



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
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WRITTEN  
TESTIMONY ONLY

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HCR205  
RELATING TO RECOGNIZING AND SUPPORTING ONGOING  
COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS BY STATE AGENCIES AND PRIVATE  
ORGANIZATIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE "HEP FREE 2030" STATEWIDE  
STRATEGY TO ELIMINATE VIRAL HEPATITIS TYPES A, B, AND C IN HAWAII.  
REPRESENTATIVE DELLA AU BELATTI, CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HOMELESSNESS**

Hearing Date: 3/23/2023

Room Number: 329

1 **Fiscal Implications:** None.

2 **Department Testimony:** Thank you for the opportunity to testify in STRONG SUPPORT of  
3 HCR205, which requests that the Legislature: recognize and support “ongoing collaborative  
4 efforts by state agencies and private organizations to implement the “Hep Free 2030” statewide  
5 strategy to eliminate viral hepatitis types A, B, and C in Hawaii”; prioritize hepatitis elimination  
6 as a State public health concern; and convene an informational briefing in 2023 on the status of  
7 the strategy’s implementation and to determine any legislative recommendations.

8 Hawaii‘i has one of the highest incidences and mortality rates in the country for liver cancer,  
9 primarily due to viral hepatitis. Recently, the department released a report that found rates of  
10 hepatitis B-associated deaths in Hawaii‘i were higher than the U.S. average every year for two  
11 decades (2000-2020). In 2019, the hepatitis B mortality in Hawaii‘i was three times higher than  
12 the national average. Furthermore, the report found consistently higher death rates due to  
13 hepatitis B among Asian and Pacific Islander residents, compared to the rest of the state.  
14 Additional research from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has shown that  
15 hepatitis C infection in Hawaii‘i can reduce life expectancy by 20 years. Hawaii‘i is also the state  
16 with the highest proportion of Native Hawaiian, Asian, and/or Pacific Islander decedents among  
17 hepatitis C deaths nationwide (from 2016-2017). Notably, hepatitis B and C are preventable and  
18 treatable (hepatitis B) or curable (hepatitis C).

1 To address this public health priority, the department has partnered closely since 2011 with a  
2 wide array of state and community partners as a member of the Hep Free Hawai‘i coalition. The  
3 department has an ongoing advisory role in the development and implementation of “Hep Free  
4 2030: The Hawai‘i Hepatitis Elimination Strategy 2020-2030” to ensure alignment with  
5 recommendations and priorities of the department, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and  
6 Prevention, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the World Health  
7 Organization. Furthermore, the Hawai‘i “Hep Free 2030 Strategy” is the first in the nation to  
8 commit to eliminating hepatitis A, B, and C, positioning the State and the department as thought  
9 leaders and innovators in public health.

10 As such, the department submits this testimony in STRONG SUPPORT of HCR205 so that the  
11 Legislature can formally recognize the successes of ongoing public-private partnerships in public  
12 health and to continue to learn more about the importance of viral hepatitis elimination as a  
13 priority for Hawai‘i.

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



**To: Committee on Health and Homelessness**

**Hearing Date/Time: Thursday March 23, 2023 10:40 AM**

**Re: Testimony in Strong Support of HCR 205**

**From: David Shaku, Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center**

Dear Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Takenouchi and members of the committee:

Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center (HHHRC) strongly supports **HCR 205** which recognizes and supports the ongoing efforts of the over 100 partners of Hep Free Hawaii to implement the “Hep Free 2030” statewide hepatitis elimination strategy for the islands. Hawaii has one of the highest rates of liver cancer linked to hepatitis B and C in the US and yet the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have identified hepatitis as a “winnable battle”. With the passage of HCR 205, we have the chance to educate our community about what it will take to make Hawaii truly hep free.

