



American Heart Association | American Stroke Association

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LATE TESTIMONY

Testimony on HB 914, HD1, "Relating to Obesity Prevention"

The American Heart Association supports the intent of HB 914, HD1, and welcomes the opportunity to serve as a stakeholder in the proposed Obesity Prevention Council.

As the bill states, obesity has become one of the leading health issues for our state. If left unchecked, it holds the potential to cripple Hawaii's health care system and Hawaii's businesses that largely cover employee healthcare costs.

As heart disease is the leading cause of death in Hawaii, and stroke is the third leading cause of death and the leading cause of major disability, the American Heart Association strongly supports the provision of state dollars to address those health issues. A heart disease and stroke prevention program currently exists within the DOH, however it is entirely funded startup funding provided through the Centers for Disease Control, and that funding is set to expire in July 2013. As obesity is one of the leading risk factors for the development of heart disease and stroke, funding applied to that program to implement the state heart disease and stroke plan that has already been developed with input from community stakeholders would be appropriate.

We also express caution that food and beverage industry involvement in the proposed task force could result in efforts to detract attention away from addressing overconsumption of calories to a focus only on physical activity, or burning of calories. That would be a recipe for failure. For instance, to burn off the calories in just one can of sugar-sweetened soda it would take about 20 minutes of hard running, and that amount of exercise would not compensate for any other calories consumed through meals. To be truly effective, any obesity prevention campaign needs to be comprehensive and address both reductions in calorie consumption and increased physical activity.

Hawaii's obesity epidemic must be addressed comprehensively through a combination of public education and strong, progressive policy aimed at encouraging the public toward living healthier. The future of our public's health and all Hawaii businesses' economic health depends on it.

Respectfully submitted,

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

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

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