



ONLINE SUBMITTAL: February 10, 2020

**HEARING** February 11, 2020 9:30 a.m. in room #329

**TO:** COMMITTEE ON HEALTH  
Rep. John Mizuno, Chair  
Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair

**FROM:** Eva Andrade, President

**RE:** **Strong Support for HB 1691 Suicide Prevention Month**

Hawaii Family Forum is a non-profit, pro-family education organization committed to preserving and strengthening life, family and religious freedom in Hawaii. We are committed to defending the sanctity of human life from conception until natural death, and everything that comes between. We are very concerned about suicide, because it affects the vulnerable people in our community, especially our youth, elderly and infirm.

2019 reports for a five-year period from 2013 to 2017, indicate that “suicide was the most common cause of fatal injuries among Hawaii residents, accounting for twenty-five per cent of all fatal injuries and claiming more victims than motor vehicle collisions, homicides, unintentional poisoning, and drowning<sup>i</sup>”. The most striking statistic was that one person dies by suicide in Hawaii every two days<sup>ii</sup>.

We believe, however, that it is not just the young people who are victims of suicide and depression. Many elderly people and people who are terminal, are also at risk for depression and suicide. The CDC reported that it was the eighth leading cause among people 55 to 64 years of age<sup>iii</sup>. Even if that number is not as high as youth, it is still not what we want for our kupuna.

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, education and treatment.

Designating the month of September of each year as Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month is a step in the right direction because it sends a message that suicide is never a solution by providing education, resources, and support to the community. This bill makes a strong statement on something with which the community can agree.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support!

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<sup>i</sup> From introduction to HB1691, Department of Health

<sup>ii</sup> Hawaii Suicide Task Force Report, 2018

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/suicide-factsheet.pdf> (accessed 02/09/19)

**HB-1691**

Submitted on: 2/8/2020 4:20:31 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/11/2020 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Michael Golojuch Jr	LGBT Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii	Support	No

Comments:

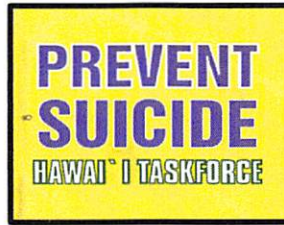
**HB-1691**

Submitted on: 2/9/2020 7:19:43 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/11/2020 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Julie Yurie Takishima-Lacasa	Hawai'i Psychological Association	Support	No

Comments:



February 11, 2020

Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair  
Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Health  
Hawai'i State Legislature, Hawai'i State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

**RE: SUPPORT for HB 1691**

*Designates the month of September of each year as Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month  
(Hearing on February 11, 2020, at 9:30 a.m. in Conference Room 329)*

Chair Mizuno, Vice Chair Kobayashi, and Members of the House Committee on Health,

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 the current Statewide Co-Chair of the Prevent Suicide Hawai'i Taskforce (PSHTF), which is Hawaii's longest-standing community-based group which has voluntarily come together to promote suicide prevention in our communities. I am also a Board Member for the Hawai'i Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), and am a certified trainer in the "SafeTALK" and "Connect" suicide prevention curricula.

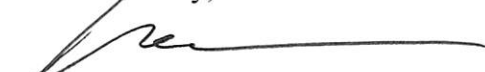
Please first allow me to convey a heartfelt THANK YOU for continuing to serve as champions for suicide prevention in Hawai'i. *As you know, one person dies by suicide every two days in Hawai'i.* As I often say in trainings, "This is an issue that does not discriminate" – suicide unfortunately affects all groups, communities, and disciplines. In addition, the immense stigma around mental health and suicidality increases the challenge that faces us when encouraging people to seek help when needed.

*I am in strong support of HB 1691.* As mentioned in the bill's narrative, increasing awareness around suicide prevention is one of the key strategies of our Strategic Plan. Though this may seem like a relatively small and simple action, please know that when our Legislative Leadership conveys the importance of such an issue, the community listens. Your consideration of HB 1691 and other suicide prevention legislation, as well as your support of the Hawai'i Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan (filed with the Legislature in December 2017), are powerful demonstrations of the priority that our Legislators have given to suicide prevention.

Although you must hear the words THANK YOU many times a day, please do know how heartfelt our gratitude really is. Many of us working in this field do so because of personal experiences with mental illness and/or suicide, and so our passion to "pass life forward" is real and true. We feel immensely honored by your leadership and commitment.

Please do not hesitate to contact me (jsugimot@hawaii.edu, or 808-291-9930), should you have further questions or concerns.

Most Sincerely,



Jeanelle Sugimoto-Matsuda, DrPH

**HB-1691**

Submitted on: 2/8/2020 9:50:05 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/11/2020 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Brett Kulbis	Individual	Support	No

Comments: