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Testimony on HB 905, "RELATING TO NEWBORN SCREENING"

The American Heart Association strongly supports HB 905, "Relating to Newborn Screening."

Congenital heart defects (CHD) are the most common birth defect in the U.S. and the leading killer of infants with birth defects. About 9 children are affected by CHD per every 1,000 live births. Tragically, more than 1,500, or one in three, do not live to celebrate their first birthday.

Despite these grim statistics, there is still real reason for hope. Due to research, most children with CHD survive to adulthood, including many who formerly would have died.

Pulse Oximetry Screening

One of the best ways to detect CHD is through a simple, noninvasive, inexpensive test, called pulse oximetry, or pulse ox. The pulse ox test consists of sensors placed on a baby's hand and foot to check blood oxygen levels.

If the baby's levels are too low, additional tests may be conducted. New research suggests wider use of pulse ox screening would help identify more than 90 percent of heart defects.

In September 2011, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius suggested that critical congenital heart defects screening be added to the "Recommended Uniform Screening Panel" for newborns before they are released from a hospital or birthing facility. To achieve this goal efforts are underway across the country to enact pulse ox screening policies that will allow babies with heart defects to live longer and fuller lives. As a result of these efforts California, Indiana, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Tennessee, and West Virginia have already passed laws requiring newborns to have pulse ox screenings prior to being discharged from the hospital. In New Jersey, just hours after the state's law took effect, a newborn's life was saved.

The AHA urges Hawaii legislators to give keiki born with congenital heart defects in our state the same chance of surviving and thriving. Support HB 905.

Respectfully submitted,

Donald B. Weisman
Hawaii Government Relations/Mission:Lifeline Director

Please remember the American Heart Association in your will or estate plan.

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For information on the AHA's educational or research programs, contact your nearest AHA office, or visit our web site at www.americanheart.org or e-mail us at hawaii@heart.org

Oahu:

677 Ala Moana Blvd., Ste. 600
Honolulu, HI 96813-5485
Phone: 808-538-7021
Fax: 808-538-3443

Maui County:

Phone: 808-224-7185
Fax: 808-224-7220

Hawaii:

Phone: 808-961-2825
Fax: 808-961-2827

Kauai:

(Serviced by Oahu office)
Phone: 866-205-3256
Fax: 808-538-3443

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free of cardiovascular
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