



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

---

Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs  
Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health  
Thursday, March 22, 2018 at 1:15 p.m.

By

Jerris Hedges, MD  
Professor & Dean

John A. Burns School of Medicine

And

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

SR 44 – REQUESTING THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO AMEND THE NATIVE HAWAIIAN HEALTH CARE IMPROVEMENT ACT TO ENSURE THAT THE ACT RECEIVES PERMANENT FUNDING

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support for Senate Resolution 44 (SR 44). SR 44 request that the United States Congress amend the Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act to ensure that the Act receives permanent funding. Enacted in 1988, the Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act was created for the purposes of establishing a program for the provision of comprehensive health promotion and disease prevention services to maintain and improve the health status of the Hawaiian people, raising the health status of Native Hawaiians to the highest possible level, and to provide existing Native Hawaiian health care programs with all resources necessary to effectuate the Act. Funding for the Act was established until fiscal year 2019, but it is uncertain as to whether long-term funding will be approved beyond fiscal year 2019.

The Department of Native Hawaiian Health at the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) found that Hawaii's Native Hawaiian population had a lower life expectancy than other ethnic groups in the state, and had higher rates of death from heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes and injuries compared to our overall population. Half of the Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders report meeting criteria for obesity. In light of these significant disparities in the health and wellbeing of Hawaii's Native Hawaiian population, permanent funding of the Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act is critical. The Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act should receive the same federal benefit as the Indian Health Care Improvement Act which is guaranteed permanent funding.

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