



**TESTIMONY OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA  
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026**

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**ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**

H.B. NO. 1597, RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH.

**BEFORE THE:**

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**DATE:** Wednesday, February 4, 2026      **TIME:** 2:00 p.m.

**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 309

**TESTIFIER(S):** Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or  
Candace J. Park, Deputy Attorney General

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Chair Garrett and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments.

This bill establishes the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Research Center of Hawaii at the University of Hawai'i.

The bill implicates article X, section 6, of the Hawai'i Constitution, which gives the Board of Regents of the University of Hawai'i "exclusive jurisdiction over the internal structure, management, and operation of the university." Section 6 further provides: "This section shall not limit the power of the legislature to enact laws of statewide concern. The legislature shall have the exclusive jurisdiction to identify laws of statewide concern." We recommend an amendment that adds a statement identifying this bill as a law of statewide concern.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ÖNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony Hō‘ike Mana‘o I Mua O Ka ‘Aha‘olelo

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Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Higher Education  
Wednesday, February 4, 2026 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  
Vassilis Syrmos, PhD  
Interim Provost  
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

### HB 1597 -- RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH.

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 1597 which establishes and appropriates funds for an Alzheimer's disease and related dementias research center at the University of Hawai‘i as the first phase of a strategic plan to build capacity and position Hawai‘i for future ADRC designation by the National Institute on Aging. This is a necessary step to eventually be able to apply for a National Institute on Aging (NIA)-designated Alzheimer's Disease Research Center (ADRC).

Although Hawai‘i has numerous ongoing and historical dementia-related research projects, education initiatives, and community programs, these activities lack a coordinated structure. The state does not currently have the centralized research infrastructure, shared cores, or integrated data and clinical systems required to be competitive for NIA-funded ADRC designation. Establishing an ADRD Research Center would allow the university to build on existing strengths, reduce fragmentation, and create the foundation necessary for Hawai‘i to prepare for future ADRC application cycles.

Hawai‘i has the longest life expectancy in the United States, and the aging population is increasing rapidly. Approximately 31,000 people are living with Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia in Hawai‘i, reflecting over 11% of the population aged 65 years and older. They require 111 million hours of unpaid care by 62,000 caregivers, valued at 2,891 million dollars in 2025. Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (NHPIs) face a higher risk of dementia, and at younger ages. The odds of early-onset dementia among Native Americans (including Native Hawaiians) are over double that of Caucasians.

Establishing an ADRD Research Center at the University of Hawai'i will create a foundation to apply for future NIA ADRC designation and deliver significant benefits to the university, the state, and its residents. This center will advance interdisciplinary research, bringing together researchers from medicine, public health, nutrition, social sciences and others, thus enhancing UH's research capabilities and reputation, attracting major federal research dollars, and expanding opportunities for local talent in biomedical research and healthcare. The Alzheimer's disease and related dementias research center also creates the opportunity to advance scientific research focused on Asian American and NHPI populations which are historically underrepresented in dementia research, and will include unique genetic, behavioral, socio-cultural, and environmental factors affecting dementia risk. The research will improve patient care and access to clinical trials for our kūpuna. Importantly, this will strengthen collaboration between many academic and community partners, including the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM), UH Cancer Center, UH Center on Aging, Kuakini Medical Center, Hawai'i Pacific Neuroscience, The Queen's Health Systems, Hawai'i Pacific Health, Native Hawaiian Health Systems, the Alzheimer's Association Hawai'i Chapter, and other community-based organizations. It will align with academic growth and workforce development, complementing JABSOM's upcoming Neurology residency program.

The UH Mānoa at Kaka'ako campus has the capacity to physically house the ADRD Research Center, including laboratory and office spaces. The appropriation and establishment of positions at JABSOM in this measure will support statewide community assets, and is in the best interests of our community.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.



# 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'OKELA

JOHN C. (JACK) LEWIN, MD  
ADMINISTRATOR

February 2, 2026

TO: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION  
Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair  
Representative Terez Amato, 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 1597 -- RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH**

HEARING: Wednesday, February 4, 2026 @ 2:00 pm; Conference Room 309

POSITION: SUPPORT with COMMENTS

Testimony:

SHPDA strongly supports HB 1597, with comments.

This bill establishes an Alzheimer's Disease and related Dementias Research Center (ADRD) at the University of Hawaii

Alzheimer's disease and related dementias are among the most pressing health challenges of our time, disproportionately affecting Hawaii's aging population. Our state's unique demographic composition—particularly our large Asian American and Pacific Islander communities—presents an unparalleled opportunity to advance research that reflects genetic, cultural, and environmental factors not studied elsewhere. This will lead to more effective, culturally tailored interventions for our residents.

Pulling together the resources associated with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias in a coordinated and collaborative way to build the research capacity within our state makes good sense and would maximize our resources.

We defer to the University regarding the specifics, details and cost of establishing such a center.

*HB1597: testimony of SHPDA (2026), continued.*

SHPDA believes that having an Alzheimer's disease and related dementias research center in our state would allow us to build research capacity and be able to design our own evidence-based models focused on our diverse populations.

