



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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Testimony COMMENTING on SCR35
REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO PROVIDE A PLAN FOR
IMPROVING ITS PROCESS FOR FULFILLING VITAL RECORD REQUESTS
FROM NEIGHBOR ISLAND RESIDENTS.

SENATOR JARRETT KEOHOKALOOLE, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Hearing Date: March 24, 2021

Room Number: N/A

1 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health (DOH) acknowledges the difficulties and
2 expresses regret for the experiences of residents who sought certified copies of vital records over
3 the last year. Staff turnover and stay-at-home orders relating to the COVID19 pandemic
4 exacerbated a growing backlog of orders in 2020, which at one point resulted in an eight-month
5 waiting period. This is clearly unacceptable. In March 2020 and at the direction of DOH's First
6 Deputy Director, additional resources were deployed to support the Office of Health Status
7 Monitoring (OHSM). Within six months, the backlog was reduced from an eight month wait for
8 online orders and four months for paper orders to five weeks and one week, respectively. The
9 department has maintained this performance as of the date of this hearing and is dedicated to
10 reducing the wait time further.

11 DOH is making internal investments in systems and staff and will be seeking policy amendments
12 to improve efficiency and operational resilience. Components of this initiative include the
13 appointment of a new Acting State Registrar in November 2020, establishing a Quality
14 Improvement Committee, reconfiguring the management structure, training and morale building,
15 and prioritization of a major information technology project to replace the core vital records
16 system. This resolution correctly asserts that Office Assistants are the backbone of the vital
17 records workfoce, and all efforts to preserve and fill those positions must be taken. Furthermore,
18 plans are also being developed to address the physical resiliency of vital records resources,

1 including hard copy volumes of original birth, death, and marriage recordations dating back to
2 the Territory of Hawaii in the late 1800's.

3 The department welcomes in the interest of the Legislature in improving the performance of the
4 vital records office and looks forward to educating members on the investments required to
5 preserve and improve this core public services. Although this resolution is not necessary due to
6 the renewed focus on creating and sustaining a culture of continuous quality improvement in the
7 vital records office, if passed, DOH will be able to fulfill the obligation for a plan to improve
8 processes relating to vital records requests.

9 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

10 **Offered Amendments:** N/A.

11

LATE

SCR-35

Submitted on: 3/24/2021 11:58:36 AM
Testimony for HTH on 3/24/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
C. Kimo Alameda, PhD	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha.. this is a strong testimony for DOH to improve its processing for vital records to the neighbor islands. Its a major issue and presents yet another geographic challenge and disparity for the neighbor islands. We need to close the gap of the access to vital records for all in the State not just Oahu residents.

Mahalo,

Kimo Alameda, PhD.

LATE

SCR-35

Submitted on: 3/24/2021 12:04:38 PM
Testimony for HTH on 3/24/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Anthony Gionson	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing in support of SCR35, requesting the Department of Health provide a plan to improve its process for fulfilling vital record requests from neighbor island residents.

When I lost my wife, my mother-in-law, and my youngest son, I was very fortunate to have my eldest son to help me navigate all the paperwork. Living in Hilo at the time, I saw his frustration at having to wait for their death certificates to conclude many of their affairs. Having a better system to help people in their time of need would only be fair for neighbor island residents.

Mahalo for your support.

Anthony Gionson

LATE

SCR-35

Submitted on: 3/24/2021 12:10:26 PM

Testimony for HTH on 3/24/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Banning Ramirez	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Thank you for the giving me the opportunity for me to testify in support of SCR35/SR24.

I find it extremely important that the Department of Health has the most up-to-date and accurate information from all neighbor island residents, especially in a time of COVID. Neighbor island residents often feel left out of the big picture and need to be included in all major desicions when it comes to medical budget and support. Mahalo again for the opportunity as a community member to express my concerns.

Sincerely,

Banning Ramirez, Kalaoa, Big Island, Hawai'i

LATE

SCR-35

Submitted on: 3/24/2021 12:10:39 PM
Testimony for HTH on 3/24/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Jessanie Marques	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am in support of SCR33: REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO PROVIDE A PLAN FOR IMPROVING ITS PROCESS FOR FULFILLING VITAL RECORD REQUESTS FROM NEIGHBOR ISLAND RESIDENTS.

Access to vital records should be made available to all counties, not only because of the Covid 19 pandemic, but because neighbor island communities have to pay for airfare, ground transportation, lodging etc. With the use of technology platforms i.e. telehealth, zoom etc. it would be beneficial for residents to have easier access through the use of computers, tablets and cell phones.

Mahalo for your considerations.

LATE

SCR-35

Submitted on: 3/24/2021 12:11:49 PM

Testimony for HTH on 3/24/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kirstin Kahaloa	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing in support of SCR35, requesting the Department of Health provide a plan to improve its process for fulfilling vital record requests from neighbor island residents.

Whether dealing with government or private institutions, vital records are more important today than ever before. The need for these records often arises around major life events, either happy or sad. For the Department of Health to make an effort to improve the process for neighbor island residents is a fundamental matter of fairness.

Mahalo for your support.

Kirstin Kahaloa

LATE

RE SCR35

Over the last 40 years I have been working in the medical profession in the State of Hawai'i and spent 10 of those years in the Marshall Islands working with the U.S. Public Health Service. I have been working with in the area of health disparities research for 25 years, and am intimately involved with training and developing primary care physicians for Hawai'i. Although brief, through this testimony, as an individual resident of Hawaii with expertise in these areas, I am in full support of this resolution as it will provide equitable resources of underserved and isolated communities throughout the State of Hawai'i.

Please contact me at any time should you have any further questions.

Neal A. Palafox MD MPH

Professor

Department of Family Medicine and Community Health

John A. Burns School of Medicine

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Professor

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LATE

SCR-35

Submitted on: 3/24/2021 12:22:49 PM

Testimony for HTH on 3/24/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Ryan Tito Gapelu	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am writing in support of the resolutions in that they provide equitable resources for neighbor islands end in turn the state as a whole.

LATE

SCR-35

Submitted on: 3/24/2021 12:28:54 PM

Testimony for HTH on 3/24/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Miyana Tohara	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chair Keohokalole and members of the committee, thank your for the opportunity to testify on my behalf. As a resident of the Big island for most of my time until moving to Oahu, I would like to suggest the ease of stress this bill would cause. I was without my birth certificate while on Oahu and was not able to obtain an authorized copy for my new job. I had to wait for the birth certificate to be sent to my mothers house in Kailua-Kona and then she was able to mail it to me. Although this process is not ludacris, it would have took a whole week less if I were able to obtain it while on Oahu. Thank you for your time.

Miyana Tohara of Kailua-Kona

LATE

SCR-35

Submitted on: 3/24/2021 12:45:18 PM
Testimony for HTH on 3/24/2021 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Elijah Aiona	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chair Keohokalole

Having a valid birth certificate is essential to live here in the United States. So the process of obtaining a new one after losing / damaging the original copy should be a lot easier, especially as neighbor island residents.

Mahalo for your time,

Elijah Aiona