



**UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM**

**‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII**

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

**LATE**

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Testimony Presented to the  
Senate Committee on Higher Education  
Thursday, February 6, 2025 at 3:05 p.m.  
by  
Michael Bruno  
Provost, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 1204 – RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 1204 which, among other things, reestablishes the Cancer Research Center of Hawai'i as an organized research unit within the University of Hawai'i John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM).

The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa cannot support this bill in its present form. We recognize the importance of ensuring strong collaboration across the John A. Burns School of Medicine and the Cancer Research Center of Hawai'i, as well as the need to continue to seek operational efficiencies on the Kaka'ako campus. However, we believe that it is essential that the University's academic units retain the authority to develop and implement academic and research programs - and the associated organizational structures - to be responsive to the needs of the people of Hawai'i.

President Hensel has tasked me with creating a process and timetable for the development of a comprehensive plan for the optimization of the Kaka'ako campus structure and activities, which may include even closer integration of the Cancer Research Center and JABSOM.

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



fightcancer.org

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair  
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair  
Members of Senate Committee on Higher Education

Hearing Date: Thursday, February 6, 2025

**ACS CAN COMMENTS on SB 1204 – RELATING TO UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII.**

Cynthia Au, Government Relations Director – Hawaii Guam  
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

Thank you for the opportunity to **COMMENT** on SB 1204: Relating to University of Hawaii, which creates the cancer research unit within the University of Hawaii medical school. While we appreciate the Legislature’s intent of reducing costs to the State, we do have concerns on the proposed measure.

By placing the University of Hawaii Cancer Center (UH Cancer Center) within the John A. Burns School of Medicine for organizational and cost reduction purposes, we are concerned that this would endanger designation as a National Cancer Institute cancer center and may impact NIH grant funding and support grants.

As the only NCI designated cancer center in the pacific region, the UH Cancer Center works with partners such as the University of Guam to address cancer issues specific to the Asian and Pacific Islander populations. While cancer mortality has fallen nationally, specific populations in Hawaii continue to face a higher burden of cancer and benefit from the research conducted at the UH Cancer Center on these specific racial and ethnic groups. We urge the committee to consider these issues on this measure.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comments. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Government Relations Director Cynthia Au at 808.460.6109, or [Cynthia.Au@Cancer.org](mailto:Cynthia.Au@Cancer.org).

**SB-1204**

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 10:53:10 AM

Testimony for HRE on 2/6/2025 3:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Adelia Dung	Testifying for Alana Dung Research Foundation	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Adelia Dung, President of the Alana Dung Research Foundation. We are in STRONG OPPOSITION of SB1204.

When 1 year old Alana was diagnosed with cancer; Hawaii did not have the resources to provide her with clinical trials and the treatment she needed. We moved to Seattle so she could get the care she needed.

In the last 2 decades, significant progress has been made and the UH Cancer Center offers support and treatment to our residents. The incredible work is recognized nationally with the NCI designation. This is a big deal - it attracts millions of research dollars and brilliant minds to our State. This is something we should WANT for our community. SB1204 puts at risk this prestigious and hard earned designation.

The Center needs your support and this bill would set back the incredible strides that are occurring.

**SB-1204**

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 1:24:00 PM

Testimony for HRE on 2/6/2025 3:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Laurie Chun	Testifying for Friends of the UH Cancer Center	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani and committee members,

My name is Laurie Chun and I am the Friends of UHCC Administrator. I am in STRONG OPPOSITION of SB1204.

I have supported the Friends of UHCC since 2016 and feel that the measure would gravely threaten the NCI designation that the Center and the State has worked so hard to attain. The designation positively impacts grants, research, staffing and ultimately the lives of cancer patients in Hawaii.

Mahalo,  
Laurie Chun

**SB-1204**

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 8:13:51 PM

Testimony for HRE on 2/6/2025 3:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Monica McLaren	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose Senate Bill 1204, which reestablishes the Cancer Research Center of Hawaii as an organized research unit within the University of Hawaii John A.

Passage of this measure would gravely threaten the P30 grant from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) of the National Institutes of Health. UHCC is one of 72 such designated centers, and as such has a position of respect, authority, and collaboration that will be lost if this bill is passed.