Thank you for hearing HB 1597.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

■ -- Jack Lewin MD, Administrator, SHPDA



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[Twitter.com/aarphawaii](https://Twitter.com/aarphawaii) | [facebook.com/aarphawaii](https://facebook.com/aarphawaii)

**The State Legislature  
House Committee on Higher Education  
Wednesday, February 4, 2026  
Conference Room 301, 2:00 p.m.**

TO: The Honorable Andrew Garrett, Chair  
FROM: Keali'i S. López, State Director  
POSITION: Support for H.B. 1597 Relating to Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementia Research

Aloha Chair Garrett and Members of the Committee:

My name is Keali'i Lopez and I am the State Director for AARP Hawai'i. AARP is a nonpartisan, social impact organization that advocates for individuals aged 50 and older. We have a membership of nearly 38 million nationwide and nearly 135,000 in Hawaii. We advocate at the state and federal level for the issues that matter most to older adults and their families.

AARP Hawai'i is in support for H.B. 1597, which establishes and provides funding for an Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD) research center at the University of Hawai'i John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM). This measure represents a critically needed investment in the future health, well-being, and economic resilience of Hawai'i's rapidly aging population.

Hawai'i faces a significant and growing burden of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. According to state analyses, more than 31,000 Hawai'i residents are living with Alzheimer's disease, yet as many as half may remain undiagnosed due to limited access to specialized memory services. [alzimpact.org] This demographic challenge is magnified by Hawai'i's unique population makeup. House Bill 1597 correctly notes that the state's large Asian American and Pacific Islander population offers a rare opportunity to advance research into genetic, cultural, and environmental dementia-related factors that remain understudied in mainland cohorts.

More than 6 million Americans live with dementia—including Alzheimer's disease—and the number is rising sharply. [aarp.org] Family caregivers provide billions of hours of unpaid care each year, often at great economic, emotional, and physical cost. [aarp.org]

Innovative research is essential because traditional drug-development pathways have repeatedly failed, underscoring the urgency for new approaches and expanded clinical research capacity. Thus, AARP strongly supports efforts that expand research infrastructure, improve diagnosis, foster innovation, and enhance culturally appropriate care—all key goals of H.B. 1597.

The establishment of an Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias research center at the University of Hawai'i represents a forward-looking, cost-effective, and scientifically sound investment that aligns with AARP's support in dementia research and our commitment to improving the lives of older adults and their families.

We urge the Committee to pass this measure. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support.

## 2026 Hawaii Leadership Board

Travis Kikuchi, *Chair*  
Senior Vice President  
Central Pacific Bank

Lori McCarney, *National  
Board Member Community  
Advocate*

Tricia Medeiros, *Past Chair  
Chief Operating Officer  
The Plaza Assisted Living*

Gina Fujikami, *MD  
The Queen's Medical  
Center*

Kai Ohashi,  
*Financial Advisor Edward  
Jones*

Michael Robinson,  
*Vice President Hawaii Pacific  
Health*

Kimberly Soares, *Vice  
President Atlas Insurance*

Gino Soquena,  
*Executive Director  
Hawaii Building and  
Construction Trade Council*

Gordon Takaki, *Past  
President Hawaii Island  
Chamber of Commerce*

Cary Tanaka,  
*Past President  
Island Insurance  
Companies*

Caroline Witherspoon,  
*President Becker  
Communications*

LJ R. Duenas,  
*Executive Director  
Alzheimer's Association*

## Testimony to the House Committee on Higher Education Wednesday, February 4, 2:00 PM, Room 309 and Videoconference RE: House Bill No. 1597 – RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB1597, which establishes a Dementia Research Unit (DRU) at the University of Hawai'i. My name is Coby Chock, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy for the Alzheimer's Association.

Hawai'i urgently needs a coordinated research structure for Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. Nationally, the NIH invests \$3.8 billion annually in Alzheimer's research, and federally designated Alzheimer's Disease Research Centers (ADRCs) can receive up to \$2.925 million per year in direct core funding, along with additional project and clinical trial awards. Yet out of more than 460 NIH funded Alzheimer's trials, Hawai'i currently leads just one. This means substantial federal funding, clinical trials, and scientific partnerships are not flowing into our state because we do not have the foundational infrastructure required to compete for these awards.

The SR163 report clearly states that while Hawai'i has many dementia related research activities, they are spread across institutions and not coordinated through shared cores, integrated data systems, or unified leadership. Without an organized research unit, Hawai'i cannot realistically pursue ADRC designation or attract multiyear federal support. At the same time, our population offers a unique scientific opportunity. Hawai'i is home to one of the largest Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander populations in the nation, groups that experience earlier onset, higher vascular risk, and younger age at diagnosis. These disparities are underrepresented in national dementia studies, and the lack of local research infrastructure prevents Hawai'i from contributing the data needed to close these gaps.

What HB1597 accomplishes:

- Establishes the DRU as an organized research unit within JABSOM, enabling shared services, collaboration, and coordinated research oversight.
- Provides \$375,000 in start-up funding to hire a senior clinician scientist (tenure track) and a center coordinator. These positions are necessary to develop grant applications, clinical protocols, and partnerships that bring in federal funding.
- Unifies existing dementia related assets across the UH Center on Aging, UH Cancer Center, Kuakini Medical Center, Hawai'i Pacific Health, and Queen's Health Systems, creating a statewide structure that meets NIH expectations for competitive centers, trials, and data integration.

