



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

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Senate Committees on Higher Education and
Commerce, Consumer Protection, & Health
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And

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SB 2011– RELATING TO MEDICAL CANNABIS

Chairs Kahele and Baker, Vice Chairs Kim and Tokuda, and members of the committees:

SB 2011 allows the University of Hawai'i, John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM), in partnership with the Department of Health, to collect data from voluntary qualifying patients, maintain a database, and conduct research and development regarding the efficacy of medical cannabis use in Hawaii and its related outcomes. The University of Hawai'i supports SB 2011, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in the University's Board of Regents approved executive biennium budget. As the medical cannabis program expands, it is important to continue research and development on medical cannabis as well as the outcomes of its use among qualifying patients in Hawai'i.

JABSOM has the ability, infrastructure and expertise to lead the effort in conducting the medical research which is vital to understanding the benefits of medical cannabis treatment. JABSOM's Complementary and Integrative Medicine Department (CIM) is responsible for the development and dissemination of alternative medical therapy, as well as the investigation and research of the scientific foundation of these techniques. It also hosts the JABSOM quantitative health sciences group, which includes experienced biostatisticians and other data scientists, with extensive expertise in biomedical research design and data analysis.

CIM faculty member, Dr. Amy Brown, has scientific expertise in medical cannabis and has successfully organized the first Medical Cannabis CME Program at JABSOM last November. The CIM quantitative health sciences group has experience in developing as well as maintaining databases and conducting health outcome data analysis and research.

JABSOM's Department of Cell and Molecular Biology (CMB) also has the expertise to evaluate the effects of medical cannabis use on cognitive performance, including learning, memory, and executive function. CMB faculty Drs. Jun Panee and Mariana Gerschenson have recently published on the association between chronic cannabis use and cognition, and it is important to assess how the frequency and dosage of medical cannabis use might affect cognition, which is relevant to public safety (such as driving) and job performance of the voluntary qualifying patients.

The funding would allow the development and maintenance of the database and the gathering of initial data. To conduct meaningful outcome research on efficacy and potential adverse effects, however, adequate information from a sufficiently large number of patients will be needed, perhaps with supplemental clinical assessments (given sufficient funding). Nonetheless, SB 2011 is an important step toward collecting meaningful data in the developing Hawai'i State medical cannabis program.

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