



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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Testimony SUPPORTING SB2539, S. D. 1
Relating to the Special Action Team for the Hawaii State Hospital

SENATOR JILL N. TOKUDA, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Hearing Date: February 23, 2016, 9:50 a.m. Room Number: 211

- 1 **Fiscal Implications:** Undetermined at this time.
- 2 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health (DOH) supports this measure. We thank
3 the Legislature for its continued support and in particular the intent of the initiatives in the bills
4 on today's committee agenda. Only through a combination of financing support, building a new
5 facility, support in rebuilding community programs, and fundamental policy changes will Hawaii
6 be able to effectively address the needs of its citizens, the operation of the Hawaii State Hospital
7 (HSH), and be able to provide an effective continuum of mental health supports. Separately, we
8 will be addressing measures the Governor and others have introduced regarding policy and
9 staffing challenges. Clearly, all three branches of government play a critical role in making this
10 system function effectively.

11 The purpose of the measure is to create a temporary Special Action Team for HSH to
12 address capacity and census issues and to develop the new forensic facility which is projected to
13 be ready for occupancy by June 30, 2019. The S.D. 1 includes technical, nonsubstantive
14 amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency. This measure appropriates \$50,000.00
15 in general funds for this team. The creation of this HSH Special Action Team, as proposed, will

1 convene key stakeholders involved in the development of the new secure building for high risk
2 patients to be built at the HSH. The group will assist and advise, and may support exempting the
3 project from certain permits and approvals which are unnecessary for completion of the project.

4 The prospect of decreasing the burden of bureaucratic “red tape,” and speeding up the
5 time table for the project, is encouraging and the DOH welcomes this effort.

6 The director of health is currently chairing a work group on this project, which includes
7 the Departments of Accounting and General Services, Health, Human Services, Land and
8 Natural Resources and Budget and Finance and the Attorney General. Further discussion may be
9 helpful to clarify the additional benefits of the Special Action Team as proposed.

10 Regular reporting, a feature of this bill, may alternatively be accomplished through a
11 resolution as well.

12 Our understanding is that open meeting laws will apply to this Special Action Team, as
13 currently proposed. If this is not the intent, we recommend that there be an explication within
14 this bill about the extent of public notice, agenda posting, attendance at and participation in the
15 Special Action Team.

16 Historically, the Senate Concurrent Resolution of 2007, known as the SCR-117 Task
17 Force, and the Governor’s Special Action Team on the Hawaii State Hospital Census of 2012,
18 encountered some challenges in the full implementation of the recommended actions from those
19 bodies.

20 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.