The DRU is the essential first step toward unlocking federal research dollars. It creates the foundation needed for Hawai'i to join national clinical trials, host locally accessible research studies, and eventually apply for ADRC designation, which brings large and recurring federal awards. It also improves access to diagnosis and treatment innovation, strengthens workforce development, and brings new economic activity through research jobs and indirect cost recovery. Most importantly, it expands research opportunities for neighbor island and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities that have been historically underrepresented in dementia science.

HB1597 represents a strategic and high value investment. It fills Hawai'i's research gap, strengthens our ability to compete for federal funding, and establishes the structure required for long term growth. By creating the Dementia Research Unit, the Legislature positions Hawai'i to advance scientific discovery, improve care, and capture the federal resources that are currently out of reach.

Mahalo for your consideration. If you have any questions, please contact Coby Chock at 808-451-3410 or [ckchock@alz.org](mailto:ckchock@alz.org).



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



## THE QUEEN'S HEALTH SYSTEMS

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To: The Honorable Andrew Garrett, Chair  
The Honorable Terez Amato, Vice Chair  
Members, House Committee on Higher Education

From: Jacce Mikulanec, Director, Government Relations, The Queen's Health Systems

Date: February 4, 2026

Re: Comments on HB1597- Relating to Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Research.

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The Queen's Health Systems (Queen's) is a nonprofit corporation that provides expanded health care capabilities to the people of Hawai'i and the Pacific Basin. Since the founding of the first Queen's hospital in 1859 by Queen Emma and King Kamehameha IV, it has been our mission to provide quality health care services in perpetuity for Native Hawaiians and all of the people of Hawai'i. Over the years, the organization has grown to four hospitals, and more than 10,000 affiliated physicians, caregivers, and dedicated medical staff statewide. As the preeminent health care system in Hawai'i, Queen's strives to provide superior patient care that is constantly advancing through education and research.

Queen's appreciates the opportunity to submit comments supporting the intent of HB1597, which establishes and appropriates funds for an Alzheimer's disease and related dementias research center at the University of Hawai'i, including the establishment of two full time positions. This Research Center will expand access to clinical trials, research, education, and community outreach, particularly benefiting rural and neighbor island communities who often face the greatest barriers to dementia care. Hawai'i's unique AAPI population is deeply underrepresented in dementia research; this center fills critical gaps and supports culturally relevant care.

Queen's has one of the largest and most robust Geriatrics programs in the state and we believe this measure correctly attempts to leverage these programs across systems to ensure better care for our kupuna. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide comments on HB1597.

*The mission of The Queen's Health System is to fulfill the intent of Queen Emma and King Kamehameha IV to provide in perpetuity quality health care services to improve the well-being of Native Hawaiians and all of the people of Hawai'i.*

**HB-1597**

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 10:05:43 AM  
Testimony for HED on 2/4/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glen Higa	Hawaii Parkinson Association	Support	Written Testimony Only

**Comments:**

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the committee,

My name is Glen Higa and I live in Honolulu. I am the president of the Hawaii Parkinson Association and I am testifying in strong support of HB1597 that would establish an Alzheimer's research unit at UH which would allow the University to receive federal research funding to conduct culturally relevant Alzheimer's research, participate in national research projects, and provide local access to clinical trials.

Hawai‘i is home to more than 31,000 residents living with Alzheimer’s disease, and this number is expected to grow as our population ages. Yet despite the increasing need, our state currently lacks a coordinated research structure to better understand dementia, improve early detection, and expand access to new treatments and clinical trials. Families across Hawai‘i, especially those caring for loved ones diagnosed at younger ages or experiencing rapid decline, often struggle to find answers or research opportunities close to home.

The Dementia Research Unit (DRU) would help fill this gap by creating a centralized hub at the University of Hawai‘i dedicated to dementia research, collaboration, and community support. Establishing the DRU is the first step Hawai‘i needs to eventually qualify for major federal Alzheimer’s research funding and to bring more clinical trials and scientific resources to our state. This will ensure that Hawai‘i’s diverse communities, including Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations who face higher dementia risks, are included in research that reflects their unique needs.

I respectfully urge you to support this important bill so that Hawai‘i can build the research capacity needed to better understand dementia, improve care, and bring new hope and new resources to families across our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Glen Higa

**Testimony on HB1597**

**RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH**

**Wednesday, February 4, 2026, 2:00 PM**

**Conference Room 309 & Videoconference**

**State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street**

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the committee:

My name is Chris Lutz, and I live in Honolulu, Hawaii.

My wife, Maria, was diagnosed with Younger-Onset Alzheimer's Disease in February 2024 at age 56. My wife has a genetic form of the illness called APOE-4 Homozygous. People, like my wife, with both copies of the APOE-4 gene variant are 15 times more likely to develop Alzheimer's Disease, often at a much younger age.

Over the subsequent two years since diagnosis, I have learned first-hand how challenging and heartbreaking this disease is for my wife, my children, and for myself. During this time, I have taken on the role as caregiver in addition to spouse.

My wife and I wanted to make a difference for others with Alzheimer's disease, so I joined the Leadership Board for the Alzheimer's Association of Hawaii in 2025. Our hope is that Maria's experience can help others in the State of Hawaii.

