



# Papa Ola Lokahi

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## **35-Year-Old Native Hawaiian Health Scholarship Program Stands Tall in the Face of a Challenge**

(Kaka'ako, O'ahu, Hawai'i) The Native Hawaiian Health Scholarship Program (NHHSP) continues its vital work of strengthening Hawai'i's health care workforce in the face of a recent legal challenge filed against the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services by a continental U.S.-based organization.

The Native Hawaiian Health Scholarship Program was established to address the needs identified in the *E Ola Mau Native Hawaiian Health Needs Study* of 1985. Lack of accessible and acceptable health care providers was identified across the board as a cause of the dismal health statistics among Native Hawaiians. The research demonstrated the need for more Native Hawaiians in health care. Thus, recommendations were made to achieve parity in the health care professions by providing opportunities to Native Hawaiians in medicine, nursing, social work, dentistry and dental hygiene, public health, nutrition, mental health and community outreach.

The Native Hawaiian Health Scholarship Program successfully recruits and nurtures professionals-in-training for primary and mental health care disciplines most needed. They are prepared to deliver quality, culturally informed health services. This merit-based program covers tuition, books and other related expenses.

Since 1991, nearly 360 scholarships across 20 disciplines have been awarded to eligible individuals. Upon matriculation, each is placed in service to a medically underserved area in Hawai'i to serve the communities where care is most needed. Most remain in medically underserved communities beyond their obligated service tenures, often rising to positions of leadership.

"Efforts to dismantle programs like this ignore both the historical context and the ongoing need to safeguard equitable access to care throughout Hawai'i," asserts Dr. Sheri Daniels, CEO of Papa Ola Lōkahi. "These scholars represent the next generation of healers for our communities, a presence that uplifts the health of all."

*He 'a'ali'i ku makani kākou; 'a'ohe makani nana e kula'i.*  
A wind-resisting 'a'ali'i bush; no gale can push us over.  
*'Ōlelo No'eau #507*

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