



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
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By

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HB 145 HD1 Proposed SD2 – RELATING TO TAXATION

Chair Tokuda, Vice Chair Kouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i supports Proposed SD2.

The UH Cancer Center is one of only 68 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 greater access to federal funding and research opportunities, and gives the people of Hawai'i and the Pacific region access to innovative and potentially life-saving clinical trials without 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 very seriously, and we have always supported strong tobacco control measures in Hawai'i. The increasing popularity of other types of tobacco products and the recent emergence of electronic smoking devices present new challenges for tobacco control and tobacco-related legislation.

Proposed SD2 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. Since the cigarette tax increases were imposed beginning in 2006, sales have decreased steadily, which may indicate that the higher cost to consumers had the disincentive intended. However, smokers have switched from cigarettes to other types of tobacco products and electronic smoking devices.

Health advocates urge consistent and equal taxation of the various forms of tobacco to avoid attracting consumers, especially youth, to products that are a less expensive substitute for cigarettes.

We respectfully urge this Committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony.