



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Education
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SB 531 – RELATING TO EDUCATION

Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in SUPPORT of SB 531 which authorizes the Department of Education (DOE) to stock bronchodilators for emergency use during respiratory distress. The bill further authorizes DOE employees to volunteer to administer bronchodilators.

Provided the proper training and procedures are in place, this measure would allow for improved care and, ultimately, improved learning for asthmatic children. Asthma is more common in certain populations, including Native Hawaiians and Filipinos. Asthma prevalence is also higher in certain communities - many of these communities are also challenged with lower educational attainment (for a large variety of social determinants).

Having albuterol accessible in the schools, as part of a comprehensive asthma management plan done in conjunction with their health care provider, will help keep children affected by asthma in school. Ideally, the communication protocols should include communication back to the primary care provider that a child needed a rescue inhaler. The parental notification regarding the emergency use of a bronchodilator may include a statement encouraging the parent to notify the child's primary care provider, to ensure timely evaluation and any adjustment to the child's asthma action plan and/or therapy.

The UH Mānoa SONDH is a long-time contributor to school health initiatives with partnership of the DOE. Starting in 2014, The UH Mānoa SONDH launched with DOE the Hawai'i Keiki - Healthy and Ready to Learn (HK) program. This program placed

advanced practice registered nurses into the schools and complexes with the greatest health disparities. In the 10 years since its inception, HK now services all 258 DOE public schools and has 58 DOE public school-based clinics and 9 charter school-based clinics. In Academic Year 2023-2024, HK nurses and staff completed over 75,000 visits in public schools and 6,700 visits in charter schools. HK nurses and staff see and care for the children enrolled in the public and charter education systems. This bill addresses an important need that will greatly improve the health and wellbeing of children across the islands. HK has worked collaboratively with the DOE and American Lung Association - Hawai'i to ensure that the design is safe and appropriate for a school health setting. In addition to the nursing we provide in our school-based clinics, HK engages in health education and training to students and DOE and charter school staff. HK welcomes the opportunity to apply our skills as nurses to provide proper training and oversight so that those volunteering feel comfortable with the task and potentially can save a student's life.

Today, children with a known health condition and completed administrative processing are able to have medications at school to support chronic health conditions. This includes children with asthma who use a bronchodilator (sometimes referred to as a rescue inhaler or albuterol inhaler) to open their airways when they are feeling unwell. However, children with no known respiratory conditions or children without their medication at school may experience shortness of breath or trouble breathing. In these cases, the best immediate treatment is a bronchodilator. However, this drug today requires a per person prescription, and access to the medication immediately. The measure proposed today offers a life-saving solution, particularly for those schools without a school-based health clinic on campus. If a school has access to a stock inhaler, the inhaler may be used to immediately address a child's ability to breathe while other actions are put into play: call the school nurse, call the parents or guardians, call emergency services, etc.

The bronchodilator drug is easy to use. Parents, and even children with little teaching are able to administer this drug effectively. This drug is fast acting. Often, this drug can stop shortness of breath adequately to prevent escalation - including needing to go to the emergency room - which keeps a child safe, healthy and ready to learn. To underscore that the administration of the medication is appropriate for a volunteer to administer, we respectfully recommend the following amendment:

At Page 7, Line 16: add a new item “(4) The administration of stock bronchodilator by authorized employees or agents pursuant to this section shall not require or imply any diagnosis, or be interpreted as the practice of medicine, nursing or other licensed professional activity”.

We have also reviewed and fully support the amendments recommended by the Department of Education (DOE) and appreciate the collaboration between the DOE, the Hawai'i Center for Nursing and the Hawai'i Keiki Program.

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