



January 25, 2010

Committee: On Health  
Bill: HB 2081

Honorable Chairperson Yamane and Members of the Health Committee:

My name is Jackie Berry, Executive Director of Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition of Hawaii. HMHB IS IN SUPPORT OF HB 2081 Relating to Premature Infant Health Care. This bill requires a coordinated effort on the part of the Department of Health to ensure standardized and follow up processes for premature infants born earlier than 37 weeks. We know that premature infants run the risk of various health issues and good follow up care will reduce those risks.

We urge your support for the passage of this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration of this issue and our testimony.

To: Honorable Ryan Yamane  
Honorable Scott Nishimoto

From: Lin Joseph  
Director of Program Services  
March of Dimes Hawaii Chapter

Re: In strong support of  
**HB2081**  
Hearing: Tuesday, January 26, 2010, 9:00am  
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

Chair Yamane, Vice Chair Nishimoto, Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express support for HB2081, *which would require the Department of Health to prepare and distribute written material about premature infants who are born at less than 37 weeks.*

For over 70 years, the March of Dimes has been a leader in improving the health of women of child bearing age, infants, and children. Our mission is to *improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth, and infant mortality.* As the leading cause of neonatal mortality and a major contributor to child morbidity, prematurity has been a major focus of March of Dimes programs in research, education, community service and advocacy.

Prematurity is a serious health problem and is the leading cause of infant death. In Hawaii, **one** in every **eight** babies is born preterm. Babies who survive an early birth often face the risk of lifelong health challenges, such as breathing problems, mental retardation and other disabilities. The specialized care a premature infant requires often continues when the infant leaves the hospital.

During discussions with families whose babies were born premature and require time in Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICU) across the U.S., March of Dimes realized that the NICU experience was incredibly painful for families, who expressed a need for more support and information during that time. In response, March of Dimes created the NICU Family Support program to provide families with informational materials and supportive activities. In Hawaii, March of Dimes provides this program at Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children.

More information about premature birth is needed and we need the Department of Health's help. March of Dimes encourages the members of the Committee on Health to join us in supporting the creation and dissemination of this important material on premature birth.