HHHRC’s mission is to *reduce harm, promote health, create wellness and fight stigma in Hawaii and the Pacific*. We focus our efforts on those disproportionately affected by social determinants of health, including but not limited to: people living with and/or affected by HIV, hepatitis, substance use, and the transgender, LGBTQ and the Native Hawaiian communities. HHHRC is the fiscal sponsor for Hep Free Hawaii. Hep Free Hawai'i (HFH) is a coalition of local, national and global partners dedicated to increasing viral hepatitis awareness and access to care throughout our state. With over 100 partner agencies, HFH thrives because we all work together, connecting our communities and our islands to make Hawaii truly “hep free”.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

David Shaku, Behavioral Health Director, Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center

**HCR-205**

Submitted on: 3/21/2023 10:20:39 AM

Testimony for HLT on 3/23/2023 10:40:00 AM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b>   | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Rensely Alik        | Hep Free Hawaii,<br>Micronesian Education for<br>Liver Wellness Program | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chairs, Vice Chairs and esteemed members of the committees,

I testify in strong support of HCR 205 which highlights Hep Free 2030 which is Hawaii's hepatitis elimination strategy and recognizes Hep Free Hawaii's coalition of over 100 partners dedicated to making Hawaii truly hepatitis free.

Hawaii is on the forefront of hepatitis elimination efforts and this resolution also offers an informational briefing on viral hepatitis in the islands to the legislature before the next legislative session.

The CDC considers viral hepatitis a winnable battle and HCR 205 will support Hawaii continuing to be at the forefront of these epidemics.

Thank you for considering my testimony.



**To: Committee on Health and Homelessness**

**Hearing Date/Time: Thursday March 23, 2023 10:40 AM**

**Re: Testimony in Strong Support of HCR 205**

**From: Heather Lusk, Co-Director, Hep Free Hawai'i**

Dear Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Takenouchi and members of the committee:

Hep Free Hawai'i strongly supports **HCR 205** which recognizes and supports the ongoing efforts of the over 100 partners of Hep Free Hawaii to implement the "Hep Free 2030" statewide hepatitis elimination strategy for the islands. Hawaii has one of the highest rates of liver cancer linked to hepatitis B and C in the US and yet the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have identified hepatitis as a "winnable battle". With the passage of HCR 205, we have the chance to educate our community about what it will take to make Hawaii truly hep free.

Hep Free Hawai'i (HFH) is a coalition of local, national and global partners dedicated to increasing viral hepatitis awareness and access to care throughout our state. With over 100 partner agencies, HFH thrives because we all work together, connecting our communities and our islands to make Hawaii truly "hep free". HFH's 2030 plan to eliminate viral hepatitis includes increase to awareness and access of hepatitis testing – both of which would be accomplished if HB659 was passed and our pharmacies could provide point-of-care and other diagnostic tests that can save lives.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Heather Lusk, Co-Director, Hep Free Hawaii.



**HCR-205**

Submitted on: 3/21/2023 10:41:56 AM

Testimony for HLT on 3/23/2023 10:40:00 AM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>         |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Christine Kapiioho  | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chairs, Vice Chairs and esteemed members of the committees,

I testify in strong support of HCR 205 which highlights Hep Free 2030 which is Hawaii’s hepatitis elimination strategy and recognizes Hep Free Hawaii’s coalition of over 100 partners dedicated to making Hawaii truly hepatitis free.

Hawaii is on the forefront of hepatitis elimination efforts and this resolution also offers an informational briefing on viral hepatitis in the islands to the legislature before the next legislative session.

The CDC considers viral hepatitis a winnable battle and HCR 205 will support Hawaii continuing to be at the forefront of these epidemics.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Aloha, Christine Kapi’ioho, Director of Client Services Kumukahi Health + Wellness

**HCR-205**

Submitted on: 3/21/2023 1:19:29 PM

Testimony for HLT on 3/23/2023 10:40:00 AM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>         |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Jason Yaris         | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chairs, Vice Chairs and esteemed members of the committees,

I testify in strong support of HCR 205 which highlights Hep Free 2030 which is Hawaii's hepatitis elimination strategy and recognizes Hep Free Hawaii's coalition of over 100 partners dedicated to making Hawaii truly hepatitis free.

Hawaii is on the forefront of hepatitis elimination efforts and this resolution also offers an informational briefing on viral hepatitis in the islands to the legislature before the next legislative session.

The CDC considers viral hepatitis a winnable battle and HCR 205 will support Hawaii continuing to be at the forefront of these epidemics.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

**HCR-205**

Submitted on: 3/21/2023 2:32:12 PM

Testimony for HLT on 3/23/2023 10:40:00 AM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Aaron Ruddick       | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chairs, Vice Chairs and esteemed members of the committees,

I testify in strong support of HCR 205 which highlights Hep Free 2030 which is Hawai'i's hepatitis elimination strategy and recognizes Hep Free Hawai'i's coalition of over 100 partners dedicated to making Hawai'i truly hepatitis free.

