



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

**Date:** 03/22/2022

**Time:** 03:20 PM

**Location:** 3/22/22 3:20P

**Committee:** Senate Human Services  
Senate Health

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Keith T. Hayashi, Interim Superintendent of Education

**Title of Bill:** HB 2293, HD1 RELATING TO HEALTH.

**Purpose of Bill:** Establishes the prevent suicide Hawaii task force to develop annual recommendations to the legislature to reduce suicide by twenty-five per cent by 2025. Dissolves the task force on 1/1/2026. (HD1)

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports HB 2293, HD1 and respectfully offers comments. This bill strives to leverage members of the mental health community to work collegially to address the critical need for easily accessible suicide prevention resources, which aligns to the Department's vision to ensure all of Hawaii's children are provided with resources and opportunities that foster health, safety, education, school readiness and success.

The Department continues to diligently work to provide Suicide Awareness and Prevention training as required by Section §302A-856, Hawaii Revised Statutes. The Department acknowledges the objectives of the proposed Prevent Suicide Hawaii Task Force as consistent and effectual to our current work.

The Department acknowledges the need for a time-limited Prevent Suicide Hawaii Task Force under the Department of Health to develop general and specific policies and procedures necessary to improve the manner in which suicide prevention is conducted in Hawaii. A task force will be able to provide a comprehensive strategy that is inclusive of all relevant stakeholders.

The Department stands ready to act in solidarity with our fellow agency partners to

reach the shared goal of decreasing suicide in Hawaii but would defer to the Hawaii State Department of Health as to the implementation of the task force.

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



**Prevent Suicide Hawai'i Taskforce**  
*Hawaii's Statewide Public-Private Network*  
*promoting hope, help, and healing*  
*and passing life forward in our local communities*



March 21, 2022

Chair Joy A. San Buenaventura and Vice Chair Les Ihara Jr.  
Senate Committee on Human Services (HMS)

Chair Jarrett Keohokalole and Vice Chair Rosalyn H. Baker  
Senate Committee on Health (HTH)

Hawai'i State Legislature  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

**RE: Full support and comments for HB 2293 HD1, relating to health and the Prevent Suicide Hawai'i Taskforce**  
**Joint hearing of the Senate Committee on Human Services and Senate Committee on Health**  
**March 22, 2022 at 3:20 p.m., conference room 225 and videoconference**

*Establishes the prevent suicide Hawaii task force to develop annual recommendations to the legislature to reduce suicide by twenty-five per cent by 2025. Dissolves the task force on 1/1/2026.*

---

We, the undersigned members of the Prevent Suicide Hawai'i Taskforce's Steering (Leadership) Committee, provide our **fullest support** of HB 2293 HD1. In this testimony we offer key points of why this bill deserves your favorable vote, especially at this critical time, and also offer a few minor edits for your consideration.

The issue of suicide

In Hawai'i, one of our community members dies by suicide every other day. This dire public health issue unfortunately impacts all communities and disciplines, though disproportionately impacts our vulnerable communities such as our Native and Indigenous peoples, our rural residents, and our youth and young adults. What's more, 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 (see attachment for more information):

Originally convened in 1999, the Taskforce has continued to grow and evolve, an incredible demonstration of staying power and partnership. Many inaugural members continue to play key roles.

- Today, we are the largest and longest-standing grassroots collaborative focused on suicide prevention. Our membership is diverse and includes all counties, professionals from various disciplines, and most importantly, those who have been personally impacted by suicide (e.g., those who have lost a loved one to suicide, those with personal struggles, etc.).
- Over time, the Taskforce has become the State's leader in raising awareness around suicide, providing trainings to various audiences, supporting those impacted by suicide, and conducting research and evaluation activities. The Taskforce is also author of the Hawai'i Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan, requested by and reported to the Legislature: <https://health.hawaii.gov/injuryprevention/files/2019/02/Prevent-Suicide-Hawaii-Taskforce-Strategic-Plan-by-2025.pdf>.

Why your support of HB 2293 HD1 matters, especially in this Legislative Session:

*1) It formalizes the Taskforce, and recognizes members' sacrifices*

Your support of HB 2293 HD1 not only ensures the long-term sustainability of the Taskforce, but also conveys proper acknowledgement and gratitude to those who have already paved the way. **It firmly documents the Legislature's earnest and serious commitment to preventing suicide**, and is particularly symbolic to those of us who have survived the loss of our loved ones to suicide, or live with our own struggles. HB 2293 HD1 is already supported by 23 of your House colleagues who stepped

forward to introduce the bill, and the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs, and so we ask you to join them and affirm your support.

*2) It ensures sustained momentum of, and accountability to, our Strategic Plan*

HB 2293 HD1 will formally designate the Taskforce as the lead entity to monitor and evaluate the Strategic Plan, adding an element of accountability for all stakeholders involved in the Plan's implementation. Since presentation of the plan in 2017, the Taskforce has already been monitoring progress, and we have actually begun the process of revisiting and updating the Plan since it is almost five years old. **As the Plan's original authors, we are intimately familiar with its intended design and use, and so are in a unique position to facilitate implementation and evaluation.**

*3) It ensures sustained partnerships among key agencies*

While all agencies named in the bill are already active participants in the Taskforce, HB 2293 HD1 ensures sustained commitment from all parties. We are aware that some may be concerned about workload; our core members validate these concerns and also empathize, given that we all voluntarily serve in our roles beyond our required professional and personal responsibilities. In response, we ask the Committees to reflect on such a statement (i.e., "prioritizing suicide prevention is too much work"), and what type of message that sends to the community. In addition, please be assured the Taskforce is already self-driven and organized. This includes all of the requirements articulated in HB 2293 HD1 – internal bylaws, regularly scheduled public meetings (statewide meeting held every other month, county meetings held monthly), communication mechanisms, and a core leadership (Steering Committee). **We are ready. This is the next step not for only the network, but also for the suicide prevention movement in Hawai'i.**

*4) It allows the Taskforce to formally become leaders in other Legislative efforts*

After presentation of the Strategic Plan in 2017, the Taskforce is honored to have been increasingly named in statewide and Legislative efforts. A key example is SB 2205 SD2, actively moving through the Legislature as we speak, which names the Taskforce to co-chair a working group with the Department of Health to shepherd the State's transition to the 9-8-8 calling code (allowing easier access to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline). After becoming a formalized body, naming of the Taskforce in such allied bills and initiatives will be clearer and more appropriate.

