



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

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UPDATE ON THE STATUS OF THE CANCER RESEARCH CENTER OF HAWAII

Chair Tokuda and Chair Ige and members of the Committees:

I am honored to serve as the interim director of the UH Mānoa Cancer Research Center and I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the current and future directions of this exciting and critically important program with you here today. Our efforts are directed at providing better cancer care to improve the health and well being of the people of Hawai'i – a great goal that binds all of us together as partners in this endeavor. Clearly, you, Hawai'i's decision makers, have been and continue to be a major partner in realizing this opportunity and we are very grateful for that strong support.

Today I will provide an update on the vision, people, and partnerships involved in providing great cancer care in Hawai'i but, first, I will provide some background about cancer centers.

There are 63 Cancer centers in the United States that carry the National Cancer Institute (NCI) designation and we are proud that the Cancer Research Center of Hawai'i is one of them. This designation is only awarded to cancer centers that excel in basic science coupled with either population science or in clinical science. NCI awards its highest center designation of comprehensive cancer center to centers that demonstrate excellence in all three of these

research areas. Our vision is to bring the NCI's highest designation of Comprehensive Cancer Center to Hawai'i. That goal is so important to us all that it binds the faculty and staff of the Cancer Research Center of Hawai'i and the John A. Burns School of Medicine, the University of Hawai'i leadership, and the people of the state of Hawai'i together. The basic and population research currently conducted at our Cancer Center, coupled with the translation of that research knowledge into the tools of cancer prevention, early cancer diagnosis and more effective treatments through clinical research, will significantly benefit the citizens of Hawai'i, the people of U.S., as well as the people of the Pacific Rim who will travel to Hawai'i because of our Cancer Center's growing reputation for excellence.

We are accomplishing that goal through strong partnerships with cancer providers and hospitals in our State. Hawai'i, because of its unique resources, is well suited to pursue a matrix cancer center model that allows physicians and scientists to work together in collaboration to conduct clinical cancer research within the community hospital systems. Two-thirds of all the cancer centers in the U.S. operate under a matrix model as opposed to a stand-alone facility model. Under the matrix model, rather than having a single clinical facility operated by the University as part of the Cancer Research Center of Hawai'i, the research performed at the center will be translated and applied to diagnosis and treatment at already existing hospital facilities throughout the State by doctors located at those facilities. We believe this is the most effective and practical model for Hawai'i and should be the approach to pursue toward earning the NCI comprehensive cancer center designation.

There are two priorities on which we are focused at this time and, thankfully, can be accomplished because of the partnerships with community health leaders and the support of the legislature. Those priorities are: 1. hiring faculty to provide the advances in cancer research and facilitate coordination of clinical trials and; 2. building the new Cancer Research Center facility to support those efforts. We are making progress in recruiting more talented researchers to the ranks of our existing excellent faculty and in the planning for the construction for the new cancer center building which will serve as a demonstration of the community's collective commitment to this goal. In that way, we stay firmly on the path of meeting the high standards required to maintain our current NCI designation and move toward the goal of a comprehensive cancer center designation. Chancellor Hinshaw understands the importance of this effort to the University of Hawai'i and to the state of Hawai'i; and consequently she has asked me, as the

interim Cancer Center director, to work with all due speed. As time is of the essence to continue our progress, I am working with the Center's program leaders, the leadership of our medical school and our local hospital systems for the purpose of maintaining our current NCI designation, to begin construction of the new Cancer Center building and to secure the foundation for the future of clinical cancer research in Hawai'i.

Our first priority is to increase the number of faculty funded by grants. This is being done both by recruiting outstanding new investigators to the center and by seeking funding to support promising junior faculty. In addition to beginning construction of the new building, we are in the process of obtaining usable research space to house these new investigators who will ultimately populate the new building. All of these steps are required for the successful recruitment of new faculty researchers, maintenance of our NCI designation and consolidation of the center's Fiscal Office and Administration in one location.

On a more strategic level, we are also expanding our role as a center for learning by inviting key experts from all over the world to participate in lectures, training sessions, and other forums so that Hawai'i's medical community can participate more easily in sessions promoting cutting-edge research. The first forum – that I hope will become an annual cancer center and community educational event - will occur in mid-February. I am excited to announce that, in collaboration with the John A. Burns School of Medicine, Hawai'i Pacific Health, Kuakini Medical Center and the Queen's Medical Center, the Cancer Research Center of Hawai'i has organized a special Cancer Conference that will take place on February 17-18, 2009 in Honolulu. The 2008 Nobel Prize winner for Medicine and Physiology, Dr. Harald zur Hausen, the scientist who discovered that Human Papillomavirus (HPV) causes cervical carcinoma, will keynote the conference. Dr. zur Hausen's discovery allowed scientists to develop a vaccine to prevent cervical carcinoma in future generations. Some of the leading cancer researchers from throughout the world will be in attendance. This conference represents a starting point for a comprehensive collaboration among the different hospitals and institutions for a joint fight against cancer.

All of these collaborations speak well for the future of the Cancer Research Center of Hawai'i. With this said, developing additional financial resources for the center will become increasingly important. We are very fortunate to have on-going funding from the state's cigarette-tax to help

finance construction and maintenance of the new building and recruit new accomplished investigators. We also recognize that, to increase the pool of established investigators, to support beginning investigators and to pay for the costs associated with the construction and the maintenance of the new Cancer Center building, requires us to augment these funds by also expanding our fund-raising efforts. It is our desire to bring our philanthropy success to the same level of support as is seen in most other U.S. cancer centers

The financial situation in the world today creates challenging times for all of us, yet this truly is an exciting moment in realizing our shared vision of providing access to great cancer care right here in Hawai'i and we are grateful for the partnerships and people who are making it happen.

Thank you. I'll be happy to answer any questions you may have.