



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Tuesday, February 22, 2022 at 10:00 a.m.

By

Joe W. Ramos, PhD

Interim Director

University of Hawai'i Cancer Center

And

Jerris Hedges, MD, MS, MMM

Professor & Dean

John A. Burns School of Medicine

And

Michael Bruno, PhD

Provost

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 3367 SD1 – RELATING TO HEALTH

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Keith-Agaran, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill 3367 SD1, relating to health. This bill creates an early lung cancer screening task force, which brings the community together to determine what steps and resources are needed to increase Hawai'i's very low rate of early lung cancer screening.

Lung cancer is the number one cancer killer for men and women in the state. The American Lung Association's State of Lung Cancer Report in Hawai'i for 2021 places Hawai'i dead last in early diagnosis of lung cancer. Early diagnosis gives lung cancer patients a better chance of survival and more affordable and effective treatment options. According to the American Cancer Society, in 2022, more people will die of lung cancer in Hawai'i than breast, liver, or prostate cancer combined.

Moreover, University of Hawai'i Cancer Center epidemiologists have shown that Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders develop lung cancer at an earlier age and with lower lifetime exposure to cigarettes, compared to Whites and Asian Americans.

The task force proposed in this bill will take on the important duty of researching the existing information, including potential contributors to the health disparities seen, recommending the steps and resources necessary to increase early lung cancer screening in Hawai'i, recommending any additional research that is needed, and providing a report to the legislature with possible policies the state can adopt. Once a comprehensive plan for lung cancer screening is adopted by Hawai'i, the University of

Hawai'i, John A. Burns School of Medicine will be instrumental in informing practicing physicians (and those in training) of this plan, as well as actively participating in any clinical research trials related to the campaign. University of Hawai'i Cancer Center researchers will work on new projects to follow up additional research recommended by the task force. Further, the legislatively established task force will also work with the medical school and cancer center to create a public awareness campaign to inform people about lung cancer screening.

Lung cancer is one of the deadliest cancers and it is 90% preventable. Fortunately, rates have decreased due to a reduction in smoking during the past 50 years. However, it is still the most common cause of cancer death in men and women. Sixty percent of new cases now occur in former smokers, pointing to the importance of screening to diagnose these cancers early and improve survival. Low-dose computerized tomography has been shown in 2011 to lower lung cancer mortality by 20% when used with high-risk patients. However, it is still underused, especially in Hawai'i. We must do all we can to make sure that all people at high risk of lung cancer are screened early so that they are allowed all the treatment options available.

On behalf of the University of Hawai'i Cancer Center and John A. Burns School of Medicine, we urge the committee's passage of SB 3367 SD1 and ensure we are doing all we can to help people with lung cancer get an early diagnosis and another chance at life.