Finally, we offer a few minor edit suggestions for your consideration:

- Page 1, Line 17 – in suicide prevention we recognize "safe messaging guidelines," which includes exclusion of verbiage such as "commit suicide" (the word "commit" often has negative connotations). Instead, a more neutral term (i.e., "died by suicide") is recommended.
- From Page 3, Line 18, to Page 4, Line 9 – this section individually names our military branches, though we would recommend amending verbiage to "one representative from the Joint Military Suicide Prevention Taskforce." This "sister taskforce" was convened several years ago, focuses on military/veteran considerations, and includes all military branches including the reserves and veterans affairs.
- Pages 5, Line 19, to Page 6, Line 4 – this section individually names specific positions within our Hawai'i Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Since these frequently shift, we suggest streamlining these positions to instead reflect one representative from the Chapter as a whole.
- Page 7, Lines 20 to 21 – we do not feel it is necessary to place an end date on this action. The Taskforce has already been active for 20+ years, and we are prepared to ensure sustainability of this new chapter.

Should you have questions or require additional information about this bill, or any resources related to suicide prevention, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. Dr. Jeanelle Sugimoto-Matsuda is the Taskforce's advocacy liaison, and can be reached at [junesugi88@gmail.com](mailto:junesugi88@gmail.com) or (808) 291-9930.

In closing, HB 2293 HD1 is an affirmation from the State and Legislature that suicide prevention will be taken seriously, earnest implementation of the Strategic Plan is essential, and the State's experts in suicide prevention should be at the helm. Thank you for prioritizing suicide prevention in our local communities; promoting hope, help and healing; and most importantly, *PASSING LIFE FORWARD.*

With Deepest Aloha,



Gina Kaulukukui  
Current Co-Chair, State PSHTF  
*(Expertise in postvention, grief/bereavement, domestic violence; Inaugural Taskforce member)*



Deborah Goebert, DrPH  
Current Co-Chair, State PSHTF  
*(Expertise in mental health research, youth/adolescent health, community and cultural treatments, community engagement; Inaugural Taskforce member)*



Jeanelle Sugimoto-Matsuda, DrPH  
Immediate Past Co-Chair, State PSHTF  
Taskforce Advocacy Liaison  
*(Expertise in mental health research, policy/advocacy, health systems)*



Brent Oto, MA, CPS  
Immediate Past Co-Chair, State PSHTF  
Taskforce military representative  
*(Expertise in awareness and training, military/veterans affairs, substance abuse counseling)*



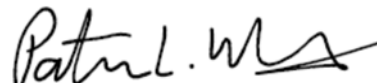
Danielle Bergan  
Co-Chair, E Ola Hou Prevent Suicide Maui County Taskforce  
*(Expertise in awareness and training, community health and engagement)*



Kristin Mills, MS, MA  
Co-Chair, E Ola Hou Prevent Suicide Maui County Taskforce  
*(Expertise in awareness and training, public health education)*



Madeleine Hiraga-Nuccio  
Co-Chair, Prevent Suicide Kaua'i Taskforce  
*(Expertise in mental health, adolescent health, community health)*



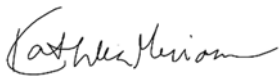
Patricia Wistinghausen  
Co-Chair, Prevent Suicide Kaua'i Taskforce  
*(Expertise in awareness and training, media, community engagement)*



H. Yolisa Duley, PhD  
Co-Chair, Hawai'i Island Prevent Suicide Taskforce  
*(Expertise in awareness and training, higher education)*



Joy Hohnstine, MA, MEd  
Co-Chair, Hawai'i Island Prevent Suicide Taskforce  
*(Expertise in behavioral health, awareness and training, K-12 education)*



Kathleen Merriam, LCSW, CSAC  
Board Co-Chair, Hawai'i Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
*(Expertise in mental health systems, engagement with consumers, crisis services, postvention)*



Mestisa Gass, PsyD  
Board Co-Chair, Hawai'i Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
*(Expertise in clinical psychology and therapies, awareness and training)*



Pua Kaninau-Santos, MSW  
Liaison, O'ahu Prevent Suicide Hawai'i Taskforce  
*(Expertise in postvention, bereavement training and services for families, Native Hawaiian health, community engagement; Inaugural Taskforce member)*

# PREVENT SUICIDE HAWAII TASKFORCE

## STRATEGIC PLAN



To reduce suicide in Hawai'i by at least 25% by the year 2025.

To provide a systematic way of developing a response to suicide.

To reflect both communities' and government's intention to address suicide.

To increase the number of people in Hawai'i who are healthy and safe.

To inspire hope, promote wellness, increase protection, reduce risk, ensure effective treatment, and support healing.

**Suicide prevention is everyone's kuleana.**

### HOPE

#### Community Awareness

Increase community awareness and communication around suicide prevention as a public health problem that is preventable.

#### Training

Increase statewide capacity for training across multiple levels and disciplines, including a focus on cultural humility with diverse populations.



