



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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SB 1297 – RELATING TO DISPOSITION OF TAX REVENUES

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

The University of Hawai'i Cancer Center strongly opposes this bill because it will negatively impact the health and well-being of Hawai'i's citizens.

Since its inception, the cigarette and tobacco tax revenue has been used to support vital health care services in Hawai'i, including cancer research and prevention, the state trauma system, community health centers, and emergency medical services. This bill will compromise the sustainability of these important programs, which provide broad support of the health of the people of Hawai'i.

Specifically, if this bill were to pass, any increase in this tax revenue, which was designed by the Legislature to stabilize and enhance the health of Hawai'i, would not directly benefit the intended health-promoting programs. Because the allocation of funds would be capped at a specific dollar amount, any excess funds would escheat to the general fund, instead of being directed to the programs the cigarette and tobacco tax was intended to support. As a result, multiple agencies serving the public's health would need to compete at the Legislature for additional general funds rather than moving toward stability and self-sufficiency. Some of the competing interests are listed below:

- Cancer Center recruitment of clinical investigators, and direct support of the Cancer Center facility and its operation (needed to provide community outreach and to house cancer research infrastructure);
- Trauma System support for the training of trauma team personnel in rural and neighbor island communities, and assessment of trauma programs to enhance outcomes in Hawaii;
- Community Health Center delivery of essential community based health care infrastructure in communities with the greatest need;
- Emergency Medical Services support of the training of EMS personnel in rural and neighbor island communities, and provision of standardized equipment for EMS providers across Hawai'i.

We respectfully ask that this bill be held.