



STATE OF HAWAII
Executive Office on Early Learning
2759 South King Street
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

February 13, 2024

TO: Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Yuuko Arikawa-Cross, Director
Executive Office on Early Learning

SUBJECT: **Measure:** S.B. No. 3279 – RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH
Hearing Date: Wednesday, February 14, 2024
Time: 1:00 p.m.
Location: Conference Room 225

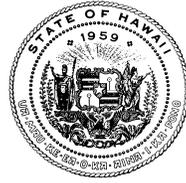
EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING'S POSITION: Support with comments

The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) supports S.B. No. 3279, defers to the Office of Wellness and Resiliency (OWR), and offers comments.

A comprehensive mental health support system is crucial to address acute and chronic mental health issues. The prevalence of these issues is on the rise, particularly as we continue to address the impacts of COVID, and more recently, the Maui wildfires.

EOEL would like to especially note that supporting early mental health and development in the youngest years is critical and asks that this also be incorporated into the development of this system. Mental health issues, even at this stage of the earliest years, can be caused by biological and/or development factors, experiences of trauma such as family violence, child abuse and neglect, parental substance abuse, and experiencing systems of poverty. These issues may result in developmental delays that could have long-lasting and detrimental impacts to children's health and development.

We look forward to continuing to work with other stakeholders and departments to continue strengthening the systems of support for our youngest keiki across the State. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.



STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE
KE KE'ENA KŪPA'A MAULI OLA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
415 S.BERETANIA ST. #415
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

**Testimony in SUPPORT of S.B. 3279
RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH**

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Hearing Date: February 14, 2024, at 1:00 pm Room Number: 225

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) in the Governor's Office **SUPPORTS** S.B. 3279, Relating to Mental Health.

Established through Act 291 (Session Laws of Hawai'i 2022) the overall aim of the OWR is to make Hawai'i a trauma-informed state. OWR is focused on breaking down barriers that impact the physical, social, and emotional well-being of Hawai'i's people. The OWR explores avenues to increase access and availability to mental, behavioral, social, and emotional health services and support.

S.B. 3279 proposes the establishment of the well-being project within the OWR. The measure would allow OWR to accelerate and strengthen the office's mission of creating a trauma-informed state. Since the inception of the OWR, we have initiated training and technical assistance supports with several state departments, specifically around the implementation of trauma-informed care. While the OWR does not provide direct mental health care, we provide technical assistance and training on implementing trauma-informed care in all state agencies, including those who provide direct mental health support services. This bill would allow OWR to expand its work and engage entities beyond state departments to incorporate culturally grounded and community-informed well-being programs.

Trauma-informed care (TIC) is an approach to understanding and responding to the widespread impact of trauma. By passing this bill, the State would be upholding the TIC principles of Safety, Peer Support, Empowerment, and Voice and Choice, which strengthens our pathway towards a trauma-informed state. As such, the OWR **SUPPORTS** S.B. 3279.

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

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tia L R Hartsock".

Tia L R Hartsock, MSW, MSCJA
Director, Office of Wellness & Resilience
Office of the Governor



To: Committee on Health and Human Services

Hearing Date/Time: Wednesday Feb. 14th 1:00 PM

Re: Testimony in Support of SB 3279

From: Heather Lusk, Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Health & Harm Reduction Center (HHRC) **supports SB 3279** which establishes within the Office of Wellness and Resilience the State of Well-being Project to assess and enhance tier 1 and tier 2 mental health support services for all key stakeholder communities across the State. More than ever, our community needs an updated assessment and recommendation of tiers of mental health support to ensure we have the culturally appropriate and trauma responsive services our community desperately needs.

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 works at the intersection of mental health, substance use, homelessness, chronic disease and the criminal legal system and the majority of our clients struggle with mental health and/or co-occurring challenges. We are very excited about the Office of Wellness and Resilience and their efforts to ensure that we have the most robust, responsive and effective mental health system possible. Thank you for supporting SB 3279!

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Heather Lusk, Executive Director, Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center

LATE

SB-3279

Submitted on: 2/14/2024 9:07:31 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/14/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chachie Abara	Testifying for Filipino Mental Health Initiative - Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai kakou, my name is Chachie Abara (she/her/isuna). I am testifying before in support of the SB3279 OWR; State of Well-being Project; Tier 1 and Tier 2 Mental Health Support Services; Expenditure Ceiling; Appropriation which Establishes within the Office of Wellness and Resilience the State of Well-being Project to assess and enhance tier 1 and tier 2 mental health support services for all key stakeholder communities across the State. Declares that the general fund expenditure ceiling is exceeded. Makes an appropriation to establish an unspecified number of full-time equivalent mental health specialist positions within the Office of Wellness and Resilience.

My background is that I obtained my Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Philippine Language & Literature: Ilokano in 2020 at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. Post grad, I have been working as a community advocate working with different individuals to create cultural sensitive mental health resources for our Filipino community. As someone who is a Filipino immigrant, mental health is not a commonly used term in the community due to the common stigma that it has to our community. "However, stigma rooted in Filipino culture remains a challenge, with some attributing mental disorders to personal weaknesses or supernatural causes.⁸ As a result, mental disorders are seen as socially unacceptable, leading Filipinos to turn to friends and family for assistance and avoid professional mental healthcare ([Alibudbud](#)) One of my main goals as this bill is approved is to help educate the community about mental health especially since Filipinos are the third largest ethnic group in Hawaii, comprising **about 14% of the total population which is according to the 2020 Census.**

Thank you,

Chachie Abara



MAUI

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

VOICE OF BUSINESS

LATE

HEARING BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, HOUSE CONFERENCE ROOM 225
Wednesday, February 14, 2024 AT 1:00 P.M.

To The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services

SUPPORT SB3279 RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

The Maui Chamber of Commerce **SUPPORTS SB3279**.

