



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Finance  
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By

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SB 2961 SD1, HD1 – RELATING TO HEALTH

Chair Takamine, Vice Chair Kawakami and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today in support of Senate Bill 2961 SD1 HD1 with amendments.

The purpose of this bill, in its current draft, is to increase the tax per cigarette to fund the John A. Burns School of Medicine, emergency medical services, trauma care, and community health centers. I would like to strongly recommend that your committee consider amending this bill to reflect SB 2961 SD1 which earmarked 50 percent of the tax to the university's Cancer Research Center of Hawaii, 25 percent to DOH health promotion and disease prevention programs, and 25 percent to the Hawaii tobacco prevention and control trust fund.

I'd also like to impress upon you the urgency of the situation and why we need to act now. We have the opportunity here to establish a world-class cancer treatment center that will allow Hawai'i citizens diagnosed with cancer to receive the best healthcare possible right here at home. They will have access to state-of-the-art facilities, renowned and respected physicians and researchers, and the latest clinical trials and treatment techniques, while being comforted in knowing that their support system of family and friends, their 'ohana, is right within reach.

Should we not act now, the opportunities lost will be tremendous. Without this funding support, it is highly likely that the Cancer Research Center will lose its coveted status as a NCI-designated Cancer Center and planned construction for a Cancer Research Center facility at Kakaako will most likely be stalled. This will not only have a detrimental impact on the Cancer Research Center itself, but also on the state's efforts to enhance biotechnology development, and most importantly on the quality of healthcare available to the citizens of Hawai'i. We will essentially be taking numerous steps backwards from the progress already made in these areas.

Passage of this bill in its amended form will enable the university and the Cancer Research Center to fulfill its vision of a comprehensive Cancer Research Center that will integrate research and clinical studies, simultaneously improving the quality of cancer care in Hawai'i while increasing the volume of research in the life sciences. We will be able to treat our residents, allowing them to remain at home here in Hawai'i, and we will be able to develop new groundbreaking treatment techniques and perhaps, maybe one day, even a cure.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of SB 2961 SD1 HD1 with the proposed amendments and I respectfully urge you to reinstate the Cancer Research Center of Hawaii as a beneficiary of the proposed tobacco tax.