



January 27, 2012 9:00 am

The Honorable Representative Ryan I. Yamane, Chair
The Honorable Representative Dee Morikawa, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Health

Dear Chairman Yamane and Members of the House Committee on Health,

Subject: **Support for HB 2276**

The Injury Prevention Advisory Committee strongly supports HB 2276 which requires any person under the age of sixteen to wear a helmet while operating a skateboard. Requiring helmets will help reduce traumatic brain injuries among skateboarders in Hawaii.

Established in 1990, the Injury Prevention Advisory Committee (IPAC) is an advocacy group committed to preventing and reducing injury in Hawai'i. IPAC members include public and private agencies, physicians, and professionals working together to address the eight leading areas of injury.

Each year in Hawaii, 882 individuals are treated in hospitals for skateboard related injuries. Of those, 450 are under 16 years of age, which is nearly equal to the number who are injured from bicycle (510) or car crashes (470) and more than the number who are injured from assaults (350) or motorcycle (155) or pedestrian crashes (145).

There were 119 patients in the Queen's Trauma Registry who were injured while skateboarding over the 5-year period of 2006-2010. Nearly 40% (47) of the patients were under 16 years of age, including 27% (32) who were 13 to 15 years old. Less than 9% (4) of the patients under 16 years of age were wearing a helmet at the time of their injury, close to the percentage for patients 16 and older (7%). Nearly three-quarters (74%, or 35) of the younger patients suffered a traumatic brain injury. None of the 4 children who were wearing helmets had a skull fracture, compared to nearly half of the unhelmeted children (44%, or 19 of 43). The costs of treating injured skateboarders are staggering, with the annual average of charges totaling \$11.3 million.

Helmet use is a best practice for injury prevention. Increasing helmet use among skateboarders would reduce head injuries among our youth in Hawaii. We strongly support the passage of HB 2276.

Thank you for allowing us to testify.

Sincerely,

Bruce McEwan

Bruce McEwan, Chair
Injury Prevention Advisory Committee