It is important also to note that modern cancer research reaches across the entire local community, including but not limited to to our medical school. UHCC is achieving many synergies (most recently and notably Queen’s hospital’s partnership in Ho’ola, UHCC’s Early Phase Clinical Trial Center), so important partnerships are presently being achieved and grown. This bill would interfere with that progress by layering on unnecessary bureaucracy.

While the legislature may have some insights into and questions about the governance of UH, it should not have complete control of its structure. I believe this is legislative overreach.

Please register my strong opposition to this bill.

**SB-1204**

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 8:18:56 PM

Testimony for HRE on 2/6/2025 3:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mary Friend Williamson	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani and committee members:

My name is Mary Friend Williamson and I am in **STRONG OPPOSITION** of SB1204.

As the former statewide director for cancer patient services for the American Cancer Society, as the Kaua'i representative to the UHCC Community Board, and as a cancer survivor, I strongly oppose SB1204, to reorganize the UH Cancer Center under the UH Medical School.

If passed, the bill will critically jeopardize UHCC's National Cancer Institute (NCI) designation. Losing NCI designation will limit the ability of the Center's investigators and scientists to continue bringing in multi-million dollars of research funding and jeopardize clinical trial funding for local residents.

We must maximize -- not restrict or endanger -- the ability of the UH Cancer Center to reduce the burden of this disease on the people of Hawai'i.

Sincerely,

Mary Friend Williamson  
Kalaheo 96741

RE: SB1204 – Relating to University of Hawaii  
Thursday, February 6, 2025; TIME: 3:05PM  
Committee on Higher Education

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Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani and committee members:

My name is Rebecca “Becki” Ward and I am a passionate advocate for cancer prevention, screening, and treatment — all of which require active investment in cancer research. I am in STRONG OPPOSITION to SB1204, which will effectively serve to reduce badly-needed cancer research in Hawaii.

My primary concern is the likely loss of designation as one of 71 NCI Cancer Centers in the US and the resulting loss of access to funding opportunities, such as the P30 grants. I currently serve on the Community Advisory Board for the UH Cancer Center, have volunteered with the American Cancer Society for the past 15 years (including serving as Hawaii Pacific Board Chair and serving on national research peer review panels), and have lost my husband and numerous close friends to cancer over the years. With my perspective, I know how important it is that we continue to build the cancer research capacity in Hawaii so that patients do not have to go to the Continent for access to trials. The physical and emotional challenges of leaving Hawaii for specialized cancer care and access to clinical trials adds to the incredible stress of the cancer experience.

I know that the vision of the UH Cancer Center is to increase this capacity in Hawaii; and this will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, without the NCI designation, which UHCC has fought hard to maintain.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my concern.

Sincerely,  
Becki Ward  
Honolulu 96816

**SB-1204**

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 5:58:03 AM

Testimony for HRE on 2/6/2025 3:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Carl Chun	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Carl Chun and I am a community member that cares about cancer research and cancer care provided to Native Hawaiians.

I am in strong opposition to SB1204 because it will negatively impact UHCC's NCI designation and the resulting support to the people of Hawaii.

**SB-1204**

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 10:20:26 AM

Testimony for HRE on 2/6/2025 3:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
sheri higa	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly OPPOSE the bill to merge the Cancer Center with JABSOM.

The major reason being the imminent loss of the NCI designation. The Cancer Center works tirelessly to maintain the coveted status. With the designation comes valuable funding and resources. We should do all we can to support the Center and not jeopardize any source of funding.

One would hope we would be proud of the Center and the good works it does for our people in Hawaii and the Pacific region.

E: SB1204 – Relating to University of Hawaii  
Thursday, February 6, 2025; TIME: 3:05PM  
Committee on Higher Education

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Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani and committee members:

My name is Adelia Dung.  
I am in STRONG OPPOSITION of SB1204.

The UH Cancer Center of Hawaii is an NCI designed center center.  
This is an incredible credit to the work being done right here in Hawaii.  
There are only 72 NCI designated centers, located in 36 states and DC.  
This provides federal funding and supports the Center's mission to reduce the burden of cancer through research, education, patient care and community outreach.