### HELP



#### System of Care

Promote suicide prevention as a core component of Hawai'i's overall system of care by encouraging help-seeking in multiple sectors and settings, implementing of Zero Suicide approach, expanding crisis services, implementing systems and protocols to enable follow-up and continuity of care, expanding postvention response, and ensuring supportive policy and regulatory changes.

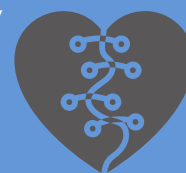
### HEAL

#### Survivor Support

Increase Hope, Help, Healing, and Wellbeing among those personally touched by suicide and among those with lived experience.

#### Survivor Outreach

Increase State and Community capacity to effectively and efficiently respond to individuals and communities affected by suicide and those with mental health challenges.



### RESEARCH AND EVALUATION



#### Effective and Innovative

Conduct and support high-quality research and evaluation to inform suicide prevention programs, interventions, policies, and overall Statewide direction through data systems and sharing, evaluation of local programs, quality improvement efforts, inclusion of culture and diversity and pursuing new opportunities.

### POLICY AND ADVOCACY

#### Lay the Foundation

Ensure policies and protocols set the proper foundation for suicide prevention initiatives including general funding; advocacy skills and capacity; organizational protocols and policy; and codifying the Prevent Suicide Hawai'i Taskforce.



#### Strategic Plan for Suicide Prevention

- REPORT TO THE HAWAII STATE LEGISLATURE TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE, 2018 STATE OF HAWAII IN RESPONSE TO: HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION (HCR) 66, H.D. 1, S.D. 1 of the Twenty-Eighth Legislature, 2016 (requesting the Prevent Suicide Hawai'i Taskforce to recommend a strategic plan to reduce suicides in Hawai'i by at least twenty-five percent by 2025). Available at: [https://health.hawaii.gov/opppd/files/2018/01/HCR66-stratplan\\_report\\_180109\\_final2\\_with-appendix.pdf](https://health.hawaii.gov/opppd/files/2018/01/HCR66-stratplan_report_180109_final2_with-appendix.pdf)
- Hawai'i Injury Prevention Plan 2018-2022. Suicide Prevention. Available at: <https://health.hawaii.gov/hipp/focus-areas/suicide-prevention/>





# CORE VALUES

"Ike aku, 'ike mai, kokua aku kokua mai; pela iho la ka nohana'ohana.

Recognize others (watch), be recognized (observe), help others, be helped; such is the family/community way.

~ 'Ōlelo No'ea 1200

## ALOHA

Aloha, unconditional love, is essential for all relationships and imperative to suicide prevention. It is embedded in the work of suicide prevention work and slogans such as, "Passing life forward," and "No blame, no shame, just Aloha."

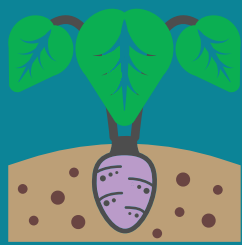
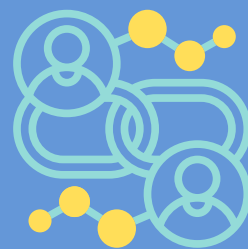


## OLA

Ola refers to life, health, hope, healing, contentment, and peace after a struggle, creating both a personal and spiritual sense of connectedness to others and place.

## CONNECTIVITY

The importance of connectivity in times of need is frequently expressed by those who have attempted suicide, as well as by those dedicated to preventing suicide in our communities. By building and maintaining relationships and connectivity, we enhance resilience.



## CULTURE

Culture refers to the values, traditions, and practices, of any group and is an important consideration in suicide prevention, particularly with our diverse communities.



The five strategies and four values make up the strategic plan's guiding framework, all of which center around the health, safety, and empowerment of our communities.

# Understanding the Extent of the Problem

Suicide is a serious, complex, preventable public health problem that can have lasting harmful effects on individuals, families, and communities.

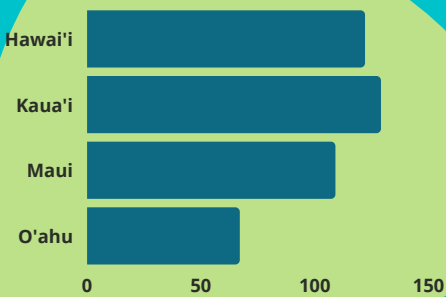
## Suicide is a leading cause of death in Hawai'i.

There is one suicide death every other day in Hawai'i. For every death, 450 members of the community are impacted.



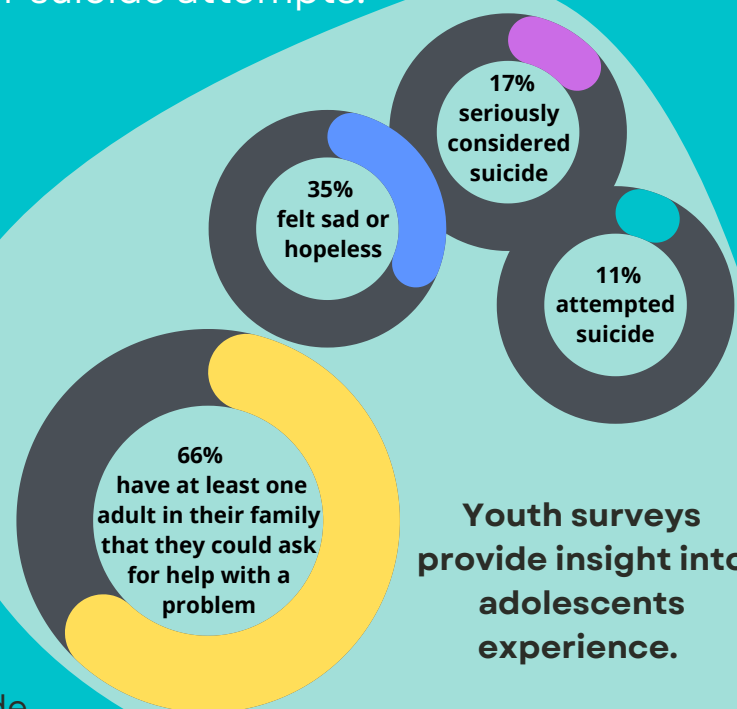
## Non-fatal suicide attempts have been increasing in Hawai'i.

