



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Health
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By

Thomas A. Wills, PhD
Director, Cancer Prevention in the Pacific Program
University of Hawai'i Cancer Center

And

Michael Bruno, PhD
Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 2227 – RELATING TO ELECTRONIC SMOKING PRODUCTS

Chair Baker, Vice Chair Chang and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i Cancer Center (UHCC) strongly support SB 2227, which would regulate e-liquids and electronic smoking devices (ESDs) as tobacco products through taxation, shipment, and licensing and permitting.

UHCC support this bill because of findings from our research on Hawai'i adolescents and adults conducted over the past 5 years. Recent studies have shown that ESD use is quite prevalent among Hawai'i middle and high school students; in recent years 40% of high school students have used e-cigarettes. Even at younger ages, the prevalence among middle school students is over 20% of the school population.

Our research has shown that ESD use is linked to several adverse outcomes. Notably, using e-cigarettes is related to initiation of cigarette smoking among previous nonsmokers, hence is contributing to undesirable outcomes. Our findings from Hawai'i have been reported in national and international scientific journals such as JAMA Pediatrics [1] and have been confirmed in over 20 different sites, in the US as well as in Britain, Germany, Canada, and Mexico.

Moreover, our research has shown that e-cigarette use is related to a higher likelihood of respiratory disease (asthma and COPD) among Hawai'i adolescents and adults. This has been reported in two scientific journals, Preventive Medicine and Drug and Alcohol Dependence [2, 3]. This research takes account of cigarette smoking as well as other existing risk factors for respiratory disease. These findings have been confirmed in several independent studies with large representative samples conducted in the US, Europe, and Asia [4], which notably includes longitudinal studies showing that e-cigarette use precedes the onset or worsening of respiratory symptoms [5, 6]. Thus, there is evidence that e-cigarette use may be linked to adverse health consequences as well as adverse behavioral consequences such as smoking initiation. In addition, there is now considerable evidence to refute the belief that e-cigarettes help adults quit

smoking. Rather, empirical studies of large populations of adults have shown that people who use e-cigarettes are less likely to quit smoking [7] and that former smokers who use e-cigarettes are more likely to relapse to smoking [8].

We have observed that e-cigarettes are aggressively marketed to Hawai'i youth in television, radio, and point-of-sale advertising venues. Without regulation, e-cigarette manufacturers will continue to aggressively market their products by using young adults and celebrities as endorsers, glamorizing its use, promoting deep discounts, and offering popular local e-liquid flavors such as Kona coffee, Maui mango, and pineapple.

Because of the adverse consequences that are known to be related to e-cigarette use, I urge the legislature to regulate and tax e-cigarettes in a similar way to other tobacco products. ESDs are the only tobacco product without a tobacco tax and increasing the price is a proven strategy that discourages access to these products. In addition, a portion of these revenues should be dedicated to tobacco prevention and quit programs. This bill will also require a permitting and licensing which will allow the state to know who is selling e-cigarettes in Hawai'i and work with these merchants to educate them and enforce current tobacco laws.

Again, UHCC strongly support SB 2227 and ask you to pass this out of committee.

References

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