



February 11, 2019

To: Chair John Mizuno
Vice Chair Bertrand Kobayashi
House Committee on Health

Chair Joy San Buenaventura
Vice Chair Nadine Nakamura
House Committee on Human Services

Re: **Comments on HB1445**

Hrg: February 12, 2019 Conference Room 329, State Capitol

The Hawaii Public Health Association is a group of over 600 community members, public health professionals and organizations statewide dedicated to improving public health. HPHA also serves as a voice for public health professionals and as a repository for information about public health in the Pacific.

HPHA is writing to express comments for House Bill 1445, which relates to the Kupuna Caregivers program. This bill continues the needed funding for the Kupuna Caregivers program, a critical part of the infrastructure to help kupuna and their caregivers, and it also mandates that the Executive Office on Aging create a report on the outcomes of the program and a plan as to how to reach more people.

While HPHA is supportive of the program, HPHA is not supportive of capping services to once per week. This defeats the intent of the original program to help caregivers who are working outside the home to stay employed. Instead, HPHA supports allowing the Executive Office on Aging create a proposed plan to reach more people and allowing them the flexibility to create a plan that works best for families.

By now we know that the need is for the program is there. The Executive Office on Aging reported that thousands of new calls came into its lines when the program was first launched. And we know why they are calling. The cost of professional caregiving continues to rise and our families simply cannot afford to take care of a loved one and remain fully employed. This program helps those in the gap group who are not eligible for Medicaid or Medicare to help with the costs, but are still barely making it, at times at risk of losing their jobs or having to reduce hours at work because the duties at home are too great. This reduces the income earning power of the caregivers, their social security benefits, at times risking their insurance coverage, and placing them closer and closer into poverty.

The Kupuna Caregivers program is a prevention program, helping people before crisis has struck. It also helps reduce costs to the state by possibly delaying the time that a family may become eligible for Medicaid. Studies have also shown that people that age at home with family are more likely to have better health outcomes, reducing hospitalization and ER visits, which ends up saving our state of expensive medical procedures that could have been prevented with adequate care.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on important health issues affecting people in Hawai'i.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads 'Holly Kessler' in a cursive, flowing script.

Holly Kessler
Executive Director