



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committees on Higher Education and
Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health
Thursday, February 8, 2018 at 1:20 p.m.

By

Randall F. Holcombe, MD, MBA
Director, University of Hawai'i Cancer Center

And

Michael Bruno, PhD
Vice Chancellor for Research
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 2877 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII CANCER CENTER

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

The University of Hawai'i supports SB 2877, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR approved supplemental budget. This measure proposed by Senator Breene Harimoto supports the Hawai'i Early Phase Cancer Clinical Trials Program at the University of Hawai'i Cancer Center (UH Cancer Center).

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

Each year more than 6,000 Hawai'i residents are diagnosed with cancer, and more than 2,000 will die from the disease. Cancer is the second leading cause of death in Hawai'i, and accounts for one of every five deaths statewide. Hawaii's racial/ethnic mixture makes us unique (as compared with national norms) in the types and incidents of cancer. As a NCI-designated cancer research center, the UH Cancer Center brings ground-breaking studies and new cancer-fighting drugs and treatment to our community, making it possible for Hawaii's people to receive many advanced treatments for cancer without the need to travel to the mainland away from home and at great expense. However, the most novel medications for the treatment of cancer

provided through early phase (Phase 1) clinical trials are not currently available in the State of Hawai'i.

Rationale:

1. Early phase (phase I) clinical trials offer patients with cancer access to novel treatments to improve the quality and quantity of life, especially when having exhausted standard treatments
2. There is currently no opportunity for patients in Hawai'i to access early phase cancer clinical trials without traveling to the mainland
3. As the only academic center in the State, the University of Hawai'i Cancer Center has the unique capacity to establish an early phase clinical trials program

Goal:

Establish a Program committed to bringing novel early phase trials to Hawai'i for the benefit of cancer patients throughout the State.

The University of Hawai'i Cancer Center, in collaboration with healthcare partners in the Hawai'i Cancer Consortium, provides access to clinical trials for nearly 2/3 of the cancer patients in the State. It maintains a robust infrastructure of protocol review and oversight. However, phase I and other early phase cancer trials are distinctive and require specific expertise and a dedicated treatment facility.

Our vision is to recruit physicians with early phase trial experience to the University of Hawai'i Cancer Center to build the program. Dedicated space will be designed and constructed in available shell space (Annex) adjacent to the Cancer Center. This program will complement drug discovery programs already in place within the Cancer Center focused on identifying compounds derived from natural products with anti-cancer activity. These compounds, along with novel therapies developed by industry, will form the basis for novel clinical trials and enable patients to receive this type of treatment in Hawai'i where their family and support systems are nearby and without the expense of months-long stays on the mainland while at other centers. The **Hawai'i Early Phase Cancer Clinical Trials Program** will provide remarkable benefit for cancer patients in Hawai'i.

Location: 1st and 2nd floors, University of Hawai'i Cancer Center, Annex

Partnerships: Queens Medical Center, Hawai'i Pacific Health and the Hawai'i Cancer Consortium

Benefit to people in Hawai'i – often cancer patients are feeling reasonably fit even if their cancer progresses on standard therapies and they wish to explore new

approaches and novel treatments for their cancer. This provides hope for the patients, the potential for improved outcomes and, not insignificantly, provides us with the type of knowledge needed to improve cancer care in the future. Often, participation in early phase clinical trials requires a substantial time commitment and many physician visits. This is difficult if patients are away from home, both financially and because they are away from their family support structure. This program will allow patients with advanced cancer who live in Hawai'i to have access to these novel treatments without the expense and hardship of relocating to the mainland.

The CIP funds requested for the UH Cancer Center will be used to build out available shell space adjacent to the UH Cancer Center in order to develop an Early Phase Clinical Trials Unit. The program providing access to these trials is envisioned as a joint partnership between the UH Cancer Center and the Hawai'i Cancer Consortium members, including Queens Medical Center and Hawai'i Pacific Health.

We respectfully urge this Committee to approval of this measure.