



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
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**LATE**

**Testimony in SUPPORT of S.B. 2408 S.D. 1  
RELATING TO THE COMPOSITION OF THE STATE COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH**

SENATOR DONOVAN M. DELA CRUZ, CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Hearing Date and Time: Thursday, February 27, 2020 at 10:35 a.m. Room: 211

1 **Department Position:** The Department of Health (“Department”) strongly supports this  
2 measure and offers comments.

3 **Department Testimony:** The subject matter of this measure intersects with the scope of the  
4 Department’s Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) whose statutory mandate is to assure a  
5 comprehensive statewide behavioral health care system by leveraging and coordinating public,  
6 private and community resources. Through the BHA, the Department is committed to carrying  
7 out this mandate by reducing silos, ensuring behavioral health care is readily accessible, and  
8 person-centered. The BHA’s Adult Mental Health Division (AMHD) provides the following  
9 testimony on behalf of the Department.

10 The SCMH was created in 1984 (ACT 218, Hawaii State Legislature). In its advisory  
11 capacity, the SCMH advocates for Hawaii adolescents, adults, and their families and provides  
12 recommendations to the Department on community issues related to mental health and  
13 substance abuse. The SCMH is a federally mandated advisory board.

14 Applicants for SCMH membership are processed through the Hawaii State Boards and  
15 Commissions office based on general applicant criteria and specific criteria for the composition  
16 of the council as outlined in §334-10, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

1           The Department recognizes that diversity within the SCMH broadens the SCMH  
2 membership. Data and research have linked Native Hawaiians and those with Hawaiian  
3 ancestry with an increased risk for mental health issues.

4           Committed advocates with knowledge and understanding can make a big difference. It  
5 may be that expanding the SCMH membership to include individuals who possess  
6 demonstrated knowledge or work experience involving Native Hawaiian concepts of well-being,  
7 culturally grounded mental health methodologies, or traditional healing or health practices  
8 promotes recovery and more effective services for our consumers.

9           We look forward to the potential that members of the SCMH, under this measure,  
10 would bring to the Department's awareness of mental health needs in our community by  
11 having Native Hawaiian representation on the council.

12 **Offered Amendments:** None.

13           Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

14 **Fiscal Implications:** Undetermined.



# Hawai'i Psychological Association

## *For a Healthy Hawai'i*

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Testimony in SUPPORT of SB2408 SD1  
Relating to the Composition of the State Council on Mental Health

**LATE**

### **COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS**

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 27, 2020, 10:35AM, Room 211

The Hawai'i Psychological Association (HPA) is in **support** of SB2408 SD1, which will require some members of the Hawai'i State Council on Mental Health to "have demonstrated knowledge of or work experience involving native Hawaiian concepts of well-being, culturally grounded mental health methodologies, or traditional healing or health practices." It is important that these council members have understanding about how their decisions affect Native Hawaiian mental health related to high rates of suicide, alcohol and drug abuse, incarceration, child abuse, school adjustment problems, and certain psychological and psychiatric mental illnesses. In Hawai'i, Native Hawaiians experience one of the poorest mental health statuses. There are existing programs in our communities led by experts in Native Hawaiian traditional and customary practices. They have shown promising results in improving mental health, increasing family and community connectedness, and building resilience. Council members with Native Hawaiian expertise have the ability to identify, develop, or implement programs and services that are culturally appropriate for Native Hawaiians.

This bill takes a positive step forward in reaffirming the state's commitment to Native Hawaiians across the state and will increase the diversity of the council which will ultimately benefit everyone in our communities.

We urge the committee to vote YES on this important bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Takishima-Lacasa, PhD, President  
Chair, Legislative Action Committee  
Hawai'i Psychological Association