My wife and I have had first-hand experience trying to find clinical trials that she is eligible for in the State of Hawaii. Unfortunately, the options in the State are very limited, and despite multiple attempts, we have not found any Clinical Trials that she qualified for in the State of Hawaii. Traveling to the mainland multiple times per year is not a realistic option for us either.

I know our experience is not unique, and many families afflicted by Alzheimer's disease are similarly unable to receive clinical trials in the State of Hawaii, and the population as a whole is unable to benefit from this research.

The Dementia Research Unit (DRU) would help fill this gap by creating a centralized hub at the University of Hawai'i dedicated to dementia research, collaboration, and community support. Establishing the DRU is the first step Hawai'i needs to eventually qualify for major federal Alzheimer's research funding and to bring more clinical trials and scientific

resources to our state. This will ensure that Hawai‘i’s diverse communities, including Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations who face higher dementia risks, are included in research that reflects their unique needs.

I respectfully urge you to support this important bill so that Hawai‘i can build the research capacity needed to better understand dementia, improve care, and bring new hope and new resources to families across our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Chris Lutz

**HB-1597**

Submitted on: 1/30/2026 6:47:13 PM  
Testimony for HED on 2/4/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kira Miyatake	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

**Comments:**

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the committee,

My name is Kira Miyatake, and I live in Kailua, Hawaii. Alzheimer's has affected me deeply through my family. My aunty's father lived with the disease, and it was heartbreakingly to watch him become increasingly lost and confused, even though he couldn't help it. Our family supported him as much as we could until he eventually passed. Experiencing this showed me how devastating Alzheimer's is, not only for those diagnosed but also for the families who care for them. Supporting this bill would help us better understand the disease and move closer to effective treatment and, ultimately, an end to its impact on families like mine. I am testifying in strong support of HB1597 that would establish an Alzheimer's research unit at UH which would allow the University to receive federal research funding to conduct culturally relevant Alzheimer's research, participate in national research projects, and provide local access to clinical trials.

Hawai'i is home to more than 31,000 residents living with Alzheimer's disease, and this number is expected to grow as our population ages. Yet despite the increasing need, our state currently lacks a coordinated research structure to better understand dementia, improve early detection, and expand access to new treatments and clinical trials. Families across Hawai'i, especially those caring for loved ones diagnosed at younger ages or experiencing rapid decline, often struggle to find answers or research opportunities close to home.

The Dementia Research Unit (DRU) would help fill this gap by creating a centralized hub at the University of Hawai'i dedicated to dementia research, collaboration, and community support. Establishing the DRU is the first step Hawai'i needs to eventually qualify for major federal Alzheimer's research funding and to bring more clinical trials and scientific resources to our state. This will ensure that Hawai'i's diverse communities, including Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations who face higher dementia risks, are included in research that reflects their unique needs.

I respectfully urge you to support this important bill so that Hawai'i can build the research capacity needed to better understand dementia, improve care, and bring new hope and new resources to families across our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,  
Kira Miyatake

**HB-1597**

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 4:40:57 PM  
Testimony for HED on 2/4/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Natalie Graham-Wood	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

**Comments:**

I support HB1597. My name is Natalie Graham-Wood and I reside at Sunset Beach, Oahu.

**HB-1597**

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 5:49:05 AM  
Testimony for HED on 2/4/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alethea Seto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

**Comments:**

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the committee,

My name is Alethea Au Seto and I live in Honolulu, Hawaii. My mother passed with Alzheimer's in 2018 after 5 years of pain and frustration and 3 years of silence. My brother says we watched my mother die in front of our eyes--slowly losing her ability to speak, walk, communicate, smile--she was there physically but was she able to understand us or know how much we loved and missed her? We'll never know. My mother was a teacher for 40 years--teaching generations of Hawaii children English, grammar, Speech and expression. In the end of her life, education, speech and expression failed her. Alzheimer's left us lost, confused, and silent. We didn't understand what was happening, we didn't know what to do to help her or ourselves and we didn't know how she was feeling or thinking in her last 3 years on this earth. My 3 siblings and I did what we could to help but that only meant helping with meals or baths, or doctor appointments. What more should/could we have done? This is still one of the most painful periods of our lives and the lives of the 13 grandchildren that lost the woman that cared for them--bathed them after church every Saturday evening, cooked them spam, bacon and Portuguese sausage for breakfast, and tied their hair in bows so they felt loved. I wish we could've made her feel loved and care back.

I am testifying in strong support of HB1597 that would establish an Alzheimer's research unit at UH which would allow the University to receive federal research funding to conduct culturally relevant Alzheimer's research, participate in national research projects, and provide local access to clinical trials. Until we can cure this disease, we need to understand it better and treat those afflicted with love and dignity that comes with knowing more.

Hawai'i is home to more than 31,000 residents living with Alzheimer's disease, and this number is expected to grow as our population ages. Our state needs to take action to better serve our people. We need to be accountable to those that suffer and to those who then care for them--impacting even more lives around them. Hawaii deserves a coordinated research structure to better understand dementia, improve early detection, and expand access to new treatments and clinical trials. Families across Hawai'i, especially those caring for loved ones diagnosed at younger ages or experiencing rapid decline, often struggle to find answers or research opportunities close to home. This lack of knowledge brings pain, anxiety, anger, and unhappiness to too many, for too long. We need to help ourselves and each other.

