



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
P.O. Box 3378
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96801-3378

LATE TESTIMONY
In reply, please refer to:
File:

House Committee on Health

H.B. 1362, Relating to Genetic Counselors

**Testimony of Chiyome Leinaala Fukino, M.D.
Director of Health**

February 3, 2009, 8:30 a.m.

1 **Department's Position:** The Department of Health (DOH) cannot support this measure. The DOH is
2 not the appropriate agency to license genetic counselors or other healthcare providers, and licensure may
3 be unnecessary since genetic counselors in Hawaii undergo board certification by the American Board
4 of Genetic Counselors (ABGC).

5 **Fiscal Implications:** Costs to the DOH will include staff and operating expenses for a licensing
6 program.

7 **Purpose and Justification:** This measure seeks to establish a genetic counselor licensing program
8 within the Department of Health. A similar bill, S.B. 1085, SD 1, was passed in the 2008 legislative
9 session. The Department did not support the bill, and the Governor vetoed the measure for several
10 reasons: The state auditor conducted a sunrise analysis of a similar bill in 2006, concluding, among
11 other things, that licensing of genetic counselors was not necessary and that such licensing did not meet
12 the criteria for regulation under the Hawaii Regulatory Reform Act.

13 The Department of Health is not the appropriate agency to oversee such a licensing program, and
14 there are no available resources to support such an effort.

15 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



[Make 3 Copies]

Tuesday, February 3 2009
Conference Room 329
8:30am

LATE TESTIMONY

The House Committee on Health

To: The Honorable Representative Ryan I. Yamane, Chair and
The Honorable Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair

From: Ken Nakamura, MD - Chief Medical Officer
Kapi'olani Medical Specialists
Professor of Pediatrics/Neonatology Division
UH John A. Burns School of Medicine

RE: Testimony in Strong Support of HB 1362: Relating to Genetic Counselors

My name is Ken Nakamura, MD and I am the Chief Medical Officer for Kapi'olani Medical Specialists and Professor of Pediatrics, Neonatology Division at the University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine. The Kapi'olani Medical Specialists are an affiliate of Hawaii Pacific Health (HPH), which is the four-hospital system of Kapi'olani Medical Center for Women & Children, Kapi'olani Medical Center at Pali Momi, Straub Clinic & Hospital, and Wilcox Hospital/Kauai Medical Clinic.

I am writing in **strong support of HB 1362** which would establish licensing and regulatory requirements for the practice of genetic counselors. Genetic counselors are frequently the primary providers of genetic information and counseling to pregnant women whose babies are at risk for birth defects and other genetic conditions. They are also the primary provider of genetic risk assessment for men and women with cancer or a significant family history of cancer. Genetic counselors also assist in the evaluation and management of children and adults with heritable conditions. Medical geneticists and genetic counselors work together much like other physicians work with nurses.

HB 1362 will provide many benefits. First, it 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. Second, it would provide the first step towards enabling genetic counselors to bill for their services from third party insurers. Third, licensure will help attract genetic counselors to practice in Hawaii as there are currently not enough trained genetic physicians to provide all genetic services and counseling.

Because of the work that genetic counselors provide and I ask that you pass HB 1362 from this committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.