



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 02/14/2018
Time: 02:10 PM
Location: 309
Committee: House Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB 1704 RELATING TO SUICIDE PREVENTION.

Purpose of Bill: Requires and appropriates funds for the Department of Education to implement a mobile application for suicide prevention that provides twenty-four hours per day crisis support services.

Department's Position:

The Department of Education (Department) appreciates the intent of HB 1704 and offers comments on this measure.

In 2015, the Mental Health America of Hawaii (MHAH) was approved for a grant-in-aid to develop a suicide prevention mobile application similar to what is being proposed in this measure. This free application, named Kokua Life, is projected to be released May 2018.

The Department has been collaborating with MHAH on the prevention of youth suicide and bullying. We recognize the importance of providing students with support in the event of crises involving potential suicide.

Further, the Department is committed to working with community partners to raise awareness of and increase accessibility to available suicide prevention interventions and resources, including promoting Kokua Life once it is launched.

Given the shared goals of stakeholders involved in Kokua Life, the Department respectfully submits this bill is not needed.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

The Hawaii State Department of Education seeks to advance the goals of the Strategic Plan which is focused on student success, staff success, and successful systems of support. This is achieved through targeted work around three impact strategies: school design, student voice, and teacher collaboration. Detailed information is available at www.hawaiipublicschools.org.

Helping Hawai'i Live Well

To: Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair, Representative Sam Satoru Kong, Vice Chair, Members, House Committee on Education

From: Trisha Kajimura, Executive Director

Re: COMMENTS REGARDING HB 1704 RELATING TO YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION

Hearing: February 13, 2018, 2:10 am, CR 309

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 1704, which requires and appropriates funds for the Department of Education to implement a mobile application for suicide prevention that provides twenty-four hours per day of crisis support services. We agree with the importance of this type of mobile application and are testifying on this bill to share with you similar work that we have almost completed.

Mental Health America of Hawaii (MHAH) is a 501(c)3 organization founded in Hawai'i 76 years ago, that serves the community by promoting mental health through advocacy, education and service. We are a member of the Prevent Suicide Hawaii Taskforce, an ongoing community group with statewide representation that works on the issue of preventing suicide by sharing information and resources that are disseminated to the community at large.

In the 2015 Legislative session, MHAH was approved for a Grant-in-Aid to develop a phone application geared towards preventing suicide, with youth being one of the targeted user groups. The funds were released in mid-2016 and since then, we have been working on **Kokua Life**, a free smart phone app providing tools for suicide prevention. Kokua Life is slated for release to the community at-large in May of this year.

Kokua Life has been created to enhance our Youth Suicide and Bullying Prevention (YSBP) project, which provides an evidence-based curriculum to youth in middle and high schools. In 2017, we reached over 2800 middle and high school youth and the adults who work with them (teachers, counselors, coaches, recreation supervisors, etc), mostly within the Department of Education (DOE) public school system. The goals of the project are to increase knowledge and understanding of bullying and suicide to facilitate prevention and intervention strategies. The curriculum we use, called "Ho'olohe Pono," was developed by MHAH, based on input from youth focus groups and research on evidence-based best practices. The training is delivered by certified facilitators through an interactive design that includes activities and discussion. Through this training, participants gain the knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy to intervene in or report bullying situations and reach out to those who may be depressed and/or suicidal.

Part of the creation of Kokua Life also included input from the local community of mental health professionals and possible users to determine the name, interface, content, and usability of the app. The app is undergoing final usability testing and coding for its release in May, 2018. The app will be embedded into our YSBP curriculum and will be disseminated through our DOE public school presentations, website, social media, and e-mail communications. We anticipate that our partners will eagerly disseminate the app through their own communication channels throughout the state. We will also conduct media outreach through news outlets.

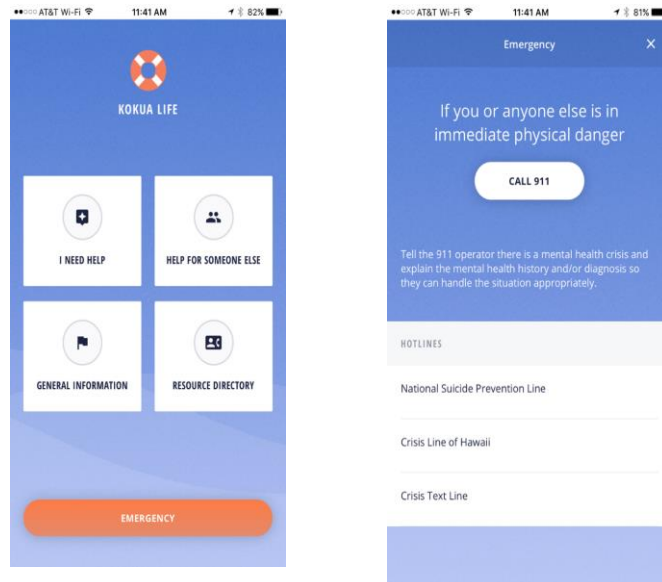


Image 1: Screenshots of the Kokua Life Smart-phone App

The Kokua Life app will have content applicable to all age groups and has sections specifically geared towards people in crisis, people who are contemplating suicide, and people who want resources to help others. Subsections include suicide screening, safety planning, self-care, youth, LGBTQ+ users, military veterans, FAQs, and postvention. The app will also include a digital version of our comprehensive mental health services directory.