The Dementia Research Unit (DRU) would help fill this gap by creating a centralized hub at the University of Hawai‘i dedicated to dementia research, collaboration, and community support. Establishing the DRU is the first step Hawai‘i needs to eventually qualify for major federal Alzheimer’s research funding and to bring more clinical trials and scientific resources to our state. This will ensure that Hawai‘i’s diverse communities, including Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations who face higher dementia risks, are included in research that reflects their unique needs.

I respectfully urge you to support this important bill so that Hawai‘i can build the research capacity needed to better understand dementia, improve care, and bring new hope and new resources to families across our islands.

Thank you for your consideration and care and for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Alethea Seto

**HB-1597**

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 2:19:40 PM  
Testimony for HED on 2/4/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Audrey Sirk	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

**Comments:**

As a former caregiver for my mother who had Alzheimer's starting in her mid seventies. My father has passed and I have no siblings so I was responsible for her care. I was shocked when I became familiar with the lack of care that was out there. I remember taking her to what was recommended, a 'neurological center' at the hospital. She was expected to answer all the questions correctly. At times, she answered I don't know. I was aghast when the nurse doing the questioning became agitated at my mother because she couldn't give a good answer. EXCUSE ME. What was even worse, was that after putting her through all that they refused to state what 'stage' she was at. All they told us was that she had Alzheimers. My God, we already knew that. Completely useless process and no help at all. Even with the Alzheimer's association, there was very little information that was applicable to our situation. Many families have to take care of their parents and go through the pain and financial stress to hold off having to put their loved ones in costly assisted living. PLEASE advocate for more research into this awful disease that affects so many people.

Mahalo,

Audrey Sirk

**HB-1597**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 11:07:07 AM  
Testimony for HED on 2/4/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carol Perone	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

**Comments:**

I fully support Hawaii House Bill 1597 which provides funds for Alzheimer's research at the University of Hawaii. The number of people and families afflicted with Alzheimer's is growing at an enormous rate. There need to be more treatment or prevention options for families dealing with this tragic condition. Having lost my mother to this dreadful disease, I am strongly behind this bill.

**HB-1597**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 4:38:59 PM  
Testimony for HED on 2/4/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lila Mower	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

**Comments:**

i support this proposal.



**HPCA**

HAWAII PRIMARY CARE ASSOCIATION

**Testimony to the House Committee on Higher Education**  
**Wednesday, February 4, 2026; 2:00 p.m.**  
**State Capitol, Conference Room 309**  
**Via Videoconference**

**RE: HOUSE BILL NO. 1597, RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH.**

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

The Hawaii Primary Care Association (HPCA) is a 501(c)(3) organization established to advocate for, expand access to, and sustain high quality care through the statewide network of Community Health Centers throughout the State of Hawaii. The HPCA **SUPPORTS** House Bill No. 1597, RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH.

By way of background, the HPCA represents Hawaii's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). FQHCs provide desperately needed medical services at the frontlines to over 150,000 patients each year who live in rural and underserved communities. Long considered champions for creating a more sustainable, integrated, and wellness-oriented system of health, FQHCs provide a more efficient, more effective and more comprehensive system of healthcare.

This bill, as received by your Committee, would establish an Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Research Center at the University of Hawaii as the first phase of a strategic plan to build capacity and position Hawaii for future Aging-designated Alzheimer's Disease Research Center designation by the National Institute on Aging. To do this, the bill would appropriate \$375,000 in general funds for fiscal year 2025-2027, to establish one full-time equivalent faculty senior clinician scientist position, and one full-time equivalent administrative lead staff position.

This bill would take effect on July 1, 2026.

According to the Center for Disease Control:

- Alzheimer's disease is one of the top 10 leading causes of death in the United States;
- The 6<sup>th</sup> leading of death among US adults; and
- The 5<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death among adults aged 65 years or older.

**Testimony on House Bill No. 1597**  
**Wednesday, February 4, 2026; 2:00 p.m.**  
**Page 2**

In 2023, an estimated 6.7 million Americans aged 65 year or older had Alzheimer's disease. This number is projected to nearly triple to 14 million people by 2060.

Further, death rates for Alzheimer's disease are increasing, unlike heart disease and cancer death rates that are on the decline. Dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, has shown to be under-reported in death certificates and therefore the proportion of older people who die from Alzheimer's may be considerably higher.

In Hawaii, Alzheimer's disease is a growing public health crisis:

- 29,000 people aged 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's in Hawaii;
- 6.7% of people aged 45 and older have subjective cognitive decline;
- 60,000 family caregivers bear the burden of the disease in Hawaii;
- 91 million hours of unpaid care are provided by Alzheimer's caregivers;
- \$1.9 billion is the value of the unpaid care; and
- \$240 million is the cost of Alzheimer's to the State Medicaid Program.

For these reasons, the HPCA believes that this bill will further the goal of making the University of Hawaii a leading institution on the research of this malady. We assert that because the vast majority of our population is growing older, we need to better prepare our citizens on how to deal with Alzheimer's Disease and Dementias.

