



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education
Wednesday, April 9, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.

By

T. Samuel Shomaker, MD, Dean,
Lee Buenconsejo-Lum, MD, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs,
Kamal Masaki, MD, Chair, Department of Geriatric Medicine
John A. Burns School of Medicine

And

Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SCR 203 – REQUESTING THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII TO EXPLORE THE FEASIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING AN ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE RESEARCH CENTER AND IDENTIFY THE REQUIREMENTS FOR RECEIVING FEDERAL FUNDING FROM THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON AGING FOR ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE RESEARCH.

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present COMMENTS today. The John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) supports the intent of SCR 203 which requests that the University of Hawai'i explore the feasibility of establishing an Alzheimer's Disease research center and to identify the requirement for receiving federal funding through the National Institute on Aging.

Hawai'i's aging population is increasing rapidly and approximately 31,000 people aged 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia. JABSOM appreciates the significant impact Alzheimer's Disease has on our communities, families, healthcare providers, and the patients themselves. However, this may not be an appropriate time to conduct the kind of study envisioned in SCR 203 considering the instability at the federal level and the uncertainty in funding streams for federal grants.

The award of a federal grant for a research center requires core faculty and programs to support robust administration, investigator development or research training, community engagement, research infrastructure, regulatory core, and several solid research projects that are multidisciplinary and include basic science, translational science, and clinical research (including clinical trials).

We are closely watching activities at the Federal level that will likely impact our research and education. We are concerned the University may not have sufficient personnel to plan an Alzheimer's Disease research center. Many of our research grants aim to better understand and reduce unequal disease burdens among some of Hawai'i's populations. The extent to which those will be affected by the federal policies and orders issued by the current administration is unknown at this time.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.



**STATE HEALTH PLANNING
AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH - KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII

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April 8, 2025

To: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Representative Andrew T. Garrett, Chair
Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair, and
Honorable Members

From: John C (Jack) Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA

Re: **SCR 203 - REQUESTING UH TO EXPLORE THE FEASIBILITY OF
ESTABLISHING AN ALZHEIMER'S RESEARCH CENTER VIA THE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON AGING...**

Hearing: Friday, April 9, 2025 at 2:00 pm; Conference Room 309

Position: SUPPORT

Testimony:

Alzheimer's Disease is an increasingly frequent and massively expensive healthcare issue in Hawai'i for which new therapies, including reducing amyloid plaque development and tau tangle aggregation are emerging, and which offer new hope for reducing the progression of the disease. Current studies being performed nationally in these regards typically do not include Asian or Polynesian populations. Hawaii's diverse population therefore offers a research opportunity, and renders the state an excellent location for development of new insights and studies in these regards. Ideally these studies can be funded by NIH and the National Institute on Aging; and the UH is ideally positioned to be a higher-priority federal research recipient.

We defer to the UH on whether this is feasible to explore at this time. However, we need to attract more healthcare research dollars and studies to our state. Clearly, we should be actively seeking such potential opportunities, including assuring seed funding is available to UH for the application costs, in order to expand research at UH and JABSOM in these regards.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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Alzheimer's Association

Testimony to the House Committee on Higher Education
Wednesday, April 9, 2:00 PM
Hawaii State Capitol, Conference Room 309, and Videoconference

RE: SCR203 & SR163

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committees,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this resolution requesting the University assess the feasibility of establishing a federally funded Alzheimer's Disease Research Center (ADRC) at the University of Hawaii. My name is Coby Chock, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy for the Alzheimer's Association. I write in strong support of SCR203 and SR163, which will initiate the process of developing this opportunity to establish localized dementia research in the State of Hawaii and access substantial federal funds to conduct this research.

The Alzheimer's Association Hawaii Chapter is dedicated to supporting individuals and families affected by Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Hawaii has one of the greatest ethnic diversities and the largest relative concentration of Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islanders, and Asian Americans in the nation. With 31,200 people living with Alzheimer's disease in Hawaii, 60,000 caregivers providing \$1.9 billion in unpaid care, and a rapidly aging population, it is critical that we do more to be at the forefront of ending this disease. By joining 24 other states in establishing an organized research unit funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and National Institute on Aging (NIA), we can make significant strides.

The Alzheimer's Association is a nonpartisan organization that has mobilized advocates across the nation to secure increases in federal Alzheimer's research funding year after year. Since 2014, across many congresses and presidential administrations, annual research appropriations have increased from \$562 million in 2014 to \$3.8 billion in 2024. The University of Hawaii and research partners across the state currently contribute some scholarly research, but not nearly as much as we could if we organize a research unit to received ADRC specific federal funding to continue and expand these efforts.

It is crucial to include diverse populations in Alzheimer's research. Localized research will ensure new developments in the field address the specific needs of our diverse community, leading to more effective and inclusive diagnosis and treatments.

We urge you to support this resolution because research is what will end Alzheimer's disease, and localized research will ensure new developments in the field don't overlook our diverse population. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support! If you have questions, please contact me at 808-451-3410 or ckchock@alz.org.



Coby Chock
Director of Public Policy and Advocacy
Alzheimer's Association - Hawaii