



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Health, Human Services, and Homelessness
Tuesday, March 22, 2022 at 9:30 a.m.

By
Nathan Murata, Dean
College of Education
And
Michael Bruno, PhD
Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 2822 SD1 HD1 – RELATING TO ASTHMA

Chair Yamane, Vice Chair Tam, and members of the committee:

The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa supports the original intent of Senate Bill 2822 Senate Draft 1, House Draft 1 and offers suggested amendments. This bill originally provided the needed support for children with asthma in our schools. However, by simply authorizing the Department of Education to create asthma trainings for teachers and not making them mandatory it does not meet the need to have all teachers trained on asthma education, one of the most common chronic childhood diseases in Hawaii.

Therefore, we respectfully ask that the Section 3 of the bill be amended to say that “the department SHALL develop and provide asthma training to teachers and other department employees who interact with students” rather than MAY develop the mentioned training.

While we understand that the Department of Education is taxed with a variety of roles, because of the nature of asthma, it's important that all people that work with children understand what asthma is, how to react in an emergency, and what may trigger asthma attacks. This is particularly important for young children, who make up most asthma-related emergency room visits. While many older children may carry inhalers and need little help when they have an asthma attack because they can identify triggers and use their inhalers themselves, younger children may need the help of a teacher to get through an asthma attack.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), on average, in a classroom of 30 children, about 3 are likely to have asthma. Low-income populations, Native Hawaiians, and children living near traffic intersections experience more emergency department visits, hospitalizations, and deaths due to asthma than the general population. CDC also recommend that schools provide asthma education for students with asthma and education programs for school staff, parents, and families. This bill would allow our state to be in-line with CDC recommendations.

It takes a village to raise a child, and schools are part of the village that helps foster the learning and healthy environment that our keiki need to thrive. We ask you to please amend and pass Senate Bill 2822, Senate Draft 1, House Draft 1 to ensure that our children with asthma have the best fighting chance to thrive in all environments. With the suggested amendments, this bill has the possibility of doing that.