Accordingly, we are honored to partner with the Alzheimer's Association on this important measure and urge your favorable consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Public Affairs and Policy Director Erik K. Abe at 536-8442, or [eabe@hawaiipca.net](mailto:eabe@hawaiipca.net).

**HB-1597**

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 9:10:06 AM  
Testimony for HED on 2/4/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gina Fujikami	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Testimony on HB1597****RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH**

**Wednesday, February 4, 2026, 2:00 PM**

**Conference Room 309 & Videoconference**

**State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street**

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the committee,

My name is Dr. Gina Fujikami, and I live in Honolulu, HI. Alzheimer's has affected my family, and as a Geriatrician, I mainly see kupuna with cognitive issues and their caregivers.

I am testifying in strong support of HB1597 that would establish an Alzheimer's research unit at UH which would allow the University to receive federal research funding to conduct culturally relevant Alzheimer's research, participate in national research projects, and provide local access to clinical trials.

Hawai'i is home to more than 31,000 residents living with Alzheimer's disease, and this number is expected to grow as our population ages. Yet despite the increasing need, our state currently lacks a coordinated research structure to better understand dementia, improve early detection, and expand access to new treatments and clinical trials. Families across Hawai'i, especially those caring for loved ones diagnosed at younger ages or experiencing rapid decline, often struggle to find answers or research opportunities close to home.

The Dementia Research Unit (DRU) would help fill this gap by creating a centralized hub at the University of Hawai‘i dedicated to dementia research, collaboration, and community support. Establishing the DRU is the first step Hawai‘i needs to eventually qualify for major federal Alzheimer’s research funding and to bring more clinical trials and scientific resources to our state. This will ensure that Hawai‘i’s diverse communities, including Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations who face higher dementia risks, are included in research that reflects their unique needs.

I respectfully urge you to support this important bill so that Hawai‘i can build the research capacity needed to better understand dementia, improve care, and bring new hope and new resources to families across our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Gina Fujikami, MD

Testimony on HB1597  
RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH  
Wednesday, February 4, 2026, 2:00 PM  
Conference Room 309 & Videoconference  
State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the committee,

My name is Mansa Devaki, a student at UC Berkeley studying Neuroscience, and I am a resident of Kula. A family friend of mine on Maui was fortunate to be diagnosed with dementia fairly early, allowing them to pursue treatments and lifestyle changes that may extend their independence. But for many, especially those diagnosed late, the options are far more limited.

I am testifying in strong support of HB1597 that would establish an Alzheimer's research unit at UH which would allow the University to receive federal research funding to conduct culturally relevant Alzheimer's research, participate in national research projects, and provide local access to clinical trials.

Hawai‘i is home to more than 31,000 residents living with Alzheimer’s disease, and this number is expected to grow as our population ages. Yet despite the increasing need, our state currently lacks a coordinated research structure to better understand dementia, improve early detection, and expand access to new treatments and clinical trials. Families across Hawai‘i, especially those caring for loved ones diagnosed at younger ages or experiencing rapid decline, often struggle to find answers or research opportunities close to home.

The Dementia Research Unit (DRU) would help fill this gap by creating a centralized hub at the University of Hawai‘i dedicated to dementia research, collaboration, and community support. Establishing the DRU is the first step Hawai‘i needs to eventually qualify for major federal Alzheimer’s research funding and to bring more clinical trials and scientific resources to our state. This will ensure that Hawai‘i’s diverse communities, including Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations who face higher dementia risks, are included in research that reflects their unique needs.

I respectfully urge you to support this important bill so that Hawai‘i can build the research capacity needed to better understand dementia, improve care, and bring new hope and new resources to families across our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,  
Mansa Devaki

**HB-1597**

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 10:50:27 AM  
Testimony for HED on 2/4/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lori McCarney	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Testimony on HB1597****RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH**

**Wednesday, February 4, 2026, 2:00 PM**

**Conference Room 309 & Videoconference**

**State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street**

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the committee,

My name is Lori McCarney of Honolulu. I am testifying in strong support of HB1597 that would establish an Alzheimer's research unit at UH which would allow the University to receive federal research funding to conduct culturally relevant Alzheimer's research, participate in national research projects, and provide local access to clinical trials.

Hawai‘i is home to more than 31,000 residents living with Alzheimer’s disease, and this number is expected to grow as our population ages. Yet despite the increasing need, our state currently lacks a coordinated research structure to better understand dementia, improve early detection, and expand access to new treatments and clinical trials. Families across Hawai‘i, especially those caring for loved ones diagnosed at younger ages or experiencing rapid decline, often struggle to find answers or research opportunities close to home.

The Dementia Research Unit (DRU) would help fill this gap by creating a centralized hub at the University of Hawai‘i dedicated to dementia research, collaboration, and community support. Establishing the DRU is the first step Hawai‘i needs to eventually qualify for major federal

Alzheimer's research funding and to bring more clinical trials and scientific resources to our state. This will ensure that Hawai'i's diverse communities, including Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations who face higher dementia risks, are included in research that reflects their unique needs.

