

**HAWAI‘I STATE COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH (SCMH)  
DRAFT MEETING MINUTES  
March 10, 2026, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon  
Via Zoom with in-person location at  
Hale F Conference Room, 2201 Waimano Home Road, Pearl City, 96782**

Members Present: Katherine Aumer, Kathleen Merriam, Forrest Wells, Mary Pat Waterhouse, Danielle Bergan, John Betlach, Tiana Celis-Webster, Lea Dias, Jon Fujii, Heidi Ilyavi, Jackie Jackson, Christine Montague-Hicks, Kristin Will

Members absent: Asianna Zaragosa-Torres

Staff Present: Carolyn Weygan-Hildebrand (AMHD), Stacy Molina (AMHD), Keli Acquaro (CAMHD)

Guests Present: Marissa “Squirrel” Celeste, Joy Soares

**I. Call to Order, Roll Call**

Chairperson Katherine Aumer called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. Quorum was established at 9:07 a.m.

**II. Announcements**

- In case of audiovisual communication breakdown that could not be solved within 30 minutes, the Council meeting will recess and resume on March 17, 2026.
- Annual NAMI State Conference on April 13 from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm.
- May is Mental Health Awareness Month.
- Kona Low storms on its way. We are on alert for various flash flood warnings and watches, be safe.
- 10 Governors appointees for State Council on Mental Health and Service Area Boards with the Senate for advice and consent.
- Two Kauai Service Area Board members appointed.
- Congratulations Kathleen Merriam on reappointment, hearing yesterday.
- Congratulations Squirrel on appointment starting July 2026

**III. Community Input**

The Council did not receive any written or oral testimony.

**IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

The following were approved unanimously.

- January 13, 2026, Meeting Minutes – Mary Pat Waterhouse motioned for approval, Danielle Bergan and Lea Davis seconded.
- February 10, 2026, Meeting Minutes – Forrest Wells motioned for approval, Jackie Jackson and Christine Montague-Hicks seconded.

## **V. Old Business**

### **A. Past Presentations Thank You Letters**

- The following letters were approved unanimously:
  - Mr. Scott Murakami – Jon Fujii motioned for approval, MP Waterhouse seconded.
  - Windward Community College – MP Waterhouse motioned for approval, Forrest Wells seconded
  - Dr. Dayna Schultz – Danielle Bergan motioned for approval, MP Waterhouse seconded.
  - Dr. Judi Steinmann – MP Waterhouse motioned for approval, C Montague-Hicks seconded.

### **B. Presentation**

- 2026 Guiding Values, Goals and Actions – MP Waterhouse motions to approve, C Montague-Hicks, L Davis, and F Wells seconded.
- Our Values, remove statement “In a time of change”.
- Add Vision Statement.
- Aloha in Action, change “community” to “the people of Hawaii”.
- Visual artist to finalize documents to ensure proper messaging is relayed.

## **VI. New Business**

### **A. Review of 2026 Legislation**

- Overall Governance
  - HB1889 HD1 – K Aumer motions to support, F Wells seconded.
  - SB3077 SD1 – K Merriam motions to support, K Aumer seconded.
- Workforce
  - HB1591 HD1 – K Aumer motions to support, F Wells seconded.
  - HB1574 HD1 – K Aumer motions to support, L Dias seconded.
- Care Services, Care Coordination, Insurance
  - SB2921 – K Aumer motions to support, J Jackson seconded. J Fujii and L Dias abstained.
- Homelessness and Housing Solutions
  - SB2803 – K Merriam motions to support, F Wells seconded. J Fujii and L Dias abstained.

- SB2557 – F Well motions to support, K Aumer seconded. J Fujii and L Davis abstained.
- Crisis Services and Suicide Prevention
  - SB3001 – D Bergan motions to support, C Montague-Hicks seconded.
- Forensic Population
  - SB3142 SD1 – F Wells motions to support, K Aumer seconded.

