



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce
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By

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And

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HB 1602 – RELATING TO HUMAN REMAINS

Chair Takumi, Vice Chair Ichiyama, and members of the committee:

HB 1602 includes the use of alkaline hydrolysis and natural organic reduction as methods for the disposal of human remains. The measure also amends the procedures for the resolution of disputes regarding the disposition of a decedent's remains and the recovery of expenses to include hydrolysis facilities and natural organic reduction facilities.

The Willed Body Program (WBP) at the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM), University of Hawai'i at Mānoa has been supporting medical education as a body donor program in Hawai'i. Our mission at JABSOM is to educate current and future healthcare professionals and leaders. For the past 3 years, the JABSOM WBP has received about 180 anatomical gifts per year.

During the preclinical courses in the 1st and 2nd year, the medical students receive a basic science and clinical skills foundation upon which to build applied clinical knowledge throughout their continued education and practice. Gross anatomy is one of the foundational courses emphasized in the preclinical courses. During the first two years, medical students learn the anatomy of the entire body through gross anatomical dissection of human cadavers, or "silent teachers" as they are known in our program.

The WBP also supports medical education in anatomy for our surgery and orthopedic residency programs at JABSOM, for Hawai'i-based emergency personnel and other Allied Health Professionals, as well as supports Continuing Medical Education for certain physician specialties which are required to demonstrate maintenance of procedural skills for their continued licensure. Additionally, the WBP sets up multiple workshops in anatomy for local high school students who are interested in becoming future health care workers in Hawai'i.

The WBP recognizes and honors the goodwill of the “silent teachers” and their families. To show appreciation and intense respect for their “silent teachers”, JABSOM students hold an annual Memorial Service in April to which the families are invited. This meaningful service helps JABSOM meet our mission as a community-based and community-engaged medical school whose purpose is to train future physicians for Hawai‘i’s populations. Disposition of the donated bodies is done in accordance with the donor’s and/or family’s wishes and in accordance with Hawai‘i Revised Statutes chapter 327.

We are extremely committed to maintaining the highest standards in caring for these gifts – which is the purpose of Hawai‘i Revised Statutes section 327-11. Unfortunately, there have been instances where families or potential donors chose to donate their bodies to other entities or programs in Hawai‘i with resultant improper handling or disposition. We support HB 1602 in order to prevent such instances from occurring.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this matter.