

SB 2958

There is a crisis in Hawaii for cancer patients that can be solved by passing Senate Bill 2958. When the Hawaii Medical Center (HMC) abruptly closed in December 2011, this created a major hole in the cancer care for adults and children in Hawaii. More specifically, since bone marrow transplant program shut down people with life threatening cancers can not receive the care that they urgently need..

For many adults and children, bone marrow transplantation gives a chance for life. When someone has a cancer like leukemia and needs a transplant, time is of the essence. Now people have to travel to the mainland for care. Why do people have to go the mainland when it can be done just as well here in Hawaii?

Many people are not aware that there were TWO transplant programs at Hawaii Medical Center (HMC). One program was for solid organ (liver and kidney) and another was for bone marrow for cancers (leukemia, lymphoma, and myeloma). Recently, the solid organ transplant program was approved for emergency funding to continue the important work.

Since Dr. Livingston Wong pioneered the first bone marrow transplant in 1978 in Hawaii, over 250 men, women, and children have gotten a second chance at life. Bone marrow or blood stem cell transplants were performed at the HMC. For the past 5 years, there have been 16-20 transplants per year; two thirds are adults and one third are children. Pediatric transplants are performed at the Kapi'olani Medical Center for Women and Children. The stem cell collections were done by the special apheresis team at HMC helped both the adult and pediatric bone marrow transplant programs.. Hawaii Pacific Health has committed to continue the pediatric transplants in the future, but not the adult transplants.

There are multiple parts to the bone marrow transplant program that also need to be saved. The Hawaii Bone Marrow Donor Registry has been working since 1989. The Registry has worked up over 3,111 preliminary matches, 331 of which have gone on to donate bone marrow or stem cells. The Registry coordinated 217 bone marrow and 114 stem cell collections from unrelated donors. In addition, the Tissue Typing HLA lab is essential for both the solid organ and bone marrow transplant programs. This essential lab represents a shared resource for our community and deserves community support. Finally, Unrelated Donor Stem cell or bone marrow collections were previously done at HMC. These collections helped people outside of Hawaii; our bone marrow transplant program in Hawaii helps those in Hawaii.

Many residents of Hawaii can not afford to travel to the mainland, get a transplant, and stay for 3 months afterwards for post transplant followup. Even with discounts, the housing cost for one person can exceed \$6000 for 3 months. The American Cancer Society is helping, but private organizations can't solve all of the problems. Of the 11 patients on the bone marrow transplant list before HMC abruptly closed in December, 8 have been urgently referred to transplant centers on the West coast.

The State of Hawaii will save money by supporting bone marrow transplant programs rather than sending patients to the mainland. When a patient travels to another medical center, many of the lab test, x-rays, and CT scans are unnecessarily repeated. Often there are costs in addition to medical care that the Medicaid programs have to pay such as travel, housing, and meals. In this case, the State of Hawaii will save more than \$500,000 per year by keeping the adult bone marrow transplant program in Hawaii.

Over past ten years, the bone marrow transplant program in Hawaii has shown overall results that are as good as or better than national averages. It would be impossible to rebuild these programs if the skilled personnel are lost to the mainland. These are programs in Hawaii worth saving. There has been broad bipartisan support in the Hawaii State Legislature in support of the bone marrow transplant program.

There is extensive community support for keeping the bone marrow transplant program going. The American Cancer Society has expressed unanimous support for the program. There is extensive community support for keeping the bone marrow transplant program going. The Hawaii Society of Clinical Oncology has expressed their support for the program. There are many cancer doctors around the state who also want the program preserved. The Board of Directors for Oncare Hawaii, the largest medical oncology group in Hawaii, gave their support as well.

Transplantation offer hope in the darkness of cancer. I urge the Senate to passed Senate Bill 2958.