

(Dr. Jeffrey Akaka's correspondence is shared with permission.)

Dear Congresswoman Gabbard,

One of the sweetest things about receiving the Hawaii Medical Association 2016 Physician of the Year award a few hours ago was to have the opportunity to use the microphone to honor those on whose shoulders I stand.

I reminded attendees of my late father, the Reverend Abraham Akaka by quoting from his statehood sermon of 1959 his definition of Aloha, and his call which led to Hawaii becoming known as the Aloha state.

I was able to honor my uncle Senator Akaka, (who attended with Mrs. Millie Akaka, and who conversed at length throughout the evening with American Medical Association immediate Past President Dr. Steven Stack), by reminding attendees of Senator Akaka's service to our nation as a veteran, his work to improve the mental healthcare of our nation with his early sponsorship of the Wellstone Dominici Parity for mental health bill as far back as the early 1990s, and through his work as chair of the Senate Veteran's Committee to champion improving the health of our nations veterans by facilitating the recognition and treatment of PTSD.

Following the footsteps of Senator Akaka when he was one of only 13 to vote against the war in Iraq, thank you for taking principled stands despite significant pressures to do otherwise and for your own support to improve the mental healthcare of our nation, including your support for Congressman Tim Murphy's Mental Health bill. And thank you for your kind congratulations to me as the Hawaii Medical Association 2016 Physician of the year.

As you may know, just before the March 21, 1965 march on Selma, my father sent lei to those marchers, including to his friend, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Bedecked in a multitude of lei from family and friends, I raised up for the audience to see, a photograph of those marchers in lei, and quoted from a handwritten draft of a letter my father typed which accompanied the lei:

Dear Brother Martin Luther King-

As you "bring good news to the meek, bind up those that are bruised, release to captives" our Prayer and Aloha reach out to enfold you.

These flower lei were made by mothers of the Kawaiaha'o Church--for you and our brothers in the cause of our Lord Jesus whose commandment you obey:

"Feed my lambs

Tend my sheep

Feed my sheep"

History will honor this hour because his chosen servant was faithful and a great nation responded to that faithfulness.

Aloha, A.A

Congresswoman Gabbard,

Thank you for your own example of servant leadership, from which I take great inspiration.

Aloha and mahalo,

Jeffrey

Jeffrey Akaka, MD