Hawai'i is on the forefront of hepatitis elimination efforts and this resolution also offers an informational briefing on viral hepatitis in the islands to the legislature before the next legislative session.

The CDC considers viral hepatitis a winnable battle and HCR 205 will support Hawai'i continuing to be at the forefront of these epidemics.

Thank you for considering my testimony.



**HCR-205**

Submitted on: 3/21/2023 6:50:52 PM

Testimony for HLT on 3/23/2023 10:40:00 AM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Vicki Bunao         | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

Dear Committee on Health and Homelessness,

I testify in support of HCR 205 which highlights Hep Free 2030, Hawai'i's hepatitis elimination strategy. HCR 205 also recognizes Hep Free Hawai'i's coalition of over 100 partners working to make Hawai'i hepatitis free. Your support of HCR 205 will help Hawai'i continue to be on the forefront of hepatitis elimination efforts. Thank you for your consideration.

**HCR-205**

Submitted on: 3/21/2023 6:54:56 PM

Testimony for HLT on 3/23/2023 10:40:00 AM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>         |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Thaddeus Pham       | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and HLT Committee members,

As a public health professional and concerned community member, I write in **STRONG SUPPORT** of HCR 205, which highlights Hep Free 2030 (the statewide hepatitis elimination strategy); recognizes the Hep Free Hawai'i coalition's efforts to make our state truly hepatitis free; and offers an informational briefing on viral hepatitis to the legislature before the next legislative session.

Hawai'i is on the forefront of hepatitis elimination efforts and has been a leader and inspiration for states and entities doing work in this field. This resolution is important because of the extraordinary burden of viral hepatitis on the people of Hawai'i. A recent Hawai'i DOH report demonstrated that death rates associated with hepatitis B are 3 times higher than the national average, especially impacting Asians and Pacific Islanders.

(<https://health.hawaii.gov/news/newsroom/doh-report-finds-high-rates-of-hepatitis-b-and-liver-cancer-mortality/>). The CDC also found disparities in these communities in Hawai'i for hepatitis C. Shockingly, a Hawai'i resident with hepatitis C is expected to die 20 years earlier than the average Hawai'i resident! (<https://academic.oup.com/cid/article/71/5/1149/5581721>)

Clearly, this is an important public health issue that needs more attention. HCR 205 will support Hawai'i to keep our local communities healthy and safe and "hep free".

With thanks,

Thaddeus Pham (he/him)

**HCR-205**

Submitted on: 3/22/2023 8:11:11 AM

Testimony for HLT on 3/23/2023 10:40:00 AM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>         |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Anika Martin        | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chairs, Vice Chairs and esteemed members of the committees,

I testify in strong support of HCR 205 which highlights Hep Free 2030 which is Hawaii’s hepatitis elimination strategy and recognizes Hep Free Hawaii’s coalition of over 100 partners dedicated to making Hawaii truly hepatitis free. In fact, I am the Awareness Workgroup lead, and our efforts towards raising awareness on hepatitis seem to be working out great in the digital world! We've received recognition from our national AND global partners. If you are interested in viewing our most recent project, please visit our TikTok account page: @hepfreehawaii along with our other social media outlets (same username).

Hawaii is on the forefront of hepatitis elimination efforts and this resolution also offers an informational briefing on viral hepatitis in the islands to the legislature before the next legislative session.

The CDC considers viral hepatitis a winnable battle and HCR 205 will support Hawaii continuing to be at the forefront of these epidemics.

Thank you for reading my testimony.

**HCR-205**

Submitted on: 3/22/2023 11:16:16 AM

Testimony for HLT on 3/23/2023 10:40:00 AM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>         |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Beatrice Zovich     | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chairs, Vice Chairs and esteemed members of the committees,

I testify in strong support of HCR 205 which highlights Hep Free 2030 which is Hawaii’s hepatitis elimination strategy and recognizes Hep Free Hawaii’s coalition of over 100 partners dedicated to making Hawaii truly hepatitis free.

Hawaii is on the forefront of hepatitis elimination efforts and this resolution also offers an informational briefing on viral hepatitis in the islands to the legislature before the next legislative session.

The CDC considers viral hepatitis a winnable battle and HCR 205 will support Hawaii continuing to be at the forefront of these epidemics.

Thank you for considering my testimony.