



**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**
KA 'OIHANA HO'OMOHALA PĀ'OIHANA, 'IMI WAIWAI
A HO'OMĀKA'IKA'I

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Statement of
JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA
Director
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Tuesday, February 3, 2026
1:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 229

In consideration of
SB2259

**RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
AND TOURISM**

Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai and members of the Committee. The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) offers comments on SB2259 which establishes Hawai'i Dementia Initiative Business Recognition Program within the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism, to promote dementia awareness and create a more supportive environment for individuals living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

We respectfully offer the following comments:

- This Program should align with existing statewide dementia initiatives and programs, including geriatric workforce training partnerships. This avoids fragmentation and duplication.
- Dementia training, dementia capable workforce development, and caregiver support are core aging services functions, not economic development functions.

- DBEDT does not have clinical, gerontological, or dementia training expertise to carry out aspects of this bill.
- DBEDT does not have relationships with culturally grounded elderly care providers, community health workers, and kupuna serving organizations - critical for Hawai‘i’s diverse population.

DBEDT, however, could assist and support with:

- Outreach to the business community
- Promotion of certified businesses

DBEDT estimates that the cost to develop and implement a dementia training program would cost approximately \$90,000.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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



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Testimony COMMENTING on SB2259 RELATING TO DