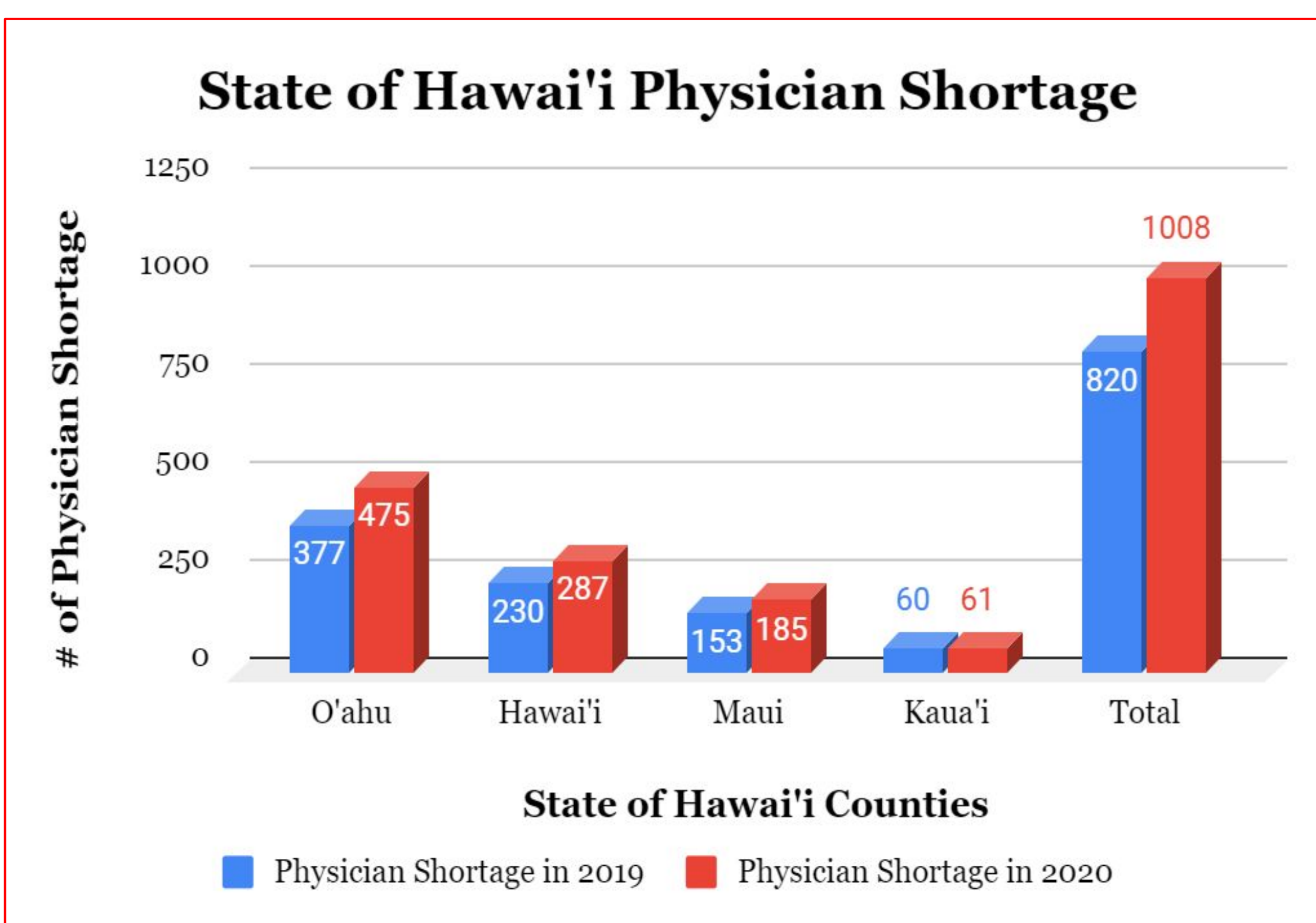


Figure 1. The physician shortage across the Hawaiian Islands is increasing

Methods

A multi-organizational effort between the faculty, staff and students of the Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy, University of Hawai'i Office of Government Relations (system and campus levels), and the Hawai'i Pharmacists Association was utilized to strengthen advocacy through multiple synchronized lines of effort. The lines of effort included: education and training (Figure 3), meetings with legislators and payors, and legislative testimony submissions (written and oral) for introduced bills (Figure 2) during the 2023 legislative session.

Bill #	Description	Status
SB 165	Mandates reimbursement for services by registered pharmacists by private and public health plans beginning Jan. 1 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduced in the Senate (Senate Bill) Companion bill to HB 1221 Passed First Reading Referred to the Health & Human Services and Commerce & Consumer Protection Committees on Jan 1, 2023
HB 1221	Mandates reimbursement for services by registered pharmacists by private and public health plans beginning Jan. 1 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduced in the House (House Bill) Companion bill to SB 165 Passed Second Reading Referred to the Consumer Protection & Commerce Committee on Feb. 2, 2023
SB 693	Auditor Assessment required for Mandates reimbursement for services by registered pharmacists by private and public health plans. Report must be submitted to the legislature before the 2024 Legislative session. Appropriates funds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduced in the Senate (Senate Bill) Passed Third Reading Senate disagreed with House Amendments Received notice of appointment of House conferees on April 24, 2023