I respectfully urge you to support this important bill so that Hawai'i can build the research capacity needed to better understand dementia, improve care, and bring new hope and new resources to families across our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Lori L McCarney

## **Testimony on HB1597**

### **RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH**

**Wednesday, February 4, 2026, 2:00 PM**

**Conference Room 309 & Videoconference**

**State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street**

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the committee,

My name is Barbara Black and I live in Ninole on the Big Island. I am testifying to strongly support HB1597 that would establish an Alzheimer's and related dementias research unit at the University of Hawaii which would allow the University to receive federal research funding to conduct culturally relevant dementia research, participate in national research projects, and provide local access to clinical trials.

My spouse, Peter, is living with Alzheimer's and I am his caretaker. I think the establishment of an Alzheimer's research unit at UH would be incredibly useful, especially to those living with Alzheimer's and their caregivers since they could then have local access to clinical trials and research studies. Culturally relevant Alzheimer's research is much needed in our culturally rich and very diverse state.

Hawai'i is home to more than 31,000 residents living with Alzheimer's disease, and this number is expected to grow as our population ages. Yet despite the increasing need, our state currently lacks a coordinated research structure to better understand dementia, improve early detection, and expand access to new treatments and clinical trials. Families across Hawai'i, especially those caring for loved ones diagnosed at younger ages or experiencing rapid decline, often struggle to find answers or research opportunities close to home.

The proposed research unit would help fill this gap by creating a centralized hub at the University of Hawai'i dedicated to dementia research, collaboration, and community support. Establishing this Unit is the first step Hawai'i needs to eventually qualify for major federal Alzheimer's research funding and to bring more clinical trials and scientific resources to our state. This will ensure that Hawai'i's diverse communities, including Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations who face higher dementia risks, are included in research that reflects their unique needs.

I respectfully urge you to support this important bill so that Hawai'i can build the research capacity needed to better understand dementia of all kinds, improve care, and bring new hope and new resources to families across our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,  
Barbara Black

## **Testimony on HB1597**

### **RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH**

**Wednesday, February 4, 2026, 2:00 PM**

**Conference Room 309 & Videoconference**

**State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street**

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the committee,

My name is Peter Black and I live in Ninole on the Big Island. I am testifying to strongly support HB1597 that would establish an Alzheimer's and related dementias research unit at UH which would allow the University to receive federal research funding to conduct culturally relevant dementia research, participate in national research projects, and provide local access to clinical trials.

I live with Alzheimer's and my wife, Barbara, is my caretaker. I think the establishment of an Alzheimer's research unit at UH would be incredibly useful, especially to those living with Alzheimer's and their caregivers since they could then have local access to clinical trials and research studies. Culturally relevant Alzheimer's research is much needed in our culturally rich and very diverse state.

Hawai'i is home to more than 31,000 residents living with Alzheimer's disease, and this number is expected to grow as our population ages. Yet despite the increasing need, our state currently lacks a coordinated research structure to better understand dementia, improve early detection, and expand access to new treatments and clinical trials. Families across Hawai'i, especially those caring for loved ones diagnosed at younger ages or experiencing rapid decline, often struggle to find answers or research opportunities close to home.

The proposed research unit would help fill this gap by creating a centralized hub at the University of Hawai'i dedicated to dementia research, collaboration, and community support. Establishing this Unit is the first step Hawai'i needs to eventually qualify for major federal Alzheimer's research funding and to bring more clinical trials and scientific resources to our state. This will ensure that Hawai'i's diverse communities, including Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations who face higher dementia risks, are included in research that reflects their unique needs.

I respectfully urge you to support this important bill so that Hawai'i can build the research capacity needed to better understand dementia of all kinds, improve care, and bring new hope and new resources to families across our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,  
Peter Black

**Testimony on HB1597**  
**RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH**  
**Wednesday, February 4, 2026, 2:00 PM**  
**Conference Room 309 & Videoconference**  
**State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street**

Dear Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the committee,

My name is Calvin Hara and I live in Kaimuki. I am in support of HB 1597. During my thirty-year career in long term care, I have seen many people with Alzheimer's disease along with their family caregivers. I have been a caregiver myself for loved ones. As we know, Alzheimer's disease is a difficult disease and there is no cure.

HB1597 would establish an Alzheimer's research unit at UH which would allow the University to receive federal research funding to conduct culturally relevant Alzheimer's research, participate in national research projects, and provide local access to clinical trials.

The Dementia Research Unit (DRU) will establish the groundwork for dementia research, collaboration, and community support. Establishing the DRU is the first step Hawai'i needs to eventually qualify for major federal Alzheimer's research funding and to bring more clinical trials and scientific resources to our state. This will ensure that Hawai'i's diverse communities, including Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations who face higher dementia risks, are included in research that reflects their unique needs.

I call upon your support of HB 1597 to support our 100,000 residents affected by Alzheimer's disease.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Calvin Hara

**HB-1597**

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 7:29:14 PM  
Testimony for HED on 2/4/2026 2:00:00 PM

**LATE**

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brian Seabaugh	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the committee,

My name is Brian Seabaugh, and I live in Kailua. I had a grandmother pass away from dementia and am currently a caregiver for a father and two aunties with Alzheimers. I am testifying in strong support of HB1597 that would establish an Alzheimer's research unit at UH which would allow the University to receive federal research funding to conduct culturally relevant Alzheimer's research, participate in national research projects, and provide local access to clinical trials.