The Kokua Life app will not provide online 24/7 crisis support itself, however it will connect users with links directly to resources that provide crisis services 24/7 a week locally and nationally, both by phone and by text. It will also link to non-crisis resources such as Mental Health America’s Screening to Supports program which offers online mental health screening for a number of different issues.

MHAH will continue to partner with the DOE, Prevent Suicide Hawaii Task Force and others to disseminate the Kokua Life app, make sure it is meeting community need, and update it regularly.

Thank you for considering my **testimony on HB 1704**. Please contact me at trisha.kajimura@mentalhealthhawaii.org or (808)521-1846 if you have any questions.



ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE STATE OF HAWAII
DIOCESE OF HONOLULU
Witness to Jesus



Submitted Online
For Hearing:
Committee:

February 12, 2018
Wednesday, February 14, 2018 @ 2:10 p.m.
House Education Committee

SUBMITTED: February 12, 2018

TO: House Education Committee
Rep. Justin Woodson, Chair
Rep. Sam Kong, Vice Chair

FROM: Walter Yoshimitsu, Executive

RE: Strong Support for HB1704 Relating to Suicide Prevention

Honorable Chairs and members of the House Education Committee, I am Walter Yoshimitsu, **representing the Hawaii Catholic Conference**. The Hawaii Catholic Conference is the public policy voice for the Roman Catholic Church in the State of Hawaii, which under the leadership of Bishop Larry Silva, represents Roman Catholics in Hawaii. **We are in strong support of any legislation that will reduce suicides in Hawaii!**

Many people at risk for suicide do not seek help so it is essential that people from across the spectrum of services, both secular and faith-based, come together to find a solution to prevent suicides in Hawaii. As a conference, we believe that each and every human life is sacred. Because of that, we advocate for public policy that will save lives, not end them. On this point we have never wavered.

To that end, we are in strong support of HB 1704 which implements a mobile application for suicide prevention that provides twenty-four hours per day crisis support services and offers students confidential and anonymous two-way communication with a crisis counselor. This may seem like a simple resource, but in Hawaii, where suicide happens once every two days, this is great tool to put into the hands of people who may avail themselves of it.

Suicide affects people from every age, faith, or ethnicity. In fact, right here in Hawaii, according to the State Department of Health, "suicide was the leading cause of fatal injuries and the 10th leading cause of death among Hawaii residents of all ages."ⁱ Many organizations are already doing great work to prevent the loss of innocent lives; however, more can and should be done.

Sadly, when an individual takes their own life, it does not end the suffering. In fact, it is quite the contrary. The truth remains that the pain of suicide will continue thereby negatively affecting the family and even the wider community. Fortunately, there is strong evidence that a comprehensive public health approach is effective in reducing suicide rates. As our state puts aside differences and makes a plan to come together and focus on our collective roles in suicide prevention, we will make a difference in our community. This, and other measures championed by this legislature, will send a message that people suffering from depression deserve a chance to live. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support.

ⁱ State Department of Health testimony on March 18, 2016.

HAWAII CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

(The public policy voice for the Roman Catholic Church in the State of Hawaii)

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ONLINE SUBMITTAL

Hearing on: Wednesday, February 14, 2018 @2:10 p.m.

Conference Room #309

DATE: February 12, 2018

TO: House Committee on Education
Rep. Justin Woodson, Chair
Rep. Sam Kong, Vice Chair

FROM: Eva Andrade, President

RE: **Strong Support for HB1704 Relating to Suicide Prevention**

Hawaii Family Forum is a non-profit, pro-family education organization committed to preserving and strengthening life, family and religious freedom in Hawaii. This year we celebrate 20 years of serving the faith-based community! We support this bill that will implement a mobile application for suicide prevention that provides twenty-four hours per day crisis support services and offers students confidential and anonymous two-way communication with a crisis counselor.

In Hawaii, suicide was the most common cause of fatal injuries among Hawaii residents between 2010 and 2014, accounting for one-quarter of all fatal injuries and experts point out that one person dies by suicide in Hawaii every two days. Recent testimony has said that is one suicide every two days. This is heartbreaking and something we absolutely need to change! Several of our pastors have dealt with this very issue over the past few months.

