

Testimony of Cindy Clivio on behalf of the Hawaii Association of Athletic Trainers in **support SB2538**

February 27, 2012

To: Chair David Ige and Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committees:

My name is Cindy Clivio and I am testifying for the members of the Hawaii Association of Athletic Trainers (HATA) in **support of SB 2538**

The Hawaii Athletic Trainers Association (HATA) is the professional membership association for Certified Athletic Trainers in our state. Certified Athletic Trainers are health care providers who specialize in the prevention, assessment, treatment and rehabilitation of injuries and illnesses of athletes participating in various athletic events in Hawaii. Athletic Trainers are employed in all Hawaii's public schools, some private schools, colleges, Universities, hospitals, physician offices, clinics, and by the military.

Over the past few years over 30 states have enacted concussion legislation. Most have been modeled after the state of Washington's Zachary Lystedt law which was the first such law enacted in 2009. The Lystedt law was created after a middle school interscholastic football player sustained a concussion which was not recognized and continued to play. He suffered a catastrophic traumatic brain injury and although he survived he has been left with permanent disability and decreased mental capacity. After his injury the first question asked was why he was allowed to continue to play. The answer was that coaches, parents and students themselves are not trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of concussions and in his case

there were no medical personnel trained in the management of concussion on site. At the time of his injury, at his school there were no doctors, no ambulance, no athletic trainers to provide appropriate medical care. Hawaii is unique and is well known as a leader in athletic health care. We are the only state that provides Certified Athletic Trainers in all of its public schools. The Hawaii Department of Education has created and successfully implemented a concussion management plan that greatly exceeds the requirements of any of the 30+ state laws. In cooperation with the State Department of Health the DOE is gathering head injury epidemiology data. Unfortunately not all schools have the same standards. While many private schools employ athletic trainers and many follow the same protocol, not all do. This bill would require that all member schools of the Hawaii High School Athletic Association create a concussion awareness plan and the hope is that eventually all leagues and schools would follow the similar policies.

As the DOE has implemented its policy, athletic trainers found that there is a lack of understanding of the serious risks associated with head injuries and there remains a culture in athletics where student athletes feel they need to “tough it out” and many athletes are reluctant to report symptoms. The proper management of concussions requires that those injured have a period of cognitive rest. School staff including counselors, teachers, and administrators need to have a greater understanding of the importance of a gradual return to school and academic activities. Teachers need to become part of the team that helps evaluate when students are able to resume full activity. Educating students, parents, coaches and school personnel is the critical element in hoping to provide meaningful change.

We would like to note that traumatic brain injuries including concussions are not only an athletics issue. These injuries are happening on playgrounds, at skate parks, in the ocean and during elementary recess and youth sports. Providing educational awareness at the interscholastic athletics level is a first step and ideally an educational program needs to be developed and implemented to elementary level and to youth leagues. We would suggest that when the economy improves and funding could become available that the legislature consider a more expansive program that would provide education for all school aged students, their parents and youth leagues.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

February 23, 2012

To: Senator David Ige
Senator Michelle Kidani
Members of the WAM committee

From: Elizabeth Lafitaga

Subject: Support of Senate Bill 2538

Aloha! My name is Elizabeth Lafitaga. I would like to ask for your support on SB2538 having the Department of Education and the Hawaii High School Athletic Association to require concussion awareness program to provide guidelines for public and private schools. Having a concussion awareness program would provide a) education to student athletes of this kind of injury, b) Annual educational session for coaches and athletic trainers, c) Need of mandatory removal and lastly d) the need of a concussed student's physician to evaluate the student and determine whether the student is able to return to their sport. I see a need for this program because Hawaii's High Schools do have concussion management programs but they do not have any education installed to their programs.

Due to facts from the website of Sports Concussion Institute, the lack of proper diagnosis and management of concussion may result in serious long-term consequences, or risk of coma or death. Having an educational program would decrease this improper activity. In Hawaii alone 213 concussions were reported in the 2007-2008 school year and 446 in the 2010-2011 school years. Hawaii's State House has introduced HB2273 this session where it is to revise the rules of youth concussions protecting public and private high schools. Seeing as this bill wants to *revise* the rules, why shouldn't they have an educational program to help support it?

Concussions can be found in any contact sport which involves any extreme amounts of force to your head. According to a Local Trauma expert of Hawaii Dr. Caesar Ursic "A concussion in a player or anyone who hits their head hard enough is a shaking of the brain to a degree that the brain momentarily stops working correctly". Parents, Students, Coaches, or Physicians need to be notified and educated properly about this injury due to that this is one of the most common injuries. Not just students need to be educated but the parents need to know how to care for a child who has a concussion. A physician needs to know how to properly evaluate the child for them to be able to ever return to the sport. This would be a beneficial program to put into act.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I hope you support SB2538,