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Contact: Julie Schweitzer Ford
Schweitzer Consulting
(808-384-3386)
Julie@SchweitzerConsulting.com

NEED FOR HAWAII HEALTHCARE EMPLOYEES JUMPS 76 PERCENT SINCE 2019, NEW REPORT SHOWS

Today's report by the Healthcare Association of Hawaii documents strategies to boost employment for the state's 3,873 healthcare job openings

HONOLULU – HAH.org – The state's need for healthcare professionals has grown 76 percent – from 2,200 job openings in 2019 to 3,873 openings today – according to a new report by the Healthcare Association of Hawaii (HAH) and the Healthcare Workforce Initiative (HWI). The need, exacerbated in part by the pandemic, puts increased pressure on employers to recruit, train, and retain qualified employees, while also opening new job opportunities for current and prospective healthcare employees.

Healthcare employers reported 3,873 Hawaii job openings within 89 patient-facing job roles, for an average job vacancy rate of 17 percent, compared to a 10 percent vacancy rate in the 2019 inaugural report. The **Hawaii Healthcare Workforce Initiative 2022 Report** shows the job turnover rate climbed to 20 percent, up from 16 percent in 2019. The average length of time to fill open positions remained the same, at a lengthy six to 12 months.

The survey of job openings was conducted by HAH and the HWI between February and June of 2022. It is the result of ongoing collaboration among Hawaii's healthcare industry, education leaders, and the broader local community. Originally set for release in 2021, the report was delayed due to surges of the COVID-19 infection.

The HWI report is the state's only industry-generated research that counts the actual number of non-physician healthcare job openings. It focuses beyond physician needs because that profession is already so well documented. Neighbor island data – included in the report for the first time – shows that the smallest islands, such as Lanai and Molokai, have the highest percentage of vacancies, and that additional healthcare training programs need to be available on more islands than Oahu.

The 2022 report ranks Hawaii's most in-demand healthcare jobs as follows:

- **Registered Specialty Nurses: 999 job openings.** This represents a 116 percent increase (or 536 new positions) since 2019.
- **Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) and Clinical Assistants/Nurse Aides: 744 openings.** Openings increased by 78 percent (or 327 new job openings) since 2019.
- **Entry-Level Positions: 320 total openings:**
 - **Personal Care Assistants: 181 openings**
 - **Phlebotomists: 128 openings**
 - **Patient Service Representatives: 11 openings**
- **Medical Assistants: 278 openings.** Job vacancies for this position increased by 162 percent (or 172 positions) since 2019.
- **Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs). 211 openings,** creating a statewide LPN job vacancy rate of 30 percent. Job openings increased by 47 percent (or 67 positions) since 2019.
- **Social Workers: 126 openings.** This represents an increase of 110 percent (66 positions) since 2019.

The report tracks both challenges and solutions in local education and training programs for the most urgently needed professions. While momentum has been generated since the 2019 report, training gaps remain. For example, many training programs are only offered on Oahu. The establishment of more neighbor island college and high school-based training programs – such as the recently created programs for nurse aides, LPNs, and phlebotomists on Maui and Kauai – will boost employment for those islands’ healthcare facilities.

In addition to issuing the biennium healthcare jobs report, the HWI meets regularly to explore strategies to boost healthcare employment. One such strategy includes recasting training programs for working individuals instead of focusing solely on full-time students. Such earn-and-learn “glidepath” programs enable healthcare professionals to become or remain employed while advancing their careers, a win for both employers and employees. The report praises increased collaboration among employers and education partners, enabling more efficient pathways into high-demand, entry-level roles. At the same time, more training programs are needed for radiologic technologists, nurse aides, surgical technologists, acute pharmacy technicians, medical laboratory technologists/scientists, medical assistants, licensed practical nurses (LPNs), registered nurses (RNs), and social workers.

“We are here today to share the growing need for healthcare professionals in Hawaii and explain how we plan to recruit and train more healthcare employees in our local organizations,” said HAH President and CEO Hilton Raethel. “We want to thank our many collaborators and intensify the statewide conversation about healthcare as a career choice – and about healthcare as a vital part of Hawaii’s economy. These are important conversations because we must continue delivering quality care to our local residents over the long term.”

Healthcare Workforce Initiative Co-Chair Carl Hinson, Director of Workforce Development at Hawai'i Pacific Health (HPH), said employers are using evidence-based strategies to bolster the workforce, including growing the entry-level health certification pipeline and removing training barriers to create glidepaths into careers.

“About 50 percent of Hawaii’s public high school graduates do not go to college immediately after graduation. So, we’ve been making significant investments in ways for these high school students to train for living-wage salary jobs offered to them immediately upon graduation,” Hinson said. “The earn-and-learn programs allow employees to schedule training around their current job schedules. Once training is complete, they enter healthcare jobs, often with higher wages. These types of employer-driven training programs and academies help reduce barriers to healthcare education and make it easier for young adults to transition into healthcare careers in their own communities.”

Healthcare Workforce Initiative Co-Chair Jason Chang, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of The Queen’s Health System and President, The Queen’s Medical Center said, “Today’s report represents cross-sector collaboration among Hawaii’s healthcare industry, the education sector, and community leaders.

“We all acknowledge that healthcare is not the only industry looking for more employees. At the same time, we recognize that healthcare is a uniquely high calling in that it impacts life — and quality of life — for nearly every Hawaii resident. That’s what drives our work to create more efficient glidepaths into healthcare career opportunities and our work to increase the pipeline of local students coming to work at local healthcare organizations.”

The HWI will use the 2022 data to continue researching and advocating for a stronger healthcare workforce. Following the interpretation of the 2019 report data, the HWI identified and pursued three strategies to increase the healthcare workforce: to increase the entry-level health certification pipeline; to attract and retain the healthcare workforce through glidepaths (or “earn-and-learn” programs); and to expand nurse residency and transition-to-specialty Registered Nurse programs. Despite the impacts of the pandemic, headway was made in each strategy.

About the Healthcare Association of Hawaii

The Healthcare Association of Hawaii (HAH) is the nonprofit trade organization serving Hawaii’s hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, Type II adult residential care homes, home care companies, and hospices. It is the state affiliate for national organizations that include the American Hospital Association (AHA), the American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living, and the National Association for Home Care and Hospice. For more information, go to HAH.org. Find us on Facebook, Twitter, (@HealthcareHAH), and Instagram.