



DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

News Release

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LABOR DIRECTOR APPOINTS SMALL BUSINESS ADVOCATE AND MEDICAL DOCTOR TO PREPAID HEALTH CARE ADVISORY BOARD

HONOLULU – Director of Labor and Industrial Relations, Nelson Befitel, announced today the appointments of Beverly Harbin and Mark Stitham, M.D. to the Hawai'i Prepaid Health Care Advisory Council. Harbin is a former small business owner, who currently serves as the Small Business Advocate for the Chamber of Commerce of Hawai'i. Dr. Mark Stitham is a psychiatrist in private practice. They will begin their appointments immediately to fill the positions left vacant by employees of the Hawaii Medical Services Association (HMSA) and Kaiser Permanente, the State's two largest health care insurance companies.

The Council makes recommendation about which insurance company can enter the healthcare market in Hawaii. Earlier today, Governor Linda Lingle signed into law SB 665, prohibiting employees of insurance companies, such as HMSA and Kaiser Permanente, from sitting on the Council.

“The signing of SB 665 was the first step toward encouraging other providers to enter the prepaid healthcare market, increasing competition, and lowering the cost of premiums for Hawai'i's businesses and working people,” said Befitel. “The next step is to encourage the Council to be flexible in reviewing innovative plans that come before them for approval.”

“Ms. Harbin and Dr. Stitham will bring a fresh perspective to the Council. Ms. Harbin will provide small businesses with a strong voice on the Council, while Stitham, after treating Hawaii’s working families for over two decades, will ensure their interests are protected.”

Mrs. Harbin is the former past president of the Hawaii Auto Repair & Gasoline Dealers Association and the Kakaako Improvement Association. She has served on various task forces and committees addressing issues relating to the Prepaid Health Care Act. She is currently a member of the Hawaii Uninsured Project, which is studying the impact of the Prepaid Health Care Act on Hawaii’s businesses and the economy.

Dr. Stitham’s medical practice encompasses adult, child, and forensic psychiatry. Dr. Stitham received his A.B. *magnum cum laude*, with distinction from Dartmouth University and his M.D. from Washington University – St. Louis. He is a clinical instructor at the University of Hawai`i Medical School – Department of Psychiatry and a member of the Medical Advisory Committee for the State of Hawai`i Board of Medical Examiners. Dr. Stitham is also a member of the Hawaii Medical Association, American Medical Association, American Association of Physicians and Surgeons and the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law.

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