Figure 2. The three bills introduced during the 2023 Hawai'i legislative session

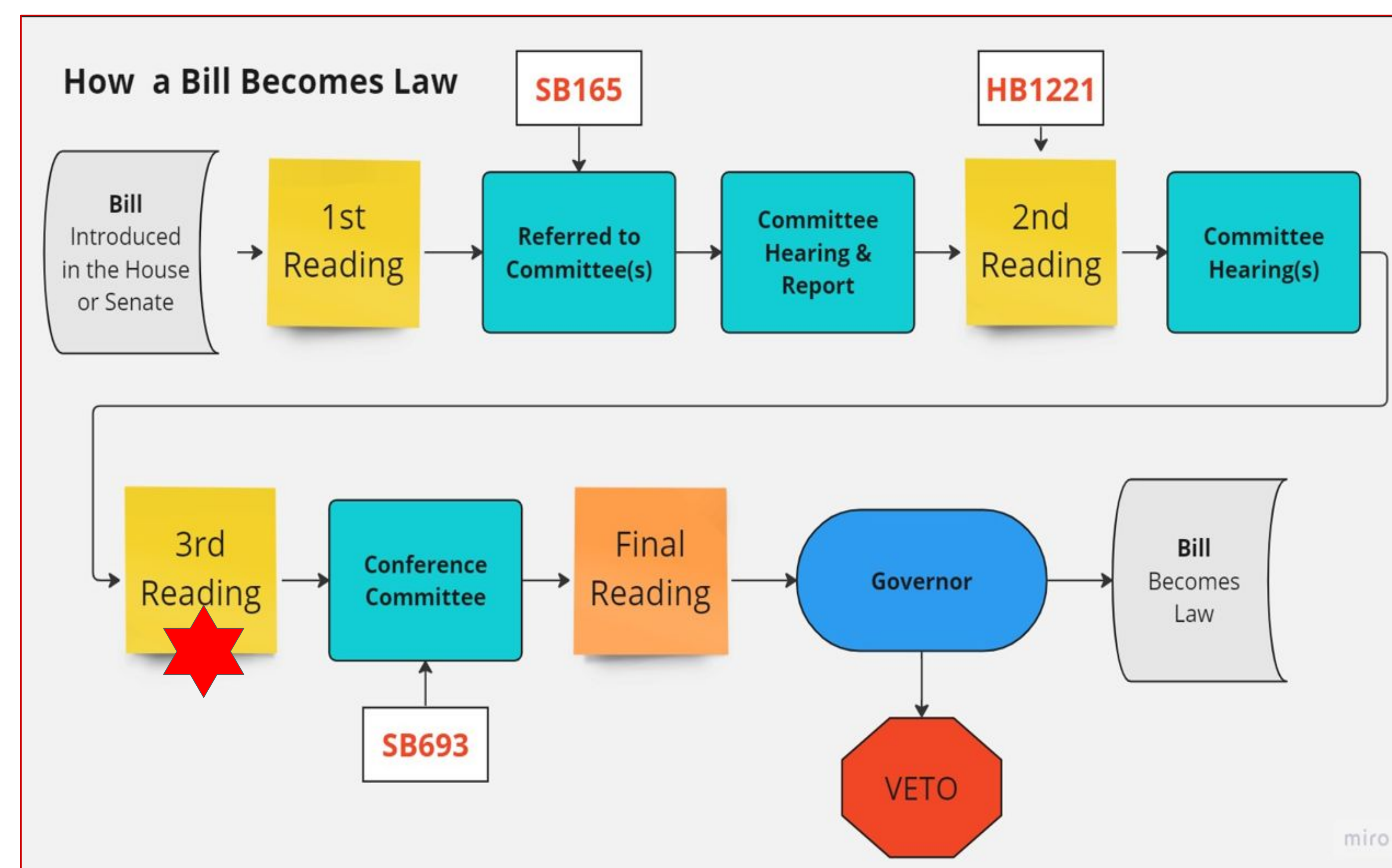


Figure 3. Training and education on how a bill becomes law was provided by the Office of Government Relations. *After a bill passes the 3rd reading in either the house or senate, the bill is crossed over to the alternate chamber prior to being appointed to committee conferees.

Results

Collaborative efforts resulted in an overwhelming amount of support and number of testimonies submitted to the state legislators. Proposed bills (Figure 2) were deliberated in state house and senate committees with little opposition. SB693 was appointed to house conferees (Figure 3) and a resolution mandating the auditor to assess the social and financial impacts of the bill in the 2024 legislative session was passed.

Discussion

There is much work to be done in preparation for the 2024 legislative session. Communication and education to Hawaii state legislators and stakeholders will take a continued collaborative effort from the college of pharmacy, UH System Government Relations and the Hawaii State Pharmacists' Association. Additionally, networking with and continued support from other healthcare professionals within the state will help in the implementation of the bill.

Conclusion

Patient access to healthcare services is at the forefront of legislative efforts related to pharmacists. Currently there is a physician shortage of between 40,000 to 60,000 physicians across the country. It is estimated that the shortage will increase to 139,000 by 2033. In the state of Hawai'i, the number of physicians will continue to decrease and the demand for physicians continue to outweigh the supply. Pharmacists are readily accessible and able to provide life-saving healthcare services across the continuum of care. The implementation of reimbursement for pharmacist services (Table 2) will be sustainable, contributing to better healthcare access to the State.

Table 2. Available pharmacy services that are currently not reimbursed by health plans

Patient Care Services
Comprehensive Medication Review
Chronic Disease State Management
Immunizations
Medication Therapy Management
Prescribe and Dispense Contraceptives, HIV PrEP/PEP, Naloxone & Nicotine Replacement Therapy
Preventative Screenings (COVID, Flu, H. Pylori, RSV, Strep, STI, UTI & others)
Wellness Screenings