For every suicide death, there are 2 hospitalizations and 3 emergency department visits for suicide attempts.



## Age-adjusted rate of fatal suicides in Hawai'i by county of residence 2016-2020

While O'ahu has more absolute numbers of suicide deaths (averaging 107/year), Neighbor Islands have higher rates of fatal suicides. Suicide attempt rates are also higher on Neighbor Islands compared to O'ahu, though to a lesser degree.

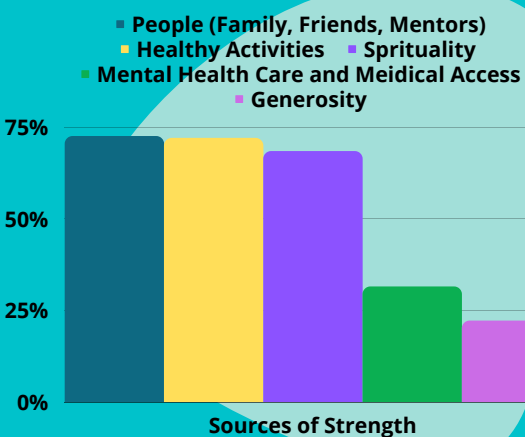


## Tell Someone

Training and awareness activities help community members learn what to look for. Most people considering suicide tell someone, usually indirectly.

Adults 65%

Youth 85%

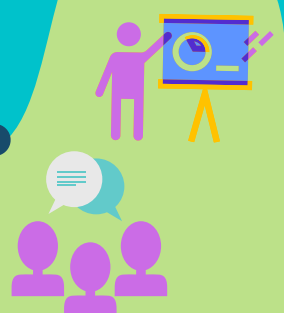


## Community Strengths

In a recent study, numerous strengths were identified in the community, supporting resilience.

## Making an Impact--Together

Last year, more than 3,000 community members receive gatekeeper training and more than 2,500 attended awareness events held across the State.





# PROGRESS 2018-2021



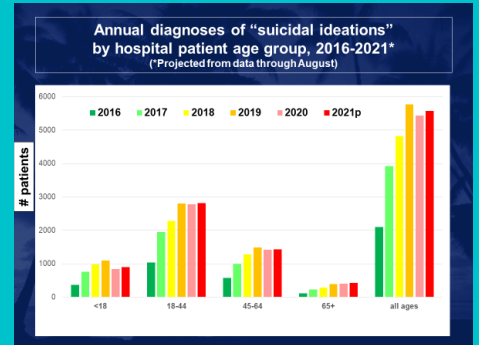
PREVENT SUICIDE HAWAII TASK FORCE

## SMART Objectives



To reduce suicide in Hawai'i by at least 25% by the year 2025.

- The suicide death rate among Hawai'i residents was 63.51/100,000 in 2013-2017. However, rates have been relatively stable since 2010.
- Annual hospitalization rates have been steadily rising over the years. This is due, in part, to better screening.



## HOPE

Community trainings and awareness activities continue to thrive. The Prevent Suicide Hawai'i Taskforce has increased the number and types of trainings offered. Taskforce partners showed creativity and adaptability during the pandemic, offering gatekeeper trainings, hosting virtual events and expanding offerings in resilience and self-care to meet community need. The Taskforce would like to revamp social media efforts using safe messaging to be relatable and accessible at multigenerational levels.



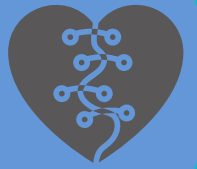
## HELP



Improvements have been noted given the increased emphasis on protocol and transitions within the education and medical arenas spurred by policy requirements such as ACT 270 and Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JACHO), and the anticipated 9-8-8 crisis line. Hawai'i CARES offers an opportunity to improve accessibility. Mental health providers remains a shortage area.

## HEAL

The Prevent Suicide Hawai'i Taskforce partners have many events to help survivors of suicide loss heal when they are ready to connect with other survivors. "...because it speaks loudly to putting a face to suicide, it increases the awareness that this issue is urgent and that this issue is preventable. And when it does that, it can really touch others to take an active step in moving to suicide prevention forward, passing life forward." Members are responding to deaths and there is a need to create community teams. Such survivor support and outreach must take into account that this is a period of grief and uncertainty.



## RESEARCH AND EVALUATION



Formal and informal evaluations currently exist capturing efforts and cultural innovations. There are opportunities for improvement in creating standard evaluations and disseminating findings. "...there's a way for us to kind of start collecting those stories and they do it in a way, through that organization, they're actually helping people tell their stories in a safe way..."

## POLICY AND ADVOCACY

There's an important need for more funding for the taskforce to carry out research, evaluation, trainings, events, activities, compensate volunteers, hire staff, and outreach. Policy is crucial to the advancement of the suicide prevention movement and there has been much progress. There is a need for more voices and leaders in advocacy. Codifying the Prevent Suicide Hawai'i Taskforce is a priority to bring attention to the needs and make progress on the strategic plan.

