



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
P.O. Box 3378
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:
File:

Senate Committee on Health

SB581, RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

**Testimony of Loretta J. Fuddy, A.C.S.W., M.P.H.
Acting Director of Health**

February 2, 2011, 2:45 p.m. Room 229

- 1 **Department's Position:** The Department of Health opposes this measure as it would create an
2 added layer of bureaucracy, creates a silo for behavioral health, would take the state in the opposite
3 direction from the rest of the nation in the integration of behavioral health and physical health, would
4 adversely impact the priorities of the Executive Budget, and is redundant of the existing 21-member
5 governor-appointed State Mental Health Council and 15-member governor-appointed Hawaii Advisory
6 Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances.
- 7 **Fiscal Implications:** Establishes nine full-time governor-appointed commissioners whose salaries shall
8 be set at an unspecified percentage of the salary of the director of health, and allows the commission to
9 "appoint and employ staff" and be reimbursed for their actual and necessary expenses, including travel
10 expenses. The commissioners shall be exempt from chapters 76 (civil service law) and 89 (collective
11 bargaining in public employment) but shall be members of any state or federal employee benefit
12 programs, including chapter 87A (Hawaii Employer-Union Health Benefits Trust Fund).
- 13 **Purpose and Justification:** The purpose of this bill is to create an oversight body that would help to
14 foster a more unified mental health system and transfers the authority, duties, responsibilities and

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1 jurisdiction of the department of health, with respect to mental health, mental illness, drug addiction, and
2 alcoholism, to the Mental Health Commission on July 1, 2013.

3 The Department opposes this bill for several reasons:

4 The Department opposes the creation of another layer of bureaucracy which would create delays in
5 decision making, would be counterproductive to efforts to “streamline government” and improve
6 accountability.

7 The Department opposes the creation of a silo which separates behavioral health from the other public
8 health functions of the department. Singling out mental health and substance abuse services increases
9 the stigma against those who need services, and does not embody the philosophy of holistic health.

10 The Department opposes this bill as it would take this state in the opposite direction of the rest of the
11 nation to integrate behavioral and physical health. This separation of behavioral health will hamper
12 current efforts to collaborate with the department’s other programs, such as primary care, chronic
13 disease and early intervention. According to the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
14 Administration (SAMHSA), 70% of individuals with significant mental health/substance use disorders
15 had at least 1 chronic health condition, 45% have at 2 chronic conditions and almost 30% have 3 or
16 more chronic conditions. Hawaii would be moving away from the national trend to foster holistic care
17 where an individual can be screened for depression at the same time they are screened for diabetes and
18 smoking. Medical research is increasingly showing the link between mental illness and substance use
19 and chronic diseases. In a recent California study (JEN Associates, Cambridge, MA, source:
20 SAMHSA), persons with mental illness were two to three times more likely to also suffer from
21 diabetes, ischemic heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, arthritis and health
22 failure.

23 The Department opposes this bill as the addition of the Commission and its staff would adversely impact
24 the priorities of the Executive Budget.

1 The Department opposes the establishment of a new Mental Health Commission as it would be
2 redundant of the 21-member governor-appointed State Council on Mental Health and the 15-member
3 governor-appointed Hawaii Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances.

4 We thank you for this opportunity to testify.

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