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## Add your voice: “Access to Care” campaign urges Hawai‘i Island residents to share community needs

*Hawai‘i Island residents urged to share healthcare needs via survey*

*Healthcare providers, social service systems and local government partner on first-of-its-kind assessment*

**HILO, HAWAII** -- [Community First](#), together with half a dozen healthcare, government and social services partners, today announced the launch of Access to Care, a project with a simple goal: to better understand what communities on Hawai‘i Island need to improve their health.

Access to Care is a comprehensive 360-degree healthcare assessment that combines data from resident surveys, input from healthcare and social service providers, and feedback from policymakers into a snapshot to better understand the terrain of the healthcare landscape on Hawai‘i Island.

The vision of Access to Care is a community-focused healthcare collaborative that ensures everyone on Hawaii Island has timely access to quality healthcare, close to home.

Hawai‘i Island residents are encouraged to share their experience with the healthcare and social service systems via a simple, fast and 100 percent anonymous survey. Residents can also take the survey at pop-up events across the island throughout the month of November.

“Everyone’s voice matters,” said Randy Kurohara, executive director of Community First. “When you fill out the survey, it’s a chance to call out the needs you see and the gaps you want fixed -- for yourself, your family and your community. It’s a chance to get the resources your neighborhood, town, district or community needs.”

Survey results will be shared with policymakers, healthcare systems and social service providers so they can work together to streamline services, identify gaps in care and effect real change across the island. Ultimately, the hope is that providers from across the island can work together to develop centers of excellence and increase their capacity to serve more patients locally, while residents feel empowered by their healthcare options and understand the benefits of local care.

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The survey phase of Access to Care is the first public-facing element of the healthcare assessment, but the project has been ongoing for several months. Since summer 2021, internal assessments of Hawai'i Island's healthcare system have been conducted, including informal meetings with policymakers and focus groups with healthcare leaders.

Access to Care is different from other healthcare assessments in that it not only seeks to understand gaps in service, it also aims to find what is working in the healthcare system and extrapolate those models or services to build upon. Finding the disconnect and bridging the gap between healthcare providers who say they are able to see patients and residents who day they can't find care, for instance, will help systems that support the community be able to better plan and serve residents.

Access to Care also looks at data from patients who are flown off-island for procedures in an effort to understand what services can be administered locally to keep care on Hawai'i Island.

Importantly, Access to Care specifically seeks to connect with populations who have been underserved in the past, specifically those in rural areas, ALICE families (asset limited, income constrained, employed), and those who are limited English proficient (LEP); Hawai'i has the highest per capita rates of (LEP) persons in the nation.

"Our focus is protecting and serving the health of our community," said Lisa Rantz, president of the Hawai'i State Rural Health Association. "Beyond the medical and clinical needs of our community, what else do we need to be vibrant and thriving from a holistic health perspective? Creating more access to quality local care by informed data is the goal."

Each week, \$250 grocery gift cards will be given out in a randomized drawing as a mahalo to survey takers.

Convened by Community First, the following partners from across healthcare, public policy and social services have come together to lead this initiative:

- County of Hawai'i
- Hawai'i Health Systems Corporation
- Hawai'i State Department of Health
- Hawai'i State Rural Health Association
- Hilo Medical Center Foundation
- HMSA
- Pacific Basin Telehealth Resource Center

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**About Community First**

Community First is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit founded by the late Barry Taniguchi in 2014 to serve as a neutral forum for the community to come together, and as a catalyst for solutions to improve health and lower medical costs on Hawai'i Island based on the community good.

Through its programs, Community First hopes to shift the model of healthcare from reactively treating disease, to proactively caring for the health of every person on Hawai'i Island.