



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM

## TESTIMONY

SB 2961  
RELATING TO HEALTH

Testimony Presented Before the  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

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by

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SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS  
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2006  
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Chair Taniguchi, Vice Chair Tsutsui, and members of the Committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 2961.

As you are aware, the Cancer Research Center of Hawaii is currently one of 61 National Cancer Institute (NCI) designated Cancer Centers in the country. NCI-designation for a Cancer Center is a highly coveted distinction, awarded after a rigorous review of the breadths, depth, and quality of the research programs. NCI-designated Cancer Centers include large and well-known Cancer Centers on the mainland such as the MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston and the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center in Seattle. But, they also include Cancer Centers at many state institutions that can be considered peers of UH, such as the University of Alabama, the University of Nebraska, and the University of New Mexico, to name a few.

NCI-designated Cancer Centers have become the magnets for cancer research funding, and collectively receive two-thirds of all NCI research grants and contracts. Those NCI-designated Cancer Centers with a clinical care component represent the centers of excellence for cancer care in the regions that they serve because of the high quality of the faculty and the availability of access to innovative clinical trials and translational research protocols. Of the 61 Cancer Centers in the country, 39 have the added designation of being a "comprehensive" NCI-designated Cancer Center.

Because of the great value that NCI-designated Cancer Centers represent for their institutions and states in terms of research dollars, scientific reputation, and quality of cancer care, they are the beneficiaries of significant financial support from their states. In addition, there are approximately 15 Cancer Centers around the country who are seeking

NCI-designation in the near future. These organizations also receive significant support from their states. In contrast, our Cancer Center is one of the smallest NCI-designated Cancer Centers in the country, and barely fulfills the minimal criteria for NCI-designation. Furthermore, state support of our Cancer Center through the UH budget has been minimal and, in fact, decreasing over the past decade. Given the incredible competition for NCI-designation by mainland Cancer Centers, it is, unfortunately, an easy conclusion that we will not be able to maintain our NCI-designation without a significant and sustained infusion of additional resources from the state.

As you are aware of, the UH Board of Regents has decided to build a new Cancer Center building in Kakaako, adjacent to the new medical school facilities. The new Cancer Center in Kakaako will not only provide expanded facilities for the research programs of our Cancer Center, but will also house a state-of-the-art cancer care facility which will be jointly operated between the University of Hawaii and several major hospitals in the state.

The new Cancer Center in Kakaako will be able to offer comprehensive cancer treatment to our cancer patients in the State of Hawaii. Coordinated and comprehensive cancer care is currently lacking in our state as identified in the report by the Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel on Cancer Care. The new Cancer Center in Kakaako will remedy this situation. In addition, many cancer patients currently leave the Islands for access to enrollment in clinical trials with novel treatment modalities that are only available at large academic NCI-designated Cancer Centers on the mainland. Our new Cancer Center will provide access to such trials and will minimize the need for our cancer patients to leave the Islands at a time when you want to be close to home and with your family. Access to comprehensive cancer care and clinical trials will not be limited to Oahu. Through the cooperation of hospital partners on the neighbor islands, the new Cancer Center will have satellite facilities on the neighbor islands, thereby providing access to the same quality of care and clinical trials available on Oahu.

The new Cancer Center building in Kakaako, for which groundbreaking will occur this year with your help, will require a sustained infusion of resources. In addition to the \$10 million appropriated from the federal budget, the bulk of the construction costs will be

provided by the developer selected by the UH Board of Regents last March. As such, with the occupancy of the new building, costs for operation and maintenance of the new facility as well as rent payment to the developer will need to be satisfied. Moreover, many services that are part of comprehensive cancer care at large academic Cancer Centers are not reimbursable and require other sources of support. We will also need resources to attract highly qualified physician-scientists to join the new Cancer Center.

In summary, the 50% of the increased tobacco tax proposed in Senate Bill 2961 would provide the much needed sustained infusion of resources to keep our Cancer Center competitive with mainland institutions and to help us in the development of a world class Cancer Center in Honolulu that will provide state-of-the-art cancer care to patients statewide. This is all the more important as the demographics of our state with its rapidly increasing aging population will be faced with an ever increasing number of cancer patients in the foreseeable future. By the year 2030 the current number of approximately 5,500 new cancer cases per year in our state will double to approximately 11,000 new cases. We need to be prepared to take care of the growing number of cancer patients.

In closing, the University would like to offer our strong support for this bill independent of the benefit that the Cancer Research Center of Hawaii would derive from a portion of the increased tobacco tax revenue. Smoking is the single most detrimental lifestyle choice and causes many cancers and other serious diseases. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cigarette smoking causes an estimated 440,000 deaths or about 1 in every 5 deaths each year. Experience from other states demonstrates that increases in the tobacco tax reduced the extent of smoking, and even more so in the teenage population group.

The University is equally supportive of the bill's provisions to make the other 50% of the increased tobacco tax revenues available to the Department of Health and the Hawaii Tobacco Prevention and Control trust fund for tobacco use prevention and cessation and other health prevention and education programs.

Thank you very much