



**HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION**

AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

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**The Twenty-Fifth Legislature, State of Hawaii  
House of Representatives  
Committee on Health**

**Testimony by  
Hawaii Government Employees Association  
March 27, 2009**

**H.C.R. 244/H.R. 212 – ENSURING THAT  
ANY LEGISLATIVE EFFORT TO REPAIR  
THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM IN HAWAII  
SHOULD INCORPORATE  
SUSTAINABLE WELLNESS PROGRAMS  
THAT ADDRESS THE UNDERLYING  
CAUSAL FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH  
CHRONIC DISEASE**

The Hawaii Government Employees Association strongly supports the purpose and intent of H.C.R. 244/H.R. 212. Any attempt to reform the existing health care system should include sustainable wellness programs to reduce ever-increasing costs that are largely attributable to chronic diseases. We also believe that preventive health care is another important part of health care reform.

State governments can effectively promote employee health by developing a comprehensive wellness program. Several states currently offer wellness programs to public employees that include risk assessments, lifestyle education incentives, and health management strategies such as smoking cessation, stress reduction, diet and exercise. State employee benefit packages can encourage disease prevention and management.

Integral to any workplace wellness program are opportunities and incentives for employees to incorporate healthy choices, good nutrition and physical activity into their daily lives. Workers today spend a significant amount of time on the job. By providing opportunities and incentives for healthy living, we would promote wellness programs in the workplace which would lead to fewer sick days, greater workplace productivity and lower health insurance costs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.C.R. 244 and H.R. 212.

Respectfully submitted,

**Nora A. Nomura**  
Deputy Executive Director



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

TO: Representative Ryan I. Yamane, Chair  
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair  
Committee on Health

FROM: Diane M. Terada, Division Administrator

DATE: Friday, March 27, 2009 (10:00 a.m., Room 329)

RE: **Support of HCR244/HR212, Ensuring that any Legislative Effort to Repair the Healthcare System in Hawaii should Incorporate Sustainable Wellness Programs that Address the Underlying Causal Factors Associated with Chronic Disease**

Chair Yamane, Vice Chair Nishimoto and Members of the House Committee on Health, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of HCR244/HR212.

Catholic Charities Hawaii (CCH), is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing supportive home and community based services to elders since 1973 and currently serves approximately 5,000 older persons each year. **We strongly support this resolution which recognizes the importance of wellness and prevention programs as strategies for improving individual health.**

Catholic Charities Hawaii has operated the Lanakila Multi-Purpose Senior Center since 1981. Lanakila Multi-Purpose Senior Center is a State owned facility that was built as a model senior center for the State of Hawaii in 1969. The Center provides a range of wellness programs that provide opportunities for older adults to maintain and improve their health. We support this resolution for the following reasons:

- Elders, age 60 and older, represent the fastest growing segment of Hawai'i's population. There are approximately 238,000 Hawai'i residents aged 60 and over, constituting 18.7% of Hawai'i's total population<sup>i</sup>. By the year 2010, this segment is projected to grow by 70% to 299,500 persons (or one in every five persons). And Hawai'i seniors have a longer life expectancy than those across the continental U.S. – 79.8 vs. 76.9 years<sup>ii</sup>.
- **Stroke remains the third leading cause of death** in the United States.<sup>iii</sup> It is also the nation's leading cause of long term disability.<sup>iv</sup> It is estimated Americans will have paid about \$65.5 billion in 2008 for stroke-related medical care and disability.<sup>v</sup> An analysis of data on over 60,000 subjects determined that **even moderate exercise on a regular basis can lower the risk of stroke.**<sup>vi</sup>
- According to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics survey, **only 2% of adults aged 75 and older were involved in exercise or recreational activity. Fifty-four percent spent their time watching TV.**<sup>vii</sup> It is well established that physical activity has a positive effect on physical health, activity also leads to better mental health and cognitive function.<sup>viii</sup>

- **Exercise can also reduce the risk of dementia by half, even in people who begin exercising in their 60s.**<sup>ix</sup> Exercise that comes in the form of recreational activities (i.e., hula, line dance, ethnic dance) can also have the same beneficial effects. **Older adults are more likely to self-refer themselves for exercise that comes in the form of a recreational activity (i.e., dance) and they are likely to continue in it for a longer period of time because it is enjoyable.**
- **Loneliness has a negative impact on cognitive health and increases the risk of dementia.**<sup>x</sup> Researchers with the Rush Alzheimer's Disease Center discovered that patients with higher loneliness scores may be twice as likely to develop dementia.<sup>xi</sup> **In a study of seven senior centers in seven states, "over 90% indicate they have developed close friendships since coming to the senior center....86.9% of the respondents indicated that senior center friends provide them with emotional security."**<sup>xii</sup>
- In general, the Center for Disease Control found that **physically active people have a lower health care cost than inactive people do.**<sup>xiii</sup> The average nursing home cost in the State of Hawai'i is between \$295<sup>xiv</sup> to \$306 per day.<sup>xv</sup> **For the approximate cost of institutional care for three frail elders, Lanakila Multi-Purpose Senior Center can provide a range of activities to serve well over a thousand older adults annually to help improve health and maintain wellness.**

As wellness programs, Lanakila Multi-Purpose Senior Center and other senior center programs are cost-effective, preventive alternatives to costly health care and institutionalization for older adults and give the State the opportunity to save money and to support the desire of older adults to remain independent in their own homes for as long as it is safely possible.

**We ask for your support of HCR244/HR21.** If I can provide any further information, please feel free to contact me via phone at 808-595-5901 or via email at [diane.terada@catholiccharitieshawaii.org](mailto:diane.terada@catholiccharitieshawaii.org). Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.

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<sup>i</sup> Yuan, S., Karel, H., & Yuen, S. (2007). Hawai'i's Older Adults: Demographic Profile. Honolulu, HI, University of Hawai'i, Center on the Family, p. 2.

<sup>ii</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>iii</sup> "Impact of Stroke", American Stroke Association, [www.strokeassociation.org](http://www.strokeassociation.org), 1/11/09.

<sup>iv</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>v</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>vi</sup> Nano, Stephanie, "Fitness A 'Strong Predictor' Of Stroke Risk," Honolulu Advertiser, 2/23/08, page A5.

<sup>vii</sup> Gitlin, Laura N. Ph.D. "Importance of Activity: What the Research Shows in Support of Senior Center Programming", 4/18/08 Presentation to Pennsylvania Association in Senior Centers. p. 12. Reference: Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Time Use Survey.

<sup>viii</sup> Brody, Jane E., "Mental Reserves Keep Brains Agile," New York Times Online 12-29-07. [www.nytimes.com/2007/12/11/health](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/11/health).

<sup>ix</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>x</sup> Wilson Ronald S, Krueger KR, Arnold SE, Schneider JA, Kelly JF, Barnes LL, Tang Y, Bennett DA, "Loneliness and Risk of Alzheimer's Disease".

<sup>xi</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>xii</sup> Aday, Ronald, "Identifying Important Linkages Between Successful Aging and Senior Center Participation", March 2003.

<sup>xiii</sup> Executive Summary: "A New Vision of Aging: Helping Older Adults Make Healthier Choices," Center for the Advancement of Health, Washington, DC, March 2006, p. 1.

<sup>xiv</sup> "Isle's Nursing Home Costs Third Highest", Honolulu Advertiser, 7-1-08. AARP survey.

<sup>xv</sup> "Hawai'i Nursing Home, Assisted-Living Costs Higher Than National Average," Pacific Business News, 10-28-08. 2008 MetLife Market Survey of Nursing Home and Assisted Living Costs.