

Date: February 23, 2013

To: Honorable Sylvia Luke  
Honorable Scott Nishimoto  
Honorable Aaron Ling Johanson

From: Lin Joseph  
Director of Program Services  
March of Dimes Hawaii Chapter

Re: In support of  
**HB909 HD1**

Hearing: Committee on Finance  
February 25, 2013  
Conference Room 308, State Capitol

March of Dimes Foundation

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Chair Luke, Vice Chair Nishimoto, Vice Chair Johanson, Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express strong support for HB909 HD1: *Relating to Infant Mortality Program*.

For over 70 years, the March of Dimes has been a leader in maternal and child health. Our mission is to *improve the health babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth, and infant mortality*.

In 2009, 18,887 babies were born in the state of Hawaii. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, 12.6% of them were born preterm, or less than 37 weeks gestation and more than 5 of every thousand born died in infancy. That means in an average week, 363 babies are born, 46 babies are born preterm, and 2 babies die before their first birthday. Prematurity is the leading cause of neonatal death in the first 30 days of life and a major contributor to infant mortality. In 2003, the March of Dimes launched a national campaign to raise awareness of the problem of prematurity and to reduce the rate of preterm birth in the United States.

In 2009, pursuant to HCR 215 SD1, March of Dimes partnered with the Department of Health and Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies to survey Hawaii hospitals regarding implementation of policies and procedures to reduce elective cesarean sections and labor inductions, and found that only 55% of Hawaii hospitals performing deliveries had policies in place that are consistent with American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) guidelines of no elective labor inductions or cesarean sections before 39 weeks gestation. In its report of HCR215 to the legislature, DOH recommended the formation of a task force to further pursue the reduction in elective procedures before 39 weeks through development of quality initiatives, training, and collection of data relating to elective deliveries, review of regulations governing state licensure of hospitals, and a public awareness campaign on the risks of delivery prior to 39 weeks gestation. In 2012, March of Dimes again partnered with the Department of Health to take up the challenge to reduce Hawaii's prematurity rate by eight percent by 2014. We are working together

February 23, 2013  
Honorable Sylvia Luke  
Honorable Scott Nishimoto  
Honorable Aaron Ling Johanson  
Page 2

on increasing public awareness to reduce Hawaii's preterm birth through our "Healthy Babies are Worth the Wait" campaign that encourages women to wait for labor to begin on its own if their pregnancy is healthy.

Therefore, March of Dimes asks the House Committee on Health to support the establishment of a statewide, comprehensive infant mortality reduction plan and the distribution by hospitals of their written policies on non-medically indicated induction of newborn deliveries to address early births in Hawaii through the passage of HB909 HD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to present testimony in support of HB909 HD1.