



**LATE
Testimony**

To: Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair, Human Services Committee
Representative Tom Brower, Vice Chair, Human Services Committee
Representative Ryan I. Yamane, Chair, House Health Committee
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair, House Health Committee
Members, House Joint Committee on Health and Human Services

From: Trisha Y. Nakamura, Policy and Advocacy Director

Date: March 1, 2009

Hrg: House Joint Committee on Human Services and Health; March 2, 2009 at 9:00 a.m.

Re: **Support of HR 36 and HCR 45, Requesting DHS to Study the Feasibility of Implementing a Smoking Cessation Benefit to Hawaii QUEST Beneficiaries**

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HR 36 and HCR 45 which requests the Department of Human Services to study the feasibility of implementing a smoking-cessation benefit to QUEST beneficiaries. The Coalition for a Tobacco Free Hawaii (Coalition) is the only independent organization in Hawaii whose sole mission is to reduce tobacco use through education, policy and advocacy. We thank the Joint Committee on Human Services and Health for hearing this matter.

The Coalition supports efforts to reduce smoking. Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death. In Hawaii, over 1,200 will die because of smoking-related causes. Smoking costs our State over \$330 million dollars in direct medical-related costs.

The resolution before you today is a step forward to ultimately save our State money and lives. This resolution asks that DHS study the feasibility of a program to provide QUEST beneficiaries with the help needed to decrease and quit smoking. Providing smoking cessation benefits leads to a reduction in the costs associated with smoking. A study by Milliman, Inc. on covering smoking cessation by employer-sponsored health benefit programs, found that every employee who quits smoking reduces annual medical and life insurance costs by at least \$210 almost immediately. For example, pregnant mothers who smoke have deliveries that cost an average of \$6,619 compared to non-smokers (\$4,865) and ex-smokers (\$5,849).

Hawaii's strong laws on tobacco have made numerous people want to quit smoking. In 2007, of adult smokers whose income is less than \$15,000 annually, about 67.5% have tried to quit smoking in the past year.

It is important to have DHS determine the feasibility of providing cessation services to those who benefit from QUEST. The Coalition asks that you pass this resolution out of Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.