The Chamber notes that mental illness is one of the most pressing challenges humanity is facing today. The prevalence of both acute and chronic mental illnesses has been on the rise in the State and globally over the past two decades. Untreated mental illness is one of the top predictors of suicide, substance abuse, incarceration, and adult disability. This is especially disconcerting for historically marginalized and under-resourced communities, which are at significantly higher risk of mental illness and also have more limited access to mental health education, resources, and support. Mental illness at the individual level compounds across communities and leads to negative statewide outcomes, including increased joblessness, homelessness, domestic violence, violent crime, and school dropout rates.

Additionally, we have seen the importance of mental health support services given the trauma that many face following the August 8 wildfires. We appreciate this bill as there are gaps in support services that are vital to address. We also encourage the group to consider how to broaden the capacity of the Hawaii State Hospital to not only assist those who have committed a felony, but to the wider community who need critical mental health care.

We support efforts to establish the state of well-being project and a timeline for the project to:

- (A) Assess the tiers of mental health support services that currently exist; and
- (B) Enhance existing well-being programming and, when non-existent, build out culturally grounded and community-informed well-being programming to establish mental health support services for key stakeholder communities across the State.

This is a crucial tool in the toolbox on fighting homelessness and supporting the care for those with mental illnesses. For these reasons, we **SUPPORT SB3279** and respectfully ask that it be passed.

Sincerely,

Pamela Tumpap
President

To advance and promote a healthy economic environment for business, advocating for a responsive government and quality education, while preserving Maui's unique community characteristics.

LATE

To: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
RE: SB3279 in strong support
Hawaii State Capitol, Conference Room 225
February 14, 2024; 1:00 pm

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

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **STRONG SUPPORT of Senate Bill 3279** relating to Mental Health.

SB 3279 establishes the State of Well-being Project within The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR). This project will assess and enhance tier 1 and tier 2 mental health support services across the state and build programs for key stakeholder communities where well-being programs do not exist. Programs will incorporate culturally responsive support systems for key stakeholder communities across the State. It would also appropriate funds to assess and enhance existing mental health training and ongoing support services to various public agencies such as public schools, community centers, and health care centers. Funds would also be used to hire and train mental health specialists and work with approved partner organizations to be culturally grounded, community, and trauma-informed.

Tier 1 systems also provide a common language to define wellness practices and promote a safe and healthy organizational culture for all. It is designed for all people to set a foundation. Tier 2 mental health support systems identify those at higher risk and, therefore, require specialized training and support geared to meet those needs. Together, these two tiers of support encompass the core mental health needs of individuals, groups, and communities.

The above purposes align with the OWR's framework to define trauma-informed care and trauma-responsive practice that applies to schools, community centers, health care providers, and other programs with contact with children and youth. The effort will support trauma-informed care within our systems for the benefit of both the public who interact with these systems and our state workforce. We must continue to make Hawai'i a healing-centered and trauma-informed state in 2024. Mahalo for supporting this bill.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

Mai Hall, M.Ed.
Children's Health Coordinator

SB-3279

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 8:48:35 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/14/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caroline Kunitake	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB3279. Please support this bill.

SB-3279

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 11:41:04 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/14/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bronson Teixeira	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I vote in support of this bill to better establish the understanding to the mental health issue's that's going on in our state. Thank you

Testimony on Senate Bill No. 3279

RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

Wednesday, February 14, 2024 at 1:00 pm

Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

State Capitol

415 South Beretania Street

Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Tina Egan, and I am writing to express my **STRONG SUPPORT** for SB 3279. The bill aims to establish the State of Well-being Project within the Office of Wellness and Resilience, focusing on accessing and enhancing Tier 1 and Tier 2 mental health support services for all key stakeholder communities across the State of Hawai'i. As a resident of Hawai'i County and graduate student at the Thompson School of Social Work and Public Health, I am deeply invested in the mental health and the well-being of our community. I believe this legislation is not only necessary but also long overdue.

Mental health is a critical component of overall well-being, yet it is often overlooked or neglected in our society. The State of Well-being Project presents a proactive approach to addressing this issue by prioritizing the assessment and enhancement of mental health support services at both Tier 1 and Tier 2 levels. In doing so, it recognizes the importance of early intervention and prevention strategies in promoting mental wellness and resilience among all residents. The establishment of the State of Well-being Project demonstrates a commitment to integrating mental health into broader public health initiatives. Through coordinating efforts across various agencies and sectors, this project has the potential to maximize resources, streamline services, and foster collaboration among major participants. This could lay the foundation for a more cohesive and effective mental health support system in Hawai'i.

One of the key strengths of this bill is its focus on inclusivity and accessibility. By targeting all key stakeholder communities across the state, including but not limited to schools, workplaces, healthcare facilities, and community organizations, the State of Well-being Project ensures that no one is left behind. This comprehensive approach acknowledges the diverse needs and challenges faced by the communities in Hawai'i and seeks to tailor mental health services accordingly.

The investment in Tier 1 and Tier 2 mental health support services will not only benefit individuals but will also have broader societal implications. Research has consistently shown that early intervention and prevention efforts can reduce the prevalence and severity of mental health conditions, improve academic and workplace performance, and mitigate the economic burden

associated with untreated mental illness. By prioritizing these strategies, the State of Well-being Project has the potential to yield significant long-term benefits for our state.

In conclusion, I urge you to support SB 3279 and the establishment of the State of Well-being Project within the Office of Wellness and Resilience. Taking proactive steps to assess and enhance Tier 1 and Tier 2 mental health support services, can aid in building a healthier, more resilient, and more inclusive Hawai'i for all residents.

Mahalo for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely, Tina Egan
Mountain View, Hawaii
egancm@hawaii.edu