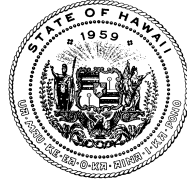


**"We [the Prevent Suicide Hawai'i Task Force] all come out as a collective impact. We do not do things individually. It's strict collaboration, so, and that's what the Taskforce is all about... We work collaboratively, we work as partners collectively, and we support each other."**

### Assets and Needs Assessment for Suicide Prevention

Assets & Needs Assessment for the Prevent Suicide Hawai'i Taskforce Report to the PSHTF at its December, 2021 meeting by Eric Agluba, Saikaew Dudla, Tricia Khun, Tarin Tanji, Shivani Trivedi Available at on request by contacting the co-chair, Dr. Deborah Goebert at goebertd@dop.hawaii.edu

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



ELIZABETH A. CHAR, MD  
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
P. O. Box 3378  
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378  
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony COMMENTING on H.B. 2293 H.D.1**  
**RELATING TO HEALTH**

SENATOR JOY A. SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

SENATOR JARRETT KEOHOKALOOLE, CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Hearing Date: 3-22-2022 3:20pm Room Number: 225/VideoConf

1

2 **Department Testimony:** Suicide is a significant public health challenge in Hawaii. The  
3 Department of Health, Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention System Branch  
4 (DOH-EMSIPSB) supports the intent of this legislation; however, a suicide task force already  
5 exists and is staffed and supported by the DOH-EMSIPSB. The Department welcomes  
6 additional groups, expanding the representation and participating membership of the Prevent  
7 Suicide Hawaii Task Force.

8 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

---

Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Human Services and  
Senate Committee of Health  
Tuesday, March 22, 2022 at 3:20 p.m.

By  
Jerris Hedges, MD, MS, MMM Dean and  
John A. Burns School of Medicine

And  
Michael Bruno, PhD  
Provost  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

### HB 2293 HD1 – RELATING TO HEALTH

Chairs San Buenaventura and Keohokalole, Vice Chairs Ihara and Baker, and members of the committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today. The John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) **supports HB 2293 HD1** which codifies the Prevent Suicide Hawai'i Task Force that would make progress on the recommendations made to the legislature in 2017 to reduce suicide by 25% by 2025. JABSOM has participated in task force activities since its inception in 2006. This bill gives the task force oversight of the State's strategic plan and adds strength to the recommendations for implementation and evaluation.

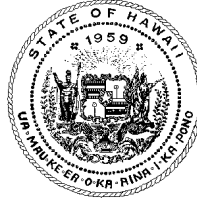
Suicide accounts for twenty-five percent of all fatal injuries in Hawai'i. On average, one person dies by suicide every two days. Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death for children between the ages of ten and fourteen and is the leading cause of death for young people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four.

A teen in Hawai'i is nearly twice as likely to attempt suicide as a teen elsewhere in the United States. This data has been confirmed by the Department of Health which found that Hawai'i has the highest attempted suicide rate in the country for youth ages 10 to 24. For every suicide death in the islands, there are more than 30 attempted suicides.

Suicide rates vary by area, with neighbor island and rural communities seeing higher rates than urban areas. Suicide attempts, like suicide deaths, have harmful, lasting, and profound impacts on families and communities.

This measure would be beneficial in making progress into hope, help, and healing steps that could be taken in order to reduce the number of suicide deaths, as well as seeking solutions to prevent suicide. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR



MAX N. OTANI  
DIRECTOR

Maria C. Cook  
Deputy Director  
Administration

Tommy Johnson  
Deputy Director  
Corrections

Jordan Lowe  
Deputy Director  
Law Enforcement

**LATE**

STATE OF HAWAII  
**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY**  
1177 Alakea Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

No. \_\_\_\_\_

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY**

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 2293, HOUSE DRAFT 1  
RELATING TO HEALTH.

by

Max N. Otani, Director  
Department of Public Safety

Senate Committee on Human Services  
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Health  
Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair  
Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Vice Chair

Tuesday, March 22, 2022; 3:20 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 225 and Via Videoconference

Chairs San Buenaventura and Keohokalole, Vice Chairs Ihara and Baker, and  
Members of the Committees:

The Department of Public Safety (PSD) supports House Bill (HB) 2293,  
House Draft (HD) 1, which would establish the Prevent Suicide Hawaii Task Force to  
develop annual recommendations to the Legislature towards the goal of reducing  
suicide by twenty-five percent by 2025. The bill also dissolves the task force on  
January 1, /2026.

In 2016, the Bureau of Justice Statistics identified suicide as the leading  
cause of death in local jails and the second leading cause of death in state prisons.  
Correctional Mental Health Directors and Health Authorities at the National

Commission on Correctional Health Care, the American Correctional Association, and the National Institute of Corrections continue to report increasing rates of suicide in correctional facilities nationwide. Currently, deaths by suicide are reported to be occurring more frequently than identified in the 2016 Bureau of Justice Statistics reports.

In FY 2018, the Department of Public Safety began implementation of a plan of action to improve the Department's comprehensive Suicide Prevention Program. Reports to the Legislature (FY 2018 thru 2021), required by Act 144, Session Laws of Hawaii 2007, document the improvements to the Department's Suicide Prevention Program. As a regular participant in the Prevent Suicide Hawaii Task Force meetings, the Department has benefited tremendously from the resources, expertise, partnerships, and demonstration of exceptional commitment to the prevention of suicide by task force members. HB 2293, HD1, is aligned with the Department's ongoing work towards the goal of eliminating all preventable deaths by suicide. The Department embraces the opportunity to participate as a member of the prevent suicide Hawaii task force.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2293, HD 1.





## HB2293 HD1 Task Force for Suicide Prevention

### COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair

### COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair  
Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Vice Chair

Tuesday, Mar 22 2022: 3:20  
: Videoconference

## Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition supports HB2293 HD1:

*ALOHA CHAIR, VICE CHAIR AND DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE MEMBERS. My name is Alan Johnson. I am the current chair of the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition (HSAC), a statewide organization for substance use disorder and co-occurring mental health disorder treatment and prevention agencies.*

The biggest problem in Hawaii is **suicide *attempts* by youth. Hawaii leads the nation** in the number of teens who have attempted suicide at least once in high school.



