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Dear Editor:

It's disappointing to read selected comments that I made in an interview with your reporter Mark Abramson being taken out of context to help further your own opinions of the proposed takeover of our neighbor island community hospitals by Banner Health, a hospital system based in Arizona.

It seems that little or no consideration was given to the extensive comments I shared with him during the interview. I, of course, expressed our concern for the impact the takeover would have on Hawaii Health Systems Corporation employees, but I also spoke at length about the greater concern for the community. Rightfully so, you assume that HGEA is concerned for the welfare of its members; however, you wrongly assume that we are so myopic that we cannot see the greater impact – positive or negative – that a partnership would have on our communities.

As someone who was born and raised in Hilo, and who still has many family and friends who live there, I certainly am very concerned about access to quality health care in our rural communities. For that reason, as well as the fact that to date HHSC and Banner have provided very little information about their plans, I cannot and will not support Banner Health's takeover.

Having been involved in health care issues over the past 20 years, including serving as a member and chair of the Hawaii State Health Coordinating Council and a member of the task force to create the HHSC, I'm aware of the challenges and complexities of addressing Hawaii's health care needs.

Who doesn't want better access to health care with state-of-the-art medical services? On the surface, it's easy to be attracted to something that's fancy and new. But we must be diligent and pragmatic about entering into potential "partnerships" with companies that have no ties or commitment to Hawaii, who will likely bail when the economics of our safety net system don't meet their financial goals.

Readers expect your journalists to dig deeper for information and press for answers to tough questions: What is Banner's exit strategy if it cannot sustain their business? Will they abandon the communities, as was done at Hawaii Medical Center in West Oahu? Why should the state help subsidize operational costs for a mainland company, and pay half the bill for capital improvements to the facilities? Does raising the issues of the level of care to be provided, ensuring that taxpayers are properly served by the use of public funds to support private operations, and questioning the long-term commitment of an out-of-state vendor really constitute "union threats"?

I recognize your newspaper focuses on the business community, however, you are doing a great disservice to your readers by merely sharing one side of this issue and not having adequate information before forming your opinions.

**Randy Perreira**

Executive Director

HGEA/AFSCME Local 152