



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

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SB 398 – RELATING TO CANCER

Chair Baker, Vice Chair Nishihara, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i strongly supports this bill.

The University of Hawai'i Cancer Center (UH Cancer Center) is one of only 69 institutions in the U.S. that hold the prestigious National Cancer Institute (NCI) designation, and is the only NCI-designated center in the Pacific. The NCI designation provides greater access to federal funding and research opportunities. More importantly, it gives the people of Hawai'i and the Pacific region access to innovative and potentially life-saving clinical trials without the necessity of traveling to the mainland.

This bill will launch a sorely needed public colorectal cancer screening and awareness program. The goal of the program is to increase colon cancer screening rates in Hawai'i in conjunction with the "80% by 2018" initiative of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths, killing nearly 60,000 people in the United States and more than 250 people in Hawai'i each year. Regular colorectal cancer screening in men and women over age 50 can reduce these deaths by more than 40 percent, with the potential to save 100 lives in Hawai'i each year.

Currently approximately 72 percent of United States men and women age 50 and over have been screened for colorectal cancers. Hawai'i's screening rates for this group is approximately 64 percent. However, when we look at differences by gender, ethnicity, location, education, or income, the colorectal cancer screening rates are much lower—often less than 40 percent for people over age 50 in some groups. The UH Cancer Center is currently conducting research designed to improve the uptake of colorectal cancer screening in several key underserved groups, including rural and Native Hawaiian populations, and we are meeting great success in improving screening rates.

We believe that launching a state-led colorectal cancer screening and awareness campaign will help to improve colorectal cancer screening rates in all at-risk groups, and to help Hawai'i achieve the CDC's goal of having 80 percent of Hawai'i's men and women over age 50 regularly screened for colorectal cancer by 2018.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.