Hawai‘i is home to more than 31,000 residents living with Alzheimer’s disease, and this number is expected to grow as our population ages. Yet despite the increasing need, our state currently lacks a coordinated research structure to better understand dementia, improve early detection, and expand access to new treatments and clinical trials. Families across Hawai‘i, especially those caring for loved ones diagnosed at younger ages or experiencing rapid decline, often struggle to find answers or research opportunities close to home.

The Dementia Research Unit (DRU) would help fill this gap by creating a centralized hub at the University of Hawai‘i dedicated to dementia research, collaboration, and community support. Establishing the DRU is the first step Hawai‘i needs to eventually qualify for major federal Alzheimer’s research funding and to bring more clinical trials and scientific resources to our state. This will ensure that Hawai‘i’s diverse communities, including Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations who face higher dementia risks, are included in research that reflects their unique needs.

I respectfully urge you to support this important bill so that Hawai‘i can build the research capacity needed to better understand dementia, improve care, and bring new hope and new resources to families across our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Brian Seabaugh

**HB-1597**

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 10:09:54 PM  
Testimony for HED on 2/4/2026 2:00:00 PM

**LATE**

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stacy Kilty	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

## Testimony on HB1597

### Relating to Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Research

**Wednesday, February 4, 2026 | 2:00 PM**  
**Conference Room 309 & Videoconference**  
**State Capitol**

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the committee,

My name is Stacy Kilty, and I live in Kailua, Hawai'i. I am testifying in strong support of **HB1597**, which would establish an Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Research Unit at the University of Hawai'i, enabling the University to receive federal research funding, conduct culturally relevant research, participate in national research efforts, and expand local access to clinical trials.

Dementia has had a profound impact on my family. Both of my parents were diagnosed in their late 80s—my father with Lewy body dementia and my mother with dementia—and both passed away within two years of diagnosis. The speed of their decline underscored how limited our understanding and treatment options remain, and how difficult it can be for families to find clear answers, timely interventions, or opportunities to participate in research that might improve outcomes for others.

As a family, we faced challenges navigating evolving diagnoses, qualifying for appropriate treatment, and understanding what options—if any—were available. For many families in Hawai'i, these challenges are compounded by geography and the absence of local research infrastructure. Access to clinical trials and emerging therapies often requires travel to the continent, which is not feasible for most patients or caregivers.

Hawai'i is home to more than 31,000 residents living with Alzheimer's disease, and that number is expected to grow significantly as our population ages. Yet our state lacks a coordinated research structure to advance early detection, improve treatment pathways, and ensure that our diverse communities are represented in dementia research. Families caring for loved ones experiencing rapid cognitive decline are often left without answers or access to innovative care close to home.

The proposed **Dementia Research Unit (DRU)** would begin to address this gap by creating a centralized hub at the University of Hawai‘i dedicated to dementia research, collaboration, and community engagement. Establishing the DRU is a critical first step toward qualifying Hawai‘i for major federal Alzheimer’s research funding and bringing clinical trials and scientific resources to our state. This investment is especially important to ensure that Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations—who face higher risks of dementia—are included in research that reflects cultural context and lived experience.

HB1597 represents an important commitment to building research capacity, improving care, and offering hope to families across Hawai‘i. I respectfully urge you to support this bill so that our state can better understand dementia, expand access to emerging treatments, and improve outcomes for current and future generations.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,  
Stacy

**HB-1597**

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 9:09:53 AM  
Testimony for HED on 2/4/2026 2:00:00 PM

**LATE**

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kenneth Hamada	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I support HB 1597 in regards to establishing an Alzheimer's disease and related dementias research unit at the University of Hawai'i. I feel that the research conducted will be helpful in understanding the specific ethnic, cultural, and environmental characteristics of people in Hawai'i as well as the Pacific region as a whole. Supporting this funding will also be a crucial step towards qualifying for a National Institute on Aging (NIA) designated Alzheimer's Disease Research Center (ADRC) which will be increase the research opportunities to better meet the needs of Hawai'i residents with Alzheimer's.

As someone who is a care giver to my grandmother with Alzheimer's, I feel it is important to have public outreach programs and initiatives as well as further research to understand Alzheimer's to improve care for those with the disease in our community. Establishing this unit will combine interdisciplinary fields of studies such as medicine, public health, and social sciences to foster tailored research and information on Alzheimer's disease. This bill will be a positive step towards helping 31,000 current people in our state affected by Alzheimer's and dementia as well as thousands of more in the future.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,

Kenneth Hamada

**HB-1597**

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 10:52:25 AM  
Testimony for HED on 2/4/2026 2:00:00 PM

**LATE**

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Liliana Perrine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee. My name is Liliana Perrine and I strongly support HB1597 that will increase funding and establish two additional positions for the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Research Center at the University of Hawai'i.

As a granddaughter who has lost two grandparents from Alzheimer's and other dementias, I strongly implore the committee to consider the families the research at UH could benefit. Children can grow up with grandparents who remember who they are, and those children will be able to remember the grandchildren they'll have one day. I want to remember the people I love and why I love them, this research can ensure that.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope you will decide to support HB1597.