UNIVERSITY OF HAWAIʻI SYSTEM
Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
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By
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SB 2690 SD1 – RELATING TO CHAPTER 245, HAWAII REVISED STATUTES

Chair Tokuda, Vice Chair Dela Cruz, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawaiʻi Cancer Center strongly supports this bill.

The UH Cancer Center is one of only 69 institutions in the United States that hold the prestigious National Cancer Institute (NCI) designation, and is the only NCI-designated center in the Pacific. The NCI designation provides cancer researchers in Hawaiʻi with greater access to federal funding and research opportunities. More importantly, it gives the people of Hawaiʻi and the Pacific region access to many innovative and potentially life-saving clinical trials without the necessity of traveling to the mainland.

Our passion at the UH Cancer Center is to be a world leader in eliminating cancer through research, education, and improved patient care. Because tobacco consumption is a leading preventable cause of cancer, we take all issues related to tobacco in Hawaiʻi very seriously. Whereas the UH Cancer Center always has supported strong tobacco control measures in Hawaiʻi, the recent emergence of electronic smoking devices (e-cigarettes) presents new challenges for tobacco control and tobacco-related legislation. To address these challenges, UH Cancer Center researchers have been actively involved in conducting studies about cigarette smoking and e-cigarette use among adolescents in Hawaiʻi, a vulnerable population for initiation of both cigarette smoking and e-cigarette use.

The bill addresses a serious concern among health professionals that addictive tobacco products other than cigarettes – including snuff, chewing tobacco, and loose roll-your-own tobacco – are attracting a new generation of tobacco users. While the dangers of smoking are well known, national research also tells us there is no safe form of tobacco use, and tobacco use continues to be a problem in Hawaii.

Since the cigarette tax increases were imposed beginning in 2006, there have been steadily decreasing sales, which may indicate that the higher cost to consumers has created the intended disincentive to cigarette use. A further increase in the taxes would

serve as a greater economic disincentive to tobacco use and decrease the number of individuals who smoke.

We appreciate the Committee's allocation of a portion of the additional tax revenues to the Hawai'i Cancer Research Special Fund. The additional revenue generated by this bill will allow the UH Cancer Center to continue to provide new knowledge about prevention of adolescent smoking, continue to provide innovative clinical trials in Hawai'i to help prevent and treat cancer, and continue its research into natural products from organisms found only in Hawai'i that may be used to treat cancer. Several patents on promising products have already been filed.

The incidence of cancer is increasing significantly and may double during the next twenty years, according to recent estimates by the International Agency for Cancer. It is imperative that the UH Cancer Center maintain its NCI designation to foster research relevant to those in Hawai'i and to provide our state's residents with access to the most innovative clinical trials here in Hawai'i, in order to reduce the incidence of cancer in Hawai'i and eliminate the need for our cancer patients to travel to the mainland for access to novel therapies.

We respectfully urge you to pass this bill.