Passage of this bill will jeopardize our designation.  
Our State is already struggling on so many fronts – why put at risk the 141,764,629.00 federal funds that directly benefits our Island community ?

Sincerely,

  
Adelia C. Chung, CLU, ChFC

**SB-1204**

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 11:14:32 AM

Testimony for HRE on 2/6/2025 3:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Rex Chang	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani and committee members,

My name is Rex Chang. I am in **STRONG OPPOSITION** of SB1204. Passage of SB1204 would strongly threaten the UH Cancer Center's NCI designation. The NCI designation is granted to cancer centers in the U.S. that meet strict standards for research, scientific leadership, and patient care. With the designation, the NCI centers have access to cutting-edge research and treatments, as well as access to federal funding supporting patient care, infrastructure, and research programs. Other top cancer centers and institutions are more likely to collaborate with the UH Cancer Center with its NCI designation. There are only 72 NCI-designated cancer centers. It would be a shame to lose this prestigious and critical designation. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Rex Chang

Manoa, 96822

# Individual's Testimony AGAINST SB1204

Submitted to the Senate Committee on Higher Education (HRE)

February 5, 2025

Hearing Date: Thursday, February 6, 2025

Dear HRE Committee Chair Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Michelle N. Kidani, and Members, Senators Fukunaga, Hashimoto, and Fevella:

Mahalo for the opportunity to document my **strong OPPOSITION to SB 1204**, which proposes to administratively reorganize the currently freestanding Organized Research Unit of the University of Hawai'i (UH) at Mānoa for cancer research (the UH Cancer Center, formerly the Cancer Research Center of Hawai'i) within the UH John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM).

As has been the case with versions of this bill that have been deferred in previous Legislative sessions, SB 1204 again asserts that "merging the cancer research center of Hawaii (sic) and JABSOM will eliminate redundancies" and "streamline future strategic collaborations, foster enhanced cooperation, and create new opportunities for joint initiatives in medical research, education, and patient care."

I have worked at the Cancer Center for 26 years, most of them as a research study project manager and as an active member of various planning and advisory committees. I have proactively managed multiple studies over the years that have been collaborations between Cancer Center and JABSOM faculty. These things *do* happen—organically—and they are happening right now, without a reorg.

To point out a recent example: You may have seen the Cancer Center and our director, Dr. Naoto T. Ueno, on the front page of the Honolulu Star-Advertiser in December 2024. The headline reads as follows, emphasis mine: "UH partnership will target disparities in cancer outcomes," with the subheadline, "The alliance is expected to raise the quality and consistency of care in Hawaii and the Pacific." This "alliance" refers specifically to the UH Cancer Center and JABSOM. Among the specific aims of this initiative, *Ka 'Umeke Lama* ("Bowl of Enlightenment"), is the establishment of a medical oncology fellowship program that will focus on addressing the health disparities and other determinants of health that are unique to the people of Hawai'i and the U.S. Affiliated Pacific Islands. **This is groundbreaking and of utmost importance, especially in light of the federal government's current focus shifting away from understanding and addressing the health of minority and diverse populations like ours.** Simply stated, we do not have enough of an oncology workforce locally to "fix" the glaring gaps in cancer mortality suffered especially by Kānaka Maoli. Up until this point, any physician in training who aimed to specialize in oncology had to pursue a fellowship program on the continental U.S.; unfortunately, many of those trainees never make it back to Hawai'i to practice, despite their best intentions to do so, for any number of reasons. In addition to the development of the fellowship program, *Ka 'Umeke Lama* also lays out strategic plans to launch targeted cancer clinical trials, as well as culturally- and resource-appropriate cancer screening programs.

We are *already* on track, as an alliance, to make significant headway in terms of health equity for the people of Hawai'i—even more so, that is, than what we as researchers and medical education professionals and UH-affiliated physicians are doing every day with the supposed “redundancies” SB 1204 purports to eliminate. Between 2014 and 2016, then-Chancellor of UH Mānoa, Robert Bley-Vroman, initiated *two* reviews of the Cancer Center, both of which recommended streamlining overlapping operations with those of JABSOM where costs could be saved without jeopardizing the core missions of each institution, and many of the recommended integrations have since been implemented. A restructuring, as it turned out, would not actually lead to cost savings. The UH administration and the Board of Regents were so convinced that they resolved in 2016 to retain the Cancer Center as an independent Organized Research Unit in which the Cancer Center Director reports directly to the University Provost. When you have evidence that compelling, why deny the associated recommendations to (a) keep the units administratively separate and (b) maintain the sovereignty of the Cancer Center Director? We *do* still believe in evidence-based practice here, don't we? At least, the Cancer Center and JABSOM do.

