



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.
SENATOR JOY SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES**

Hearing Date: 4/12/2023

Room Number: 225

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 Hawai‘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 Hawai‘i were higher than the U.S. average every year for two
11 decades (2000-2020). In 2019, the hepatitis B mortality in Hawai‘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 Hawai‘i can reduce life expectancy by 20 years. Hawai‘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 Human Services

Hearing Date/Time: Wednesday April 12, 2023 1:10 PM

Re: Testimony in Strong Support of HCR 205

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

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino 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.





To: Committee on Health and Human Services

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 San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and Members of the Committee:

Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center (HHRC) 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.

HHRC’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. HHRC 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: 4/11/2023 10:25:45 AM

Testimony for HHS on 4/12/2023 1:10:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Daniel Saltman | Individual | Support | Remotely Via Zoom |

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the committee

I am presenting strong support of HCR 205. This resolution highlights Hep Free 2030, which is Hawai‘i’s viral hepatitis elimination strategy. It recognizes Hep Free Hawai‘i’s coalition of over 100 partners dedicated to addressing these preventable and treatable infectious diseases in Hawai‘i.

Hawai‘i is on the national forefront of hepatitis elimination efforts. This resolution offers the legislature an informational briefing on viral hepatitis in the islands, before their next legislative session.

The CDC, the WHO, Dr. Francis Collins, former head of the NIH, and many others consider elimination and control of viral hepatitis to be a winnable battle. HCR 205 will support statewide efforts for Hawai‘i to continue to be a leader in viral hepatitis elimination.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

HCR-205

Submitted on: 4/7/2023 5:11:18 PM

Testimony for HHS on 4/12/2023 1:10:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Thaddeus Pham | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and HHS 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: 4/8/2023 9:33:49 PM

Testimony for HHS on 4/12/2023 1:10:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| marc rocheleau | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the committee,

I am writing to testify in strong support of HCR 205 which highlights the Hep Free Hawaii 2030 which is Hawaii Hepatitis elimination strategy and recognizes HFH coalition of over 100 local partners dedicated to making Hawaii Hepatitis free

Hawaii is on the forefront of the hepatitis elimination efforts and this resolution also offers an informative briefing on viral hepatitis in the islands to the legislators before the next session

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

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony, Marc Rocheleau

HCR-205

Submitted on: 4/9/2023 9:22:50 PM

Testimony for HHS on 4/12/2023 1:10:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Alison Kaneshiro | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Senators of the Committee on Health and Human Services, Chairwoman Senator Buenaventura and Vice Chair Senator Aquino.

I believe that we can reach the goal of a Hep Free 2030. I believe that expanding MedQuest to cover Hep C medications will help to attain this goal. Hep C direct-acting antivirals are effective, well tolerated and generally can be eradicated with one to three pills a day for twelve weeks (Lombardi, et al., 2019).

Enacting a syringe service, immunizing against Hep A in homeless communities as well as identifying and supporting foreign born women and families that are at high risk of contracting hepatitis B are all steps in the right direction and show this is a priority.

Additional action to show this is a priority might also include no cost testing for Hepatitis A, B, and C to identify those infected and those that need vaccination for Hepatitis A and B. For anyone with advanced liver disease after eradication of the virus, should also be in a surveillance program (Lombardi, et al., 2019). As is stated in the resolution, hepatitis B & C can lead to liver cancer and Cirrhosis as well as decrease the life expectancy. With deaths from Hep B higher in Hawaii than in other parts of the US, ongoing care needs must be considered as part of the plan for Hep Free 2030.

I support the resolution with added considerations.

Mahalo for your time.

Reference

Lombardi, A., Mondelli, M. U., & ESCMID Study Group for Viral Hepatitis (ESGVH) (2019). Hepatitis C: Is eradication possible?. *Liver international : official journal of the International Association for the Study of the Liver*, 39(3), 416–426. <https://doi.org/10.1111/liv.14011>

HCR-205

Submitted on: 4/10/2023 8:42:36 AM

Testimony for HHS on 4/12/2023 1:10:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Anika Martin | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the committee

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: 4/10/2023 10:09:42 AM

Testimony for HHS on 4/12/2023 1:10:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Aaron Ruddick | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the committee

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.

Aaron Ruddick

HCR-205

Submitted on: 4/10/2023 10:58:20 AM

Testimony for HHS on 4/12/2023 1:10:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Charles F Ah Nee Bahn | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the committee

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.

Mahalo a nui loa for considering my testimony.

HCR-205

Submitted on: 4/10/2023 2:31:42 PM

Testimony for HHS on 4/12/2023 1:10:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Jeremy Sakamaki | Individual | Oppose | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and members of the committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for HCR 205, which highlights Hawaii's Hep Free 2030 strategy and recognizes Hep Free Hawaii's coalition of over 100 partners dedicated to eliminating viral hepatitis in the state.

As per the Hawaii State Department of Health, viral hepatitis remains a significant public health threat in the state, with an estimated 23,000 people living with chronic hepatitis B or C, and around 2,000 new cases reported each year. This resolution offers an opportunity for an informational briefing on viral hepatitis in the islands to the legislature before the next legislative session.

I would like to highlight the CDC's Viral Hepatitis Strategic Plan, which outlines the national strategy for hepatitis elimination in the United States, and emphasizes increasing awareness, improving testing and treatment, and reducing transmission of viral hepatitis.

Hawaii's Hep Free 2030 strategy aligns with the CDC's plan and aims to eliminate viral hepatitis in the state by increasing testing, improving access to treatment, and raising awareness about hepatitis prevention. Additionally, the strategy focuses on addressing health disparities and improving healthcare provider education.

I urge you to support HCR 205 to show your support for Hawaii's efforts to eliminate viral hepatitis and to encourage continued progress towards achieving the goal of a truly hepatitis-free state. Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Sakamaki

HCR-205

Submitted on: 4/10/2023 2:54:15 PM

Testimony for HHS on 4/12/2023 1:10:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Erin Furuichi | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the committee,

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: 4/10/2023 3:00:02 PM

Testimony for HHS on 4/12/2023 1:10:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Maddalynn Seseapasara | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the committee

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.

Maddalynn Seseapasara

HCR-205

Submitted on: 4/10/2023 4:59:38 PM

Testimony for HHS on 4/12/2023 1:10:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Kunane Dreier | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the committee

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: 4/10/2023 4:19:38 PM

Testimony for HHS on 4/12/2023 1:10:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| RUSSELL ABORDO | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the committee

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.

I lost my father to liver disease in 2008. I wonder if he would still be here if these same efforts were available then.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

HCR-205

Submitted on: 4/11/2023 11:10:07 AM

Testimony for HHS on 4/12/2023 1:10:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Beatrice Zovich | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the committee

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: 4/11/2023 12:28:20 PM

Testimony for HHS on 4/12/2023 1:10:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Judy Strait-Jones | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I strongly support HCR 205.

HCR-205

Submitted on: 4/11/2023 12:46:00 PM

Testimony for HHS on 4/12/2023 1:10:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Michael Paul | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the committee,

I am testifying in strong support of HCR 205. HCR 205 highlights some of the challenges we face in Hawai'i regarding Hepatitis, as well as supporting the continuing work of the many organizations and partners working for a hepatitis free future in our state.

The Hep Free 2030 strategy of integrating culturally appropriate outreach and services combined with comprehensive care is a winning one and deserves the continuing support and consideration of our legislature. Please pass HCR 205.

Mahalo!

-Michael Paul