

Hepatitis Support Network of Hawai`i
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LATE

RE: In favor of HR 297 & HR 269 -

Aloha,

Thank you for your willingness to participate with us in getting a handle on these silent Epidemics. Due to the nature of this Epidemic, which is SILENT here in Hawaii, we feel it is imperative that these people are educated about the problems we face.

Currently, Hawai`i has the highest rate of liver cancer in the U. S. (U.S. Cancer Statistics Working Group. (*United States Cancer Statistics: 1999–2002 Incidence and Mortality Web-based Report*). According to Hawaii Cancer Facts & Figures 2003 – 2004 it is reported that liver cancer is a leading cause of cancer death among Chinese, Filipino, and Hawaiian males (American Cancer Society, Cancer Research Center of Hawai`i and the Hawai`i Department of Health. *Hawai`i Cancer Facts and Figures 2003 – 2004*).

The reason for Hawai`i's dubious Liver Cancer distinction is due to the "Silent Epidemic" of Hepatitis B and C.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau in 2006 the population of The City & County of Honolulu was 909,863 with 299,000 households. Families made up 70 percent of the households in Honolulu County. This figure includes both married-couple families (53 percent) and other families (17 percent). Nonfamily households made up 30 percent of all households in Honolulu County. Most of the nonfamily households were people living alone, but some were composed of people living in households in which no one was related to the householder. Because people in Hawaii live so close to each other infectious diseases spread exponentially.

Eighteen percent of the people living on Oahu in 2006 were foreign born. Among people at least five years old living on Oahu in 2006 26 percent spoke a language other than English at home. 2 percent of the total population moved to Oahu from abroad.

Anyone can become infected with hepatitis B, however, children who were born, or whose parents were born, outside the United States where hepatitis B is a serious problem may be at increased risk for hepatitis B virus infection.

Special populations, which are residents of Oahu, are:

Asian – 402,365, 44.2%
Native Hawaiian 44,597
Pacific Islanders 27,597
Hispanic or Latino 63,312,
Mixed races 205,578,
White 201,795

The CDC's Budget for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention was \$1 Billion dollars. From that amount only 2% was allocated nation wide for Hepatitis.

Of the approximately \$17 million in the Division of Viral Hepatitis, only about \$5 million goes to all 50 States combined (the rest is research and CDC staff etc). That 5 million is for positions called the Adult Viral Hepatitis Prevention Coordinator, in each state and a few cities. They don't give us any \$\$ for program – just A position.

Even though Hepatitis has been around for more than a thousand years, Viral Hepatitis was only added to the CDC's National Center on HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention in 2006.

Here in Hawai`i, we get \$75,000 per year for hepatitis C programs as well as one position. She is the only employee in the DOH who focuses on Viral Hepatitis C; and that is expected to be reduced.

Reductions in federal funding are often not matched by reductions in state/ local health department funding.

Hepatitis C is the most common chronic blood-borne viral infection in Hawai`i, with an estimated 23,000 residents currently infected. Hepatitis B infects up 10% of our Asian and Pacific Islander immigrants in Hawai`i. Currently Hawai`i has the highest rate of liver cancer in the U.S. and liver cancer is a leading cause of cancer death among Native Hawaiian males in Hawai`i.

Since Hepatitis C has no outward symptoms, most people do not know they have been infected. For the past 6 years The Hepatitis Support Network of Hawai`i has worked tirelessly to educate, test and treat as many people as possible.

The 12 months of 2007 the Hepatitis Support Network of Hawai'i in conjunction with numerous non-profits and community organizations and countless volunteers participated in 80 different events. Of the 700 people who were tested, 72 tested positive for HVC.

Currently Hepatitis Support Network of Hawai'i works closely with medical treatment providers. as well as a Telemedicine Center in Waianae.

Free testing and state vaccine at River of Life Mission, The Institute for Human Services (HIS), both shelters, as well as Aloha Medical Mission.

Thank you so very much for your continued support.

Me ke aloha pumehana
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