THE HUGE GROWING NUMBER OF TEEN SUICIDE ATTEMPTS - EVEN THOUGH NOT SUCCESSFUL - APPEARS TO SAY “ HELP US, WE HAVE A PROBLEM” AND YET WE HAVE A CULTURE THAT HESITATES TO INTERVENE.

Honolulu Civil Beat

- According to data from the U.S. Office of Adolescent Health, 1 out of every 10 Hawaii teens has already attempted suicide at least once.<sup>1</sup>
- During COVID this number has exponentially grown.

<sup>1</sup> Civil Beat: Teen Suicide Is A Big Problem In Hawaii 2019  
[https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.civilbeat.org%2f2019%2f04%2fdanny-de-gracia-teen-suicide-prevention-is-everyones-responsibility%2f&c=E,1,mciCLcYk8Tl1aNkKcTVYsy9zRyzrsEqidobO3Ok1lGMgoVBqyW8RdzMQzOkrstG1p65DXUxhx5A-MnCfejSRH-khs8x4zPBiBLn8K0hmpC\\_x&typo=1](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.civilbeat.org%2f2019%2f04%2fdanny-de-gracia-teen-suicide-prevention-is-everyones-responsibility%2f&c=E,1,mciCLcYk8Tl1aNkKcTVYsy9zRyzrsEqidobO3Ok1lGMgoVBqyW8RdzMQzOkrstG1p65DXUxhx5A-MnCfejSRH-khs8x4zPBiBLn8K0hmpC_x&typo=1)

Teachers, counselors, and health professionals need to know about suicide prevention resources as well as can be trained to deter Teen suicide, but prevention is everyone's responsibility.

We want our children to be our future leaders, bringing forth our Ohana values. This Task Force can help us do our part to help this generation be more confident and healthier.

Aloha, HSAC

## TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF HAWAII PSYCHIATRIC MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

To: Chairs Joy San Buenaventura and Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chairs Les Ihara, Jr. and Rosalyn Baker and Members of the Committees

From: Dr. H. Blaisdell-Brennan, President, and Dr. Denis Mee-Lee, Legislative Committee Chair, Hawaii Psychiatric Medical Association

Time: 3:20 p.m., March 22, 2022

Re: HB 2293, HD1, Relating to Health

Position: **SUPPORT**

Chairs Buenaventura and Keohokalole, Vice Chairs Ihara and Baker and Members of the Committees:

Hawai'i Psychiatric Medical Association (HPMA) thanks you for this opportunity to Support HB 2293, HD 1 which establishes the Prevent Suicide Hawaii Task Force and requires it to develop annual recommendations to the legislature to reduce suicide by twenty-five per cent by 2025.

HPMA represents between 100 and 200 Physicians, who receive additional years of specialty training in Psychiatry after four years of medical school. We comprise the local District Branch of the American Psychiatric Association, whose members are actively seeing patients in the community. Suicide prevention has been a pillar of the Hawai'i Psychiatric Medical Association's advocacy since its inception.

Suicide is the [tenth-leading cause of death](#)<sup>1</sup> in the United States. It is the [fourth-leading cause of death](#)<sup>2</sup> for adolescents ages 15-19 globally. When someone dies by suicide, as with any cause of death, the [ripples of loss](#)<sup>3</sup> spread from close family and friends to community members, acquaintances and even people the deceased did not know. All of those exposed to the loss may experience different levels of grief and trauma. Societal costs associated with suicide and suicide attempts are estimated at [\\$93.5 billion](#).<sup>4</sup> These costs include lifetime medical fees and lost work costs. Mental health disorders and substance use disorders are the most [significant risk factors](#)<sup>5</sup> for suicidal behaviors. Populations with disproportionately high suicide rates include: [Veterans](#)<sup>6</sup> compared with non-veteran adults. [Those living in rural areas](#)<sup>7</sup> compared with those living in urban areas. [LGBTQ adults and youth](#)<sup>8</sup> compared with heterosexual adults and youth.

Strategies to reduce suicide include: [Universal screening](#)<sup>9</sup> at emergency rooms to identify patients at higher risk of suicide, [Safety planning](#)<sup>10</sup> at emergency rooms to assist patients with suicidal behaviors by providing them with a prioritized list of evidence-based coping strategies, [Cognitive behavioral therapy](#)<sup>11</sup> to identify and manage suicidal thoughts, and [Reducing access to lethal means](#)<sup>12</sup> such as firearms, lethal doses of medications and alcohol.

As the front-line doctors who evaluate and treat patients with suicidal ideation, we say: One life lost is One too many : a Prevent Suicide Task Force is timely and necessary.

**HPMA appreciations the addition of an HPMA member who serves rural and under-served communities to the Prevent Suicide Hawaii Task Force.**

Thank you for considering this legislation and for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2293, HD1. We are available to answer any questions.

