



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

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House Committee on Health
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by
Risa E. Dickson, Vice President for Academic Affairs
University of Hawai'i System

HCR 76/HR 38 – URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH BY UPDATING ITS RULES REGARDING TUBERCULOSIS

Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Creagan, and Members of the Committee on Health:

HCR 76/HR 38 urges the Department of Health to update its rules regarding tuberculosis (TB) and specifically to require that any “individual” or “student, including postsecondary student,” who has spent more than one year in foreign TB high-risk locations to submit TB clearance documentation upon entering or re-entering the State.

The University of Hawai'i (UH) limits the following comments to post-secondary students who meet the criteria stated in HCR 76/HR 38 and who intend to enter or re-enter UH after having undergone the required initial tuberculosis (TB) screening.

UH supports HCR 76/HR 38 as it applies to postsecondary students since the re-testing of students who have spent substantial time living in foreign locations with high prevalence rates of TB may potentially reduce the risk of active TB cases on our campuses. The potential risks and consequences associated with experiencing an active TB case on a campus is amplified by our substantial student enrollment numbers, for example, at Mānoa with nearly 4000 residence hall students.

The American College Health Association recommends tuberculosis screening for any incoming students who have ever had close contact with persons with known or suspected active TB, were born in or had frequent or prolonged visits to countries with high incidences of TB, have been a resident or employee of high-risk congregate settings (e.g., correctional facilities, long-term care facilities, and homeless shelters), have been a volunteer or health care worker who has served clients who are at increased risk for active TB disease, or have been a member of a group with an increased incidence of TB disease (e.g., medically underserved, low-income, or abusing alcohol/drugs).

The American College Health Association recommends TB screening and targeted testing of incoming college and university students, but does not provide recommendations for students who underwent initial screening and are subsequently returning to a postsecondary school after spending substantial time in locations with a high prevalence of tuberculosis infections.

At UH, a TB screening questionnaire could be utilized to efficiently direct screening efforts in this returning student population. An additional benefit is that the health clearance process offers young adults an opportunity to establish contact with health care providers and the health care system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.