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**Improving Life
One Breath at a Time**

Founded in 1904, the
American Lung Association
includes affiliated associations
throughout the U.S.

LATE



TO: Senate Committee on Health

**FOR: Hearing Scheduled for 3:00 pm
Monday, March 16 2009**

**RE: TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT HB 896, HD 1
RELATING TO TOBACCO**

Chair Ige, Vice Chair Green and Members of the Committee:

The American Lung Association in Hawaii strongly supports HB 896, HD 1 which extends without time limit the requirement for retailers who sell tobacco to obtain a retail tobacco permit from the Department of Taxation.

Removal of the provision in the existing law that sunsets the permit requirement in July 2009 would ensure continuation of an important element in the ongoing effort to regulate and control tobacco use among Hawaii's minors. Although the percentage of frequent smokers among high school students is declining (and stands presently at approximately 9.7 percent), surveys indicate nearly 7 out of 10 high school students in Hawaii have tried smoking.

The most recent statistic available from the Hawaii Department of Health reveal that "1 in 6 Hawaii high school underage smokers who bought their last pack of cigarettes in a store were neither asked to show ID nor refused sale, according to a student survey."

Clearly, improved regulation and monitoring of tobacco retail sales is required to help stem the illegal sale of tobacco products to minors. ALA in Hawaii believes adoption of HB 896, HD1 will be an important step in achieving that goal.

Respectively submitted,

Jean Evans, MPH
Executive Director
American Lung Association in Hawaii