---

1. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/suicide>
2. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide>
3. <https://nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/September-2018/The-Ripple-Effect-of-Suicide>
4. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/sltb.12225>
5. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/sltb.12422>
6. <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2021/2021-National-Veteran-Suicide-Prevention-Annual-Report-FINAL-9-8-21.pdf#page=7>
7. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2749451>
8. <https://lgbtqiahealtheducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Suicide-Risk-and-Prevention-for-LGBTQ-Patients-Brief.pdf#page=3>
9. <https://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.ps.201800445>
10. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/2687370>
11. <https://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/cognitive-therapy-suicide-prevention>
12. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/recommendations/families/>

## Helping Hawai'i Live Well

**Testimony to the Senate Committees on Human Services, and Health**  
**Tuesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022, 3:20pm**  
**Via videoconference**

### **HB2293 HD1, Relating to Health and the Prevent Suicide Hawai'i Task Force**

Dear Senator San Buenaventura, Chair, and Senator Ihara, Vice Chair, of the Senate Committee on Human Services; and Senator Keohokalole, Chair, and Senator Baker, Vice Chair, of the Senate Committee on Health; and members of both committees:

Mental Health America of Hawaii is in **strong support of HB2293 HD1**, which *Establishes the prevent suicide Hawaii task force to develop annual recommendations to the legislature to reduce suicide by twenty-five per cent by 2025.*

Mental Health America of Hawai'i (MHAH), an affiliate of the renowned national organization, is a highly regarded 501(c)(3) non-profit organization serving the State of Hawai'i. For nearly 80 years, MHAH has been fulfilling its mission "to promote mental health & wellness through education, advocacy, service, and access to care" through its vision of 'mental wellness for all.' We endeavor to reduce the shame and stigma of mental illness and improve the overall care, treatment, and empowerment of those with or at risk for mental health challenges across all stages of life in Hawai'i.

The passage of this bill, which codifies the Prevent Suicide Hawaii Taskforce, is an investment in not just suicide prevention efforts across the state, but in the lives of those who may be at risk for death by suicide. In Suicide and COVID-19, a report by Mental Health America (MHA), Hawai'i had the highest percentage of individuals reporting suicidal ideation of those who took a depression screening.<sup>1</sup> The report further notes that Hawai'i had the fifth highest percentage of individuals reporting frequent thoughts of suicide or self-harm in comparison to the overall state population. This report, which analyzed more than 700,000 online depression screenings, found that 41% (622 of 1,529) of Hawai'i residents who participated had indications of suicidal ideation more than half or nearly every day. Also, according to the Hawaii Department of Health's EMS & Injury Prevention System Branch, death by suicide is the leading cause of fatal injury for ages 15-29 and 30-44; and the second leading cause for age groups 45-59 and 60-74 statewide. Of the 4,251 causes of fatal injuries between 2016 and 2020, 957 (23%) were the result of suicide, the second leading cause of fatal injury in that period.

Considering the above, and the fact that that someone in Hawaii dies by suicide every other day, a recognized strategic and collaborative effort towards prevention is critical.

Respectfully,



Bryan L. Talisayan  
Executive Director

<sup>1</sup> Reinert, M & Nguyen, T (May 2021). Suicide and COVID-19: Communities in Need Across the U.S. Mental Health America, Alexandria VA.





# Samaritan Counseling Center Hawaii

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Human Services and Senate Committee on Health  
March 22, 2022 at 3:20 p.m., conference room 225 and videoconference**

**HB 2293 HD1, relating to health and the Prevent Suicide Hawai'i Taskforce**

---

Dear Chair San Buenaventura and Vice Ihara, Senate Committee on Human Services (HMS); and Chair Keohokalole and Vice Chair Baker, Senate Committee on Health (HTH); and members of the Senate Committee on Human Services and Senate Committee on Health,

On behalf of Samaritan Counseling Center Hawaii, we thank you being present today. We testify in **strong support** of **HB 2293 HD1**.

In Hawai'i, one of our community members dies by suicide every other day. This dire public health issue unfortunately impacts all communities and disciplines, though disproportionately impacts our vulnerable communities such as our Native and Indigenous peoples, our rural residents, and our youth and young adults. What's more, 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 is the largest and longest-standing grassroots collaborative focused on suicide prevention. Their membership is diverse and includes all counties, professionals from various disciplines, and most importantly, those who have been personally impacted by suicide (e.g., those who have lost a loved one to suicide, those with personal struggles, etc.). The Taskforce has become the State's leader in raising awareness around suicide, providing trainings to various audiences, supporting those impacted by suicide, and conducting research and evaluation activities. The Taskforce is also author of the Hawai'i Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan, requested by and reported to the Legislature: <https://health.hawaii.gov/injuryprevention/files/2019/02/Prevent-Suicide-Hawaii-Taskforce-Strategic-Plan-by-2025.pdf>.

Your support of HB 2293 HD1 ensures the long-term sustainability of the Taskforce, ensures sustained commitment from all parties, and affirms Hawaii's commitment to preventing suicide. HB 2293 HD1 is already supported by 23 of your House colleagues who stepped forward to introduce the bill, and the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs. We ask you to join them and affirm your support.

Samaritan Counseling Center Hawaii is a participant in the Prevent Suicide Hawaii Task Force and is committed to promoting reliance and the value of life. Founded in 1989, our mission is to provide professional, accessible behavioral health counseling sensitive to the spiritual traditions of individuals, families, and communities in Hawaii, regardless of their ability to pay. Through the Client Assistance Fund, we serve people who are uninsured, underinsured, elderly, and economically disadvantaged to become healthier and more whole. In recent years, we co-sponsored suicide awareness and prevention workshops, including "Soul Shop: Ministering to Suicidal Desperation" in 2016 and 2019; and "A Hundred Million Reasons: A Virtual Suicide Prevention and Resilience Workshop" in 2021.

## **Celebrating Over 30 Years of Service**

1020 South Beretania Street, Honolulu, HI 96814 • Phone: (808) 545-2740 • Fax: (808) 545-2852  
Email: [info@samaritanhawaii.org](mailto:info@samaritanhawaii.org) • Website: [www.samaritancounselingcenterhawaii.org](http://www.samaritancounselingcenterhawaii.org)

By supporting HB 2293 HD1, you will affirm that suicide prevention will be taken seriously, and that the State and Legislature are earnest about implementing of the Strategic Plan, with the State's experts in suicide prevention at the helm. Thank you for prioritizing suicide prevention in our local communities; promoting hope, help and healing; and most importantly, PASSING LIFE FORWARD.