We are committed to defending the sanctity of human life from conception until natural death, and everything that comes between. Many people in our community are concerned about suicide, because it affects the vulnerable people in our community, especially our youth and elderly. Just in the past few months, pastors have had to deal with the loss of someone in their community because of suicide.

Experts rightly point out that suicidal behaviors, for people of any age, are usually rooted in many different factors, with mental health issues playing an important role in the overall mix. It is a "perfect storm" of emotional issues and the only way to begin making a difference, is by identifying and treating each person. And the good news, is that it is fixable by awareness and treatment.

If this bill is passed with the appropriate funds necessary, our teenagers will have an application on their smartphones that may very well be a tool to help them make a choice that will save their life. Protecting these precious lives are an outcome that is one upon which everyone in the community will agree. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support.

HB-1704

Submitted on: 2/12/2018 2:57:12 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/14/2018 2:10:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Richard Mizusawa	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

HB-1704

Submitted on: 2/12/2018 3:56:59 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/14/2018 2:10:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Margaret Maupin	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

HB-1704

Submitted on: 2/13/2018 8:36:21 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/14/2018 2:10:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Christine Russo	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chair Woodson and members of the committee. My name is Christina Russo and I'm an educator at James Campbell High. I am writing to tentatively support HB 1704 with the additional suggestion that the mobile app also provide support for anonymous reporting of bullying as well as anonymous reporting of intention to commit acts of violence against oneself and others.

Thank you for your time!

Thank you.

HB-1704

Submitted on: 2/13/2018 11:42:31 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/14/2018 2:10:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Judy Ann Kaku	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

HB-1704

Submitted on: 2/13/2018 1:57:12 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/14/2018 2:10:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Melodie Aduja	OCC Legislative Priorities Committee of the Democratic Party of Hawaii	Support	No

Comments:



February 14, 2018

Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Representative Sam Satoru Kong, Vice Chair
House Committee on Education
Hawai'i State Legislature, Hawai'i State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: COMMENTS REGARDING HB 1704 (relating to youth suicide prevention)

Requires and appropriates funds for the Department of Education to implement a mobile application for suicide prevention that provides twenty-four hours per day crisis support services. (Hearing on February 14, 2018, at 2:10 p.m. in Conference Room 309)

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Kong, and Members of the House Committee on Education,

My name is Jeanelle Sugimoto-Matsuda. My professional training is in public health and community-based research, with the majority of my experience relating to mental/behavioral health, including suicide prevention. I am also the current Statewide Chair of the Prevent Suicide Hawai'i Taskforce (PSHTF), Board Member for the Hawai'i Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), and a certified trainer in the "SafeTALK" and "Connect" suicide prevention curricula.

As you may know, one person dies by suicide every two days in Hawai'i. In addition, the immense stigma around mental health and suicidality increases the challenge that faces us when encouraging people to seek help when needed.

The Prevent Suicide Hawai'i Taskforce (PSHTF) is a long-standing community-based group which has voluntarily come together to promote suicide prevention in our communities. The original group came together in 2001. Today, we are a statewide network of individuals and organizations dedicated to reducing suicide attempts and deaths across our communities. Members include the Departments of Education, Health, and Human Services, and also community agencies such as Mental Health America of Hawai'i. Of note, the PSHTF recently completed a Strategic Plan for Suicide Prevention in Hawai'i, which was requested by the Legislature and presented during an informational briefing in December 2017 (link to official document: https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/measure_indiv.aspx?billtype=DC&billnumber=175).

Regarding HB 1704, which would allow for the development of a mobile application for suicide prevention, we would like to call your attention to an ongoing project by Mental Health America of Hawai'i (MHAH). A mobile application, named "Kokua Life," is currently in production and slated for release later this year. Specific details on Kokua Life's development can be referenced in MHAH's testimony on this bill (see testimony from their Executive Director, Ms. Trisha Kajimura).

We also note that HB 1704 envisions a mobile application that provides 24/7 crisis support. Per MHAH's testimony, while Kokua Life itself will not provide this function, it will serve the very important purpose of bridging users with existing resources (both crisis and non-crisis services). In Hawai'i, crisis calls and outreach are managed by the Hawai'i State Department of Health's Crisis Line of Hawai'i. In addition, other 24/7 crisis services which are available to the community include the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) and the Crisis Text Line.

Therefore, while we agree with the importance of a mobile application (and it is also supported in our strategic plan), we urge the Committee to consider allocation of funds to other suicide prevention strategies (e.g., bolstering education/training efforts, ensuring proper postvention support for families who have lost a loved one to suicide, etc.), and avoid duplication of current efforts.

Thank you again, Representative Woodson, Representative Kong, and Members of the House Committee on Education. Please do know how heartfelt our gratitude really is. Please do not hesitate to contact me (junesugi88@gmail.com, or 808-291-9930), should you have further questions or concerns.

Most Sincerely,



Jeanelle Sugimoto-Matsuda, DrPH