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House Committee on Health
Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair
Representative Dee Morikawa, Vice Chair

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HB 407 – RELATING TO CANCER

Cory Chun, Government Relations Director – Hawaii Pacific
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 407, which appropriates state funding for the breast and cervical cancer screening program.

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) is the nation's leading cancer advocacy organization. ACS CAN works with federal, state, and local government bodies to support evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem.

What is the Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program?

In the United States, breast and cervical cancer early detection testing is available for low-income, underserved, under-insured, and uninsured women through the Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (BCCEDP). This program was created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 1991. It provides screening support in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, 5 US territories, and 12 American Indian/Alaska Native tribes or tribal organizations.

Screening services are mainly offered through non-profit groups and local health clinics. Through these BCCEDP partners, women without health insurance, or with insurance that does not cover these tests, can get breast and cervical cancer testing for free or at very low cost.

The need for additional funding

In 2010, 58% of all women in Hawaii were screened for breast cancer and 84% were screened for cervical cancer. Those rates dropped significantly among uninsured women who were screened at 28% and 62% respectively.

The Affordable Care Act will provide American women with greater access to preventative evidence-based cancer screenings and treatment services by ensuring all women in new health plans will have access to mammograms and pap tests at no cost. However, gaps will still remain for women who are uninsured or underinsured. According to a new study completed by the George Washington University, it is estimated that over 10,985 women will continue to lack access to cervical cancer screenings, and 4,639 women will lack access to breast cancer screenings in Hawaii after 2014.

Providing additional funding will preserve a critical safety net for thousands of women, who will remain uninsured or underinsured and will lack access to essential screening, diagnostic, and treatment services. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important issue.