We strongly urge you to pass this legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachelle Chang". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and larger than the rest of the letters.

*Rachelle Chang*  
*Executive Director*



**Testimony to the Senate Joint Committee on Human Services and Health  
Tuesday, March 22, 2022; 3:20 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 225  
Via Videoconference**

**RE: HOUSE BILL NO. 2293, HOUSE DRAFT 1, RELATING TO HEALTH.**

Chair San Buenaventura, Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Primary Care Association (HPCA) is a 501(c)(3) organization established to advocate for, expand access to, and sustain high quality care through the statewide network of Community Health Centers throughout the State of Hawaii. The HPCA **SUPPORTS** House Bill No. 2293, House Draft 1, RELATING TO HEALTH.

By way of background, the HPCA represents Hawaii's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). FQHCs provide desperately needed medical services at the frontlines to over 150,000 patients each year who live in rural and underserved communities. Long considered champions for creating a more sustainable, integrated, and wellness-oriented system of health, FQHCs provide a more efficient, more effective and more comprehensive system of healthcare.

This bill, as received by your Committee, would establish a Prevent Suicide Hawaii Task Force (Task Force) within the Department of Health to, among other things:

- (1) Develop general and specific policies and procedures necessary to improve the manner in which suicide prevention is conducted in the State;
- (2) Monitor implementation of the strategic plan and submit annual reports to the Legislature; and
- (2) Examine, evaluate, and determine methods to improve education, awareness, support services, and outreach to best prevent suicides in Hawaii.

**Testimony on House Bill No. 2293, House Draft 1**  
**Tuesday, March 22, 2022; 3:20 p.m.**  
**Page 2**

The HPCA recognizes that the mental health needs of the State continue to outweigh present capacity. These needs were greatly exacerbated due to the profound level of stress placed on individuals, families, and entire communities as economic hardships, disruptions in normalcy, and the stark isolation of quarantine have greatly complicated daily life. This has led to an increase in suicides in Hawaii and across our Nation.

Because the HPCA is embedded in Hawaii's most underprivileged and isolated communities throughout the State, we believe we can greatly help in this cause. We can offer our expertise, daily interaction with key demographic cohorts, and trust with communities from decades of providing primary care to Medicaid recipients.

The HPCA greatly appreciates inclusion as a member of the Task Force and pledges to assist the Task Force in this endeavor.

**For this reason, we urge your favorable consideration of this bill.**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Public Affairs and Policy Director Erik K. Abe at 536-8442, or eabe@hawaiipca.net.



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2293 HD1

TO: Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Ihara, & Members – Senate Committee on Human Services  
Chair Keohokalole, Vice Chair Baker & Members – Senate Committee on Health

FROM: Trisha Kajimura  
Deputy Director - Community

DATE: March 22, 2022 at 3:20 PM

---

Hawai'i Health & Harm Reduction Center (HHHRC) **supports** HB 2293 HD1, which establishes the prevent suicide Hawaii task force to develop annual recommendations to the legislature to reduce suicide by twenty-five per cent by 2025. Dissolves the task force on 1/1/2026.

HHHRC's mission is to reduce harm, promote health, create wellness, and fight stigma in Hawai'i and the Pacific. We work with many individuals who are impacted by poverty, housing instability, and other social determinants of health. Many of our program participants live with mental health issues and co-occurring disorders such as substance use. We recognize suicide as a risk for our participants and are aware that it is a tragedy impacting all communities in Hawai'i.

According to the Hawaii Department of Health's EMS & Injury Prevention System Branch, death by suicide is the leading cause of fatal injury for ages 15-29 and 30-44; and the second leading cause for age groups 45-59 and 60-74 statewide. Of the 4,251 causes of fatal injuries between 2016 and 2020, 957 (23%) were the result of suicide, the second leading cause of fatal injury in that period.

The Prevent Suicide Hawaii Task Force has been doing the important work of convening around suicide prevention, providing training, advocacy and resources to the community. This bill will codify the task force and help to ensure its sustainability.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.





**Senate Committee on Human Services / Senate Committee on Health**

Tuesday, March 22nd 2022 3:20p.m. Conference Room 225

**Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action Supports: HB2293 HD1**

Aloha Chair Buenaventura/Keohokalole, Vice Chair Ihara Jr./Baker and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) I am submitting testimony in support of HB2293 HD1.

HAPA strongly supports HB2293 HD1, which establishes the prevent suicide Hawaii task force to develop annual recommendations to the legislature to reduce suicide by twenty-five per cent by 2025.

HAPA supports the important work of the Prevent Suicide Hawai'i Taskforce, which was originally convened in 1999. This taskforce has continued to grow and become a leader in raising awareness around suicide, providing trainings to various audiences, supporting those impacted by suicide, and conducting research and evaluation activities which are critical in addressing the high rate of suicide in Hawai'i.

HB2293 HD1 is an affirmation from the State and Legislature that suicide prevention will be taken seriously, earnest implementation of the Strategic Plan is essential, and the State's experts in suicide prevention should be at the helm. We believe this measure is an important part of formalizing the Taskforce and recognizing the sacrifices and hard work of its members.

HAPA also supports the amendments suggested by the Prevent Suicide Hawai'i Taskforce in their testimony.

Please PASS HB2293 HD1.

Mahalo for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick', is written above the printed name.

Anne Frederick  
Executive Director

**HB-2293-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/19/2022 10:43:05 AM

Testimony for HMS on 3/22/2022 3:20:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
John Bickel	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a teacher I see the need for this.

**HB-2293-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/19/2022 12:17:55 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/22/2022 3:20:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Cate Waidyatilleka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this lifesaving bill.