



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB1550 HD1
RELATING TO HEALTH**

REPRESENTATIVE DAVID TARNAS, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Hearing Date: February 25, 2026 @ 2:00 pm

Room Number: 325

1 **Fiscal Implications:** None

2 **Department Position:** The Department of Health SUPPORTS this measure and offers comments.

3 **Department Testimony:** The Communicable Disease and Public Health Nursing Division
4 (CDPHND) provides the following testimony on behalf of the Department.

5 People who use drugs purchased outside of pharmacies are at risk of harm from contaminants,
6 including drugs that are more powerful than what they intend to consume. Consuming these
7 substances can lead to overdose, poisoning, and serious injury. Testing illicit drugs to
8 determine whether a controlled substance contains chemicals, toxic substances, or hazardous
9 compounds in quantities that can cause physical harm or death has been shown to reduce
10 overdose and drug-related harm. Research indicates that knowledge of what is in their drugs
11 often contributes to people changing their drug use to prevent overdose, injury, or poisoning.

12 The department supports removing barriers to drug checking by excluding drug testing
13 products from the definition of drug paraphernalia.

14 **Offered Amendments:** None

15 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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

JOSH GREEN, MD
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII

KENNETH S. FINK, MD, MGA, MPH
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOHN C. (JACK) LEWIN, MD
ADMINISTRATOR

February 23, 2026

TO: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair
Representative Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair
Honorable Members

FROM: John C. (Jack) Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA, and Sr. Advisor to
Governor Josh Green, MD on Healthcare Innovation

RE: HB 1550-HD1 -- RELATING TO HEALTH

HEARING: Wednesday, February 25, 2026 @ 2:00 pm; Conference Room 325

POSITION: SUPPORT with COMMENTS

Testimony:

SHPDA strongly supports HB 1550-HD1 with comments.

This bill strengthens Hawai'i's overdose-prevention and harm-reduction efforts by ensuring that drug checking tools are legally accessible and not treated as "drug paraphernalia." By exempting additional testing products from the paraphernalia definition, the bill seeks to give individuals, service providers, and communities accurate information about what may be present in a substance to help reduce accidental and fatal overdoses.

This bill can save lives by making it easier for people and frontline organizations to identify harmful contaminants in an increasingly unpredictable drug supply, which can help prevent accidental overdoses and guide safer, faster responses. It also supports public health outreach by allowing programs to use a wider range of drug-checking tools, so they can better spot emerging threats like xylazine and medetomidine and customize education and services. The bill helps reduce barriers for providers and community partners working to keep people safer and connect them to care.

In closing, this bill is a practical step to strengthen Hawai'i's response to a rapidly changing overdose crisis. It supports evidence-based strategies, helps communities stay ahead of new drug threats, and reinforces a compassionate approach that prioritizes safety and prevention. Thank you for hearing HB 1550-HD.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

■ -- Jack Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA



Dedicated to safe, responsible, humane, and effective drug policies since 1993

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1550, HD 1

TO: Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and JHA Committee

FROM: Nikos Leverenz, DPFH Board President

DATE: February 25, 2026 (2:00 P.M.)

Drug Policy Forum of Hawai'i (DPFH) **supports** HB 1550, HD 1, which excludes drug testing products from the definition of drug paraphernalia under the state's Uniform Controlled Substances Act. However, the bolder approach to this state's paraphernalia law in HB 1549 is preferable to another "carve out" of a law that has significant ongoing negative ramifications.

Paraphernalia laws needlessly criminalize equipment and supplies that support the provision of overdose prevention and harm reduction services. These laws also create risks to individual health, not only in terms of increasing the likelihood of viral transmission but also protracted engagement in the criminal legal system.

Still, the explicit exclusion of drug testing equipment from the current paraphernalia law represents an incremental yet positive change from existing law. The decriminalization of fentanyl test strips is not enough to meet current and emerging threats posed by the illicit drug market.

Since 1993 DPFH has advanced public discussions and policy changes around Hawai'i's drug polices, which continue to advance severe criminal penalties and extended periods of criminal legal supervision. DPFH also supports policy changes around substance use and behavioral health issues that are anchored in harm reduction, public health, and human rights.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

HB-1550-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 10:20:59 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/25/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carrie Ann Shirota	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe and Members of the Committee:

I support HB 1550 HD1 which excludes drug testing products from the definition of drug paraphernalia under the Uniform Controlled Substances Act.

Hawai'i continues to experience an overdose crisis that led to more than 100 people dying from opioidr elated drugs in 2025. SAMSHA recommends the best practice of providing access to drug checking equipment such as fentanyl test strips to identify potentially fatal adulterants.

Two years ago, the legislature passed a bill exempting fentanyl test strips from the paraphernalia law. However, without this measure, any other drug checking/testing equipment would be considered paraphernalia and illegal to distribute or use in order to save lives.

I urge you to pass HB1550 HD1 Relating to Health.

Sincerely,

Carrie Ann Shirota, Esq.

Honolulu, Hawai'i