

**House Committee on Health  
SB 1805, SD 1, Relating to Genetic Counselors**

Wednesday, March 12, 2008, 8:00 am  
State Capitol, Conference Room 329  
**Please make 20 copies of this testimony**

To the Honorable Chair Josh Green, M.D., Vice Chair John Mizuno and Members of the House Committee on Health:

I strongly support SB 1805, SD 1, relating to professional licensure of genetic counselors. As a practicing physician specializing in obstetrics and gynecology, I work directly with genetic counselors in my practice.

Prenatal Genetic counselors are medical professionals with specialized training in genetics and genetic disease. Genetic counseling is provided by Board Certified genetic counselors for prenatal diagnosis, family planning, interpretation of test results, and other supportive services. Genetic counseling helps alleviate the anxiety which patients may feel, by providing accurate information regarding their genetic concerns and offering them support and guidance in a non-directive manner.

In a genetic counseling session, the potential need for carrier testing and the risks and benefits of amniocentesis and relevant genetic tests are discussed. Interpretation of test results and accuracy are addressed and the patient's genetic family history and individual concerns are examined. If the result of prenatal testing is abnormal, a meeting with a genetic counselor can offer the patient professional guidance and support during a difficult time. The counselors' genetic expertise enables them to make proper referrals, arrange appropriate testing, and offer a wide variety of resources to their patients.

Licensure will create clear educational, certification, and continuing education standards for all genetic counselors in the state. Licensure will ensure greater patient access to competent genetic counselors. The goal is for patients to make more informed decisions about their genetic health care enabling them to seek methods to prevent disease and stay healthy.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SCR 31.



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**Wednesday – March 12, 2008 – 8:00am**  
**Conference Room 329**

**The House Committee on Health**

To: The Honorable Josh Green, M.D., Chair  
The Honorable John Mizuno, Vice-Chair

**LATE TESTIMONY**

**The House Committee on Human Services & Housing**

To: The Honorable Maile S.L. Shimabukuro, Chair  
The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Vice-Chair

**From: March of Dimes – Hawaii Chapter**

Michael Robinson  
Chair, Public Affairs Committee

**Subject: Testimony in Strong Support of SB 1805 SD1, Relating to Genetic Counselors**

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My name is Michael Robinson and I am here today in my role as Chair of the Public Affairs Committee for the March of Dimes Hawaii Chapter. The Hawaii Chapter strongly supports SB1805 SD1, which would establish guidelines for licensure of genetic counselors ensuring the public has access to qualified genetic counselors.

The mission of the March of Dimes is to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth, and infant mortality. We carry out this mission through providing public and professional education, funding research into causes and prevention of poor birth outcomes, offering community services and advocating for policy and programs that increase access to health care and prevention/treatment programs designed to improve birth outcomes, including support for birth defects surveillance and newborn screening programs.

In Hawaii, as compared to much of the rest of the country, we are fortunate to have a birth defects surveillance program that is among the most comprehensive in the nation and a newborn screening program that tests for a core of 29 treatable conditions, as recommended by American College of Medical Genetics (ACMG) and endorsed by the March of Dimes and American Academy of Pediatrics. Early treatment of these newborn screening conditions can help to prevent severe mental/physical disability or even death. Both birth defects surveillance and newborn screening programs are implemented statewide and supported by enabling legislation that many mainland March of Dimes chapters are envious of, especially since as means to identify additional conditions become available, these can be added seamlessly to current program operations.

As a result of these past legislative efforts, over time more and more Hawaii families are apt to be referred to genetic counselors when genetic causes of birth defects or metabolic disorders may be suspected. SB 1805 SD 1 will ensure that genetic counselors practicing in Hawaii will have the training and knowledge to provide the best care to these families at a difficult time in their lives – when dealing with a sick infant and contemplating the impact on future reproductive and health care decisions.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 1805 SD1. We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of this measure and encourage your committee to pass this bill.