Thank you again for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Crissy Terawaki Kawamoto

**SB-1204**

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 11:46:59 AM

Testimony for HRE on 2/6/2025 3:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Spencer Dung	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As the brother of Alana Dung, who valiantly fought cancer, but sadly lost that battle, I **STRONGLY OPPOSE** SB1204 and the consolidation of the University of Hawaii Cancer Center (UHCC) into JABSOM as a research unit under/within the medical school. The UHCC is one of only 72 NCI-Designated Cancer Centers, and one of only 8 Clinical Cancer Centers. UHCC provides critical research, clinical trials, and cutting-edge cancer treatments to the people of Hawaii and beyond. When my sister, Alana was diagnosed, my family had to go away to the mainland for her to get this type of care and treatment. With the advancements of the UHCC and the development of its Early Phase Clinical Research Center, families may not have to make that sacrifice to leave their home to get the best care. **IF** this legislation were to be passed, all that could, and most likely would, be lost. As such, I have to reiterate, my **STRONG OPPOSITION** to this bill. Thank you for your consideration.

**SB-1204**

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 3:06:16 PM

Testimony for HRE on 2/6/2025 3:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kevin Cassel	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

RE: SB1204 – Relating to University of Hawaii

Thursday, February 6, 2025; TIME: 3:05PM

Committee on Higher Education

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Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani and committee members:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in strong opposition to SB1204, which proposes to legislate the internal structure and management of the University of Hawai‘i (UH) by moving the UH Cancer Center under the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM). This bill would replace the judgment and decision of the Board of Regents, which established the Cancer Center in 1981 as a freestanding Organized Research Unit (ORU) of the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, by imposing a structure suggested by the Legislature without regard for the potentially devastating impacts of such a change. We oppose this bill for three reasons: First, passage of this measure would gravely threaten the P30 grant from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) of the National Institutes of Health, which carries our formal designation as one of only 71 NCI-designated cancer centers in the nation. This is a critical designation for which we have worked diligently and in which the university and State have invested significant resources. Second, a legislative mandate regarding internal restructuring is not necessary or appropriate to achieve synergies and efficiencies among the Cancer Center and other UH units, which include but are not limited to JABSOM. Third, while the Legislature has reserved to itself the right to legislate matters of statewide concern, it is neither appropriate nor necessary for the legislature to substitute its opinions on this specific matter of internal structure and management for the reasoned views of the UH, which is responsible to maximize the ability of the Cancer Center to reduce the burden of cancer on the people of Hawai‘i.

Sincerely,

Kevin Cassel



**SB-1204**

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 4:33:08 PM

Testimony for HRE on 2/6/2025 3:05:00 PM



<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Susan Hirano	Individual	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

I plan to submit testimony in person

Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Higher Education  
Thursday, February 6, 2025 at 3:05 p.m.



By

Diane T. Ono

Community Volunteer and Retired Attorney

SB 1204 – Relating to the University of Hawaii

UH; JABSOM; Cancer Research Center of Hawai'i; Research and Training  
Revolving Fund

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani and members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to provide testimony in strong  
opposition to SB 1204.

First, this bill stands counter to our Hawai'i constitutional mandate to provide  
the University of Hawai'i with autonomy. It is the University and its Board of  
Regents who should have control of its internal structure as well as its  
management and operation. SB 1204 negates and erodes this mandate.

Secondly, the reorganization this bill proposes would jeopardize the hard-  
earned and well-deserved National Cancer Institute designation of the  
University of Hawai'i Cancer Center. With this prestigious designation comes  
funding through the NCI which is critical.

As a long-time UH Cancer Center supporter, I ask you to vote against SB 1204.  
This bill is detrimental to the existence of the UH Cancer Center as the world  
class cancer center that it is. Thank you.