



SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

The Honorable Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair
The Honorable Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair

S.C.R. NO. 15 REQUESTING THE AUDITOR TO ASSESS BOTH THE SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL EFFECTS OF PROPOSED MANDATED HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR A PERCENTAGE OF THE COSTS OF KETAMINE THERAPY TO TREAT DEPRESSION

S.R. NO. 13 REQUESTING THE AUDITOR TO ASSESS BOTH THE SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL EFFECTS OF PROPOSED MANDATED HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR A PERCENTAGE OF THE COSTS OF KETAMINE THERAPY TO TREAT DEPRESSION

Hearing: Thursday, March 16, 2023, 10:00 a.m.

The Office of the Auditor offers comments on S.C.R. No. 15 and S.R. No. 13, requesting the auditor to conduct a social and financial assessment of proposed mandatory health insurance coverage for a percentage of the costs of ketamine therapy to treat depression.

Pursuant Section 23-51, Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS), before any legislative measure that mandates health insurance coverage for specific health services, specific diseases, or certain providers of health care services as part of individual or group health insurance policies, can be considered, there shall be a concurrent resolution passed requesting the auditor to prepare and submit to the legislature a report that assess both the social and financial effects of the proposed mandate coverage. In addition, the concurrent resolution shall designate a bill introduced in the legislature must include, at minimum, the following information identifying the (1) specific health service, disease, or provider that would be covered; (2) extent of the coverage; (3) target groups that would be covered; (4) limits of utilization, if any; and (5) standards of care.

S.C.R. No. 15 and S.R. No. 13 identify an unspecified senate bill that will require insurance coverage for a percentage of the costs of ketamine therapy to treat depression. We ask the committee to include a bill that contains the minimum information required in Section 23-51, HRS.

Thank you for considering our testimony related to S.C.R. No. 15 and S.R. No. 13.

SR-13

Submitted on: 3/15/2023 8:47:59 AM

Testimony for CPN on 3/16/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robin Martin	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Dr. Robin Martin, I am a psychiatrist who trained and now practice in Honolulu, and am also assistant clinical faculty with the Department of Psychiatry at UH, and I am **in strong support of SR13** which will assess the effects of a proposed mandated insurance coverage of ketamine therapy to treat depression.

In my profession I see on a daily basis the significant mental health challenges our state is facing, and the limitations in our current treatment paradigms. Major depression is becoming the leading cause of disability worldwide, and suicide is the leading cause of death in the youth of Hawaii. We are in desperate need of new therapies, and increasing access to treatments that are proven safe and effective. Ketamine is one such treatment, and is the only rapid acting anti-depressant and anti-suicidal agent that we have access to. I have seen it work when everything else has not, saving lives and restoring hope to patients and families. Unfortunately this treatment is vastly underutilized due to lack of insurance coverage, requiring significant out of pocket expenses that make this treatment out of reach for many who need it the most. This bill is an important step forward in addressing this issue and helping make available a powerful tool in addressing the mental health crisis in Hawaii. Please support this bill.

Sincerely,

Dr. Robin Martin

Board Certified in Psychiatry and Neurology

FROM THE DESK OF

Bhupinder Chima, MD

LATE

March 15, 2023

I am a board-certified psychiatrist practicing in the state of Hawai'i. I provide psychiatric care for all income levels, I work for Mental Health Kokua where we serve the indigent and low income population of Hawai'i. Additionally I have worked in private practice models caring for teens as young as 17 years old up to our Kupuna.

During my residency training here on Oahu and then into my career over the last 6 years, I have seen time and again how our conventional antidepressants fall short in providing much needed care to my patients. Antidepressants can provide much needed relief to people suffering from depression and anxiety, however over half of people who trial an antidepressant do not get a response. Additionally our standard antidepressants work to suppress symptoms, often providing only a bandaid solution. For this reason I have spent years and thousands of dollars of my own time and money outside of my already busy work schedule to educate myself on better practices to be able to provide to my patients. This path has led me into the field of functional medicine and training regarding psychedelic therapies currently under research, both areas showing great promise for treating mental illness at a root cause level - whether it's inflammatory processes, nutrient deficiencies, toxin exposures or lifetime trauma. We as a society need to do better, we are in the midst of a healthcare epidemic and need to be honest with ourselves that business as usual is not working. The mental health crisis has only significantly worsened due to the upheaval to many peoples' lives that was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

For these reasons, I have recently established a Ketamine-Assisted Psychotherapy program with the Center for Healing and Transformation. After completing a year long fellowship through the Integrative Psychiatry Institute on Psychedelic Psychotherapies and getting to experience a ketamine treatment session firsthand as part of my training, I feel very strongly about the importance of expanding to include this service to my clients. Ketamine is an effective and safe medication when used properly in a medically supervised setting. Due to its efficacy, treatment clinics are being established across the country to meet the demand for more effective treatments. We combine our ketamine treatment sessions with intensive psychotherapy support as this is what the evidence supports for best outcomes.

Chronic, treatment resistant depression is a devastating condition that not only affects the individual who is suffering from but also has significant impacts on their close family, friends, employers and society at large. For these reasons, I support insurance coverage for ketamine therapy for severe depression.

I support bills SCR15/SR13.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BChima', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Bhupinder Chima, MD
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