B. Presentation by Joy Soares, Med-QUEST Division, Hawaii Department of Human Services “Rural Health Transformation Initiative, An Informal Presentation”

Five-year cooperative agreement between Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the State of Hawaii. It is designed to strengthen healthcare in rural communities. The program provides funding and strategic support to help rural healthcare providers build the infrastructure they need to deliver coordinated, high-quality care and participate in modern healthcare payment models. Budget for year one is \$188 million. CMS is specifically involved in five areas: strengthening rural healthcare systems and providers, improving care coordination and access to services, supporting value-based care and payment transformation, addressing health-related social needs, and improving population health.

Q: What partners do you have so far?

A: Quite a bit of partners providing feedback via governor’s office on how to best use the money. In process of creating criteria for application process. It will be designed to be competitive.

Q: Are you setting up different grant funding for people to apply for?

A: There are other infrastructures that build on things like education, connectivity, or other areas. CMS is part of Rural Respite Network (RRN). Medicaid has a medical respite program.

Q: What do you consider respite care?

A: There are three different specific things that went live in January 2026; pre or post hospitalization, short-term recuperative care, short-term post-hospitalization.

Q: Will there be RFI’s or RFP’s put out?

A: There will be different approaches depending on the project. We value putting out competitive bids so we can make sure that the money is being used by organizations that demonstrate that they’ll have the greatest amount of impact.

Q: Are you at all concerned about time in which it needs to be spent?

A: Yes, year one ends September 30. There is a lot of pressure to figure out how to get the money.

Q: What is AHEAD?

A: Achieving Healthcare Efficiency through Accountability. It is another grant focused on how we will start paying for providers differently by getting away from paying solely for volume to trying to figure out how to transition to paying for quality and outcomes. Moving away from fee for service and toward value-based contract.

Q: With the value-based model, will you be working more closely with certain insurance companies, organizations, POs, or physician organizations? And working directly with them?

A: Yes. We believe if that if we change the way one payer pays for services, it is so much more efficient if all of them change, because then providers won't have so many different rules. We have a governance committee that helps through this. Earliest start date for primary care is January 1, 2028, and for hospitals January 1, 2029.

Q: Will funding be provided before then?

A: We already received 12 million for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation to work on value-based care transition through AHEAD. A lot of funds will be used by consultants to figure out the technical and methodologies of how this will work. We will also engage providers and communities and get feedback.

Q: Are you working with different states that have gotten funding?

A: Yes. We are sharing our procurement strategies, best practices, materials, and other things.

Q: Will you work with or help smaller organizations?

A: While we're trying to get the funds out to those organizations that we think will be highly functioning, we don't make assumptions that those organizations are always fancy large organizations with a tremendous amount of staff and resources. That's why we really want to look at our criteria and figure out how we can best make sure that the funds go to community organizations.

## **VII. Informational Reports by Council Members**

### **A. Island Representative Reports**

#### **1. O'ahu Service Area Board meeting –Jackie Jackson**

Last meeting in January and approved November minutes. Next meeting March 18. Mental Health Tech Program enrollment doubled. Last legislative session approved DOH to transition all 10 remaining civil service positions to permanent to help with recruitment, retention and sending representatives to job fairs. Governors' office is trying to recruit and hire laid-off federal workers and a handful have made it through the process. Informative talk with Ben Davis about jail diversion program, mental health court, and the \$10,000 he won for the Koolau Clubhouse.

2. Hawai'i Service Area Board meeting – John Betlach

People are reluctant to move to isolated parts of Big Island due to the length of hiring process and pay cuts. Concern about cutting positions. NAMI provides classes for mental health issues.

**B. Government Sector Representative Reports - Mental Health Care**

1. MedQUEST/Medicaid sector & HACDACS – Jon Fujii

Ohana Health Plan is leaving the Medicaid market.

2. Education – Christine Montague-Hicks

Office of Student Support Services were keynote panels at the conference last week and presented advancing, suicide prevention, trauma-informed and culturally respective care, suicide awareness and prevention, strengthening communities to prevent human trafficking. Hosting Youth Mental Health First Aid Instructors Training 3/31 – 4/2.

**VIII. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:04 pm.