

February 9, 2009

To: Senate Committee on Commerce & Consumer Protection
Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair
Senator David Y. Ige, Vice Chair

By: Diane Brenessel, BS, D.Ed., RRT, AE-C
Clinical Educator for Respiratory Care

RE: SB 1332 RELATING TO HEALTH CARE – Establish licensing requirements for Respiratory Care Practitioners on Feb 10, 2009 at 0830

Chairs and Committee Members:

I am writing in support SB 1332. I see my role as not just an educator but as a strong patient advocate ensuring a consistent high level of care-delivery that produces positive patient outcomes and promotes patient safety.

I have practiced and taught respiratory care for over 20 years and I have witnessed the role change for the respiratory care practitioner from prior task-driven physician ordering pattern to our current practice that requires critical thinking, independent assessment and individual clinical judgment in the management of patients suffering from respiratory disorders and diseases. Physicians rely on our clinical assessment and recommendations and they assume all respiratory care practitioners are required to comply with established standards that support on-going education and competency testing and this is not the case.

My role as an educator at my facility is to assist in the orientation of new hires. My observation and concern is that a new hire respiratory care practitioner can pass the didactic and clinical orientation, successfully complete the probation period, and then lapse into previous patterns of behavior that resulted in poor clinical judgment and harm to patients. These types of situations can and should be avoided through licensing where people with these problems are identified prior to employment.

Lastly, with threats of bioterrorism and pandemic flu outbreaks, it's just a matter of time before Hawaii will be called on to produce resources to deal with these situations. Currently, there is no requirement for respiratory care practitioners to gain the knowledge and competence to be able to deal with these catastrophic respiratory events as addressed in other states.

I am asking this committee to support and pass **Senate Bill 1332** to help protect patients requiring respiratory care services in Hawaii.

Thank you for your kind consideration,
Diane Brenessel, BS, D.Ed., RRT, AE-C
Clinical Educator for Respiratory Care