

SCR 150



April 2, 2010

Committee on Health
Senator David Ige, Chair
Senator Josh Green, M.D., Vice Chair

Committee on Economic Development and Technology
Senator Carol Fukunaga, Chair
Senator Rosalyn Baker, Vice Chair

Hearing:

2:45 P.M. Monday, April 5, 2010
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 016

RE: SCR150 – Proclaiming September 20, 2010, as Mesothelioma Awareness Day

Testimony in Support

Chairs Ige and Fukunaga, and members of the Committees of Health, and Economic Development and Technology. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this resolution.

For the past 50 years, the American Cancer Society Hawaii Pacific, Inc. has been dedicated to eliminating cancer mortality and reducing the suffering caused by cancer through prevention, research, advocacy and education. Because of education, we have made much progress in reducing certain types of cancers caused by highly toxic substances including asbestos.

Mesothelioma is a disease in which malignant (cancer) cells form in the lining of the chest or abdomen and claims approximately 2,500 lives each year in the United States. The mesothelioma rate in Hawaii is 0.8 per 100,000 which is below the average U.S. rate of 1.1 per 100,000.

Evidence clearly shows that many people with malignant mesothelioma have worked or lived in places where they inhaled or swallowed asbestos. After being exposed to asbestos, it usually takes a long time for malignant mesothelioma to occur. Possible signs of mesothelioma include shortness of breath and pain under the rib cage. Fortunately, there are diagnostic tests that can detect mesothelioma including chest x-rays, blood counts and various types of biopsies. Unfortunately once diagnosed, the prognosis is grim with a life expectancy a little over one year.

As with all cancers, one of the keys to improving survival rate is early diagnosis. Over the years, the American Cancer Society has helped to raise public awareness and education about certain cancers by advocating for publicly sponsored awareness days, weeks, or months. Some include:

- National Cervical Cancer Screening Month – January
- National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month – March
- Melanoma Monday – First Monday in May
- Esophageal Cancer Awareness Week – Second Week in May
- National Prostate Cancer Awareness Month – September
- National Breast Cancer Awareness Month – October
- National Mammography Day – Third Friday in October
- Lung Cancer Awareness Month – November

Awareness days, weeks, or months gives us the opportunity to spotlight certain facts regarding specific cancers and other disorders. As an example, many more women will do self-breast exams during Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October.

We believe that declaring September 26, 2010, as Mesothelioma Awareness Day will encourage individuals who have worked around asbestos learn more about the symptoms of this cancer and seek medical attention.

If Mesothelioma Awareness Day just saves a few lives in Hawaii with early detection, then it will have been a success.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today. We encourage the committees to pass this resolution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Massengale".

George S. Massengale, JD
Director of Government Relations