

S.B. 2403 -- Relating to Substance Abuse

Good afternoon Chairs Sakamoto and Ige and members of both Senate Committees. I am Elaine Wilson, a licensed social worker and retired alcohol and drug abuse administrator.

I strongly support passage of S.B. 2403.

Substance abuse remains a significant public health problem. The 2003 Hawaii Student Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Use Survey indicated that 6.9% of Hawaii's sixth through twelfth graders (4,375 students) meet the requirements for needing treatment.

As a result of legislative funding of Act 40, there now should be treatment available in every public high school and middle schools. There are some schools that did not receive full funding based on past utilization, difficulty hiring and need to educate school personnel about the effectiveness of early treatment for students. These schools now are fully engaged in the process of referral to treatment and acknowledge the value of substance abuse treatment for their students.

I urge you to allocate additional funds for them so there is not wait list for a substance ready to get clean and sober.

Studies show that investing in treatment and early treatment of adolescents will:

- reduce future costs to society;
- reduce criminal behavior; and
- reduce health care costs.

Hawaii outcomes indicate that for FY 2007, six months after completing treatment,

- 93% of adolescents were still in school;
- 89% had no new arrests;
- 95% required no hospitalization;
- 92% required no emergency room use; and
- 95% were in stable living situations, usually with their parents.

Treatment saves lives, restores dignity and gives our adolescents and their families an opportunity for a safe and healthy life.

I also strongly support Part II on this measure which will increase the availability of Therapeutic Living Programs for adults in recovery.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Senate Bill (SB) Number 2403

Title: School-Based Substance Abuse Programs; Therapeutic Living Programs; Appropriation

Good Afternoon, Senators. My name is Gordon Baon and I am sophomore at Waipahu High

School. I am testifying on SB No.2403, School- Based Substance Abuse Programs; Therapeutic Living Programs; Appropriation

I support this bill for the following reasons.....

The School-Based Substance Abuse program is a great idea towards trying to improve the youth and the community in itself. Targeting the youth is a very good idea in my opinion because telling them that drugs and alcohol are bad for them while they're still young will have a much more profound effect on them rather than trying to warn them when they're older. One thing that I believe that must happen for this bill to succeed is to show young adults the harsh reality of what happens when you abuse drugs, speeches and talks about drugs just aren't cutting it with kids nowadays. Showing them physically will definitely make kids think before trying any drugs or drinking any alcohol. Basically helping the youth understand more will definitely help them make better decisions later on in life. Children and young adults are identified as the future, so when you help the children and the young adults you basically improve not only now but what happens later on in time when the young adults are the new generation of working adults. There is also the fact that with this bill you can save money that can later on be used for something else useful.

The Therapeutic Living programs too me was a very good idea in my opinion. Recovering addicts should be applauded for just being able to beat their addiction, but, one person can only do so much. With this bill we can help those who are trying so hard to get better get back on their feet and make something of themselves even if by a little. There are therapeutic living programs in the state but the amount is not enough to meet the need for the number of growing recovering addicts. With this bill we can help a lot more people and really having a bigger impact, without this bill the therapeutic living programs in my opinion would just be an unfinished product where we can't supply the needs of those who need help.

All in all I'm in support of this bill for the fact that I believe it will help many people, families, communities and the state of Hawaii.

Cody Tacheras
Lanai High School

I am here in opposition to Senate Bill 2403, which appropriates funds for school-based substance abuse programs. One cannot deny the existence of substance abuse problems in our schools and I completely agree with the idea that there is a connection between substance abuse and other societal problems. However, I do not agree with the proposed means, which you hope may lower this problem. The environment, according to the department of health report on which this very bill is based, is the chief factor in fueling our youth's substance abuse problems. Furthermore, the very environment we grow up in is what needs to be changed.

Logically, substance abuse programs should be in the environment where the problems occur. Not in the schools. School should be a place where we can grow as individuals, learn in groups, and have the freedom to choose our own life path. We, as students, depend on school to be that place for us. Unfortunately, having *on-campus* substance abuse programs destroys this idyllic idea we have of school because of all the preconceived negativity we associate with these programs, even if they are meant to help us. We need to look for the answers to our problems in a positive light, and implement them with the optimism we have always known school to have.

How can we afford to see such a serious issue positively? Moreover, even if we address this problem with a seemingly carefree attitude, will it not lead the students to believe that this is a "carefree" issue? Not if we treat it correctly and carefully. It is the directness in your approach that brings upon the negativity; we need to directly address this issue, ^{but} ~~and~~ in my opinion, through the use of school programs and clubs.

To put it simply, if students are participating in club activities, they are not using drugs. The benefits to this approach are great: students have the opportunity to assume

leadership roles, take on academic challenges, learn through cohesive teamwork, pursue their own life path, and above all, in the context of the problem we face, live in a drug-free environment. This is the approach that we students, our parents, and everyone in the community want to see.

Particularly at the school I go to, Lanai High & Elementary School, there are close to no school-based clubs available to us. How appealing does a school sound if the only extracurricular program it offers is a substance abuse program? // Furthermore, our school can barely stand on its own feet in trying to provide us with a decent education, let alone provide us with the luxury of extracurricular activities. The very idea that substance abuse programs are being prioritized over my education offends what I believe is the foundation of all schools.

We need to make a responsible decision and understand the environment we are exposing students to by implementing on-campus substance abuse programs. We need to address this problem, but in more creative, educational, and positive ways. Substance abuse programs should be placed appropriately within the environment where the problems start. We all want to see a change for the better and I hope the Senate will come to recognize the enormous benefits that come with the use of positive school-based programs and clubs, not substance abuse programs. Therefore, I urge you to oppose Senate Bill 2403.