



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committees on Hawaiian Affairs and  
Commerce, Consumer Protection and Health  
Tuesday, February 14, 2017 at 1:30 p.m.

By

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and

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### SB 1315 – RELATING TO HEALTH

Chairs Shimabukuro and Baker, Vice Chairs Galuteria and Nishihara, and members of the committees:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in **strong support** of SB 1315 which requires all health benefits plans to include coverage for Native Hawaiian culture-based activities, including among other activities, canoe paddling, hula, and lua. These activities have been shown to be effective in the management of weight, cardiovascular health, diabetes and chronic kidney disease.

Native Hawaiians have among the highest rates of obesity, hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases, and certain cancers. Nationally Native Hawaiians have among the highest mortality rates. They are more likely to develop chronic diseases and die an average of ten years earlier than people of other ethnic groups in Hawai'i. As a mean of addressing the increasing concern over the health risks faced by Native Hawaiians, the Senate of the Twenty-Seventh Legislature passed SR 60 which created a Native Hawaiian task force to specifically improve the health of Native Hawaiians, other Pacific Islanders and all of the people in Hawai'i. The goal of the task force was to articulate policy priorities that would advance health equity for Native Hawaiians and also the State's entire population.

Some Native Hawaiians feel alienated from and have a mistrust of the present health care system, and prefer more culturally acceptable means of managing their health. Native Hawaiian practices, such as hula, canoe paddling and lua, have proven an effective means of managing weight, cardiovascular health, diabetes management and chronic kidney disease:

- With its community partners, the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) oversees a long-running program integrating community wisdom and scientific enquiry to reduce obesity among Native Hawaiians. The PILI (Partnership for

Improving Lifestyle Intervention) program has led to measurable, positive outcomes.

- In 2012, researchers from JABSOM Department of Native Hawaiian Health and The Queen's Medical Center demonstrated, for the first time, that the Native Hawaiian dance form of hula can be an effective and engaging cardiac rehabilitation therapy.
- Currently, the University of Hawai'i Cancer Center has been studying the health benefits of physical activity for breast, cervical, endometrial, and ovarian cancer survivors. Hula as a culturally relevant form of physical activity has been the focus of the study.

Requiring health benefits plans to include coverage for Native Hawaiian culture-based activities would have a far-reaching effect in improving the health and quality of life for Native Hawaiians as well as the overall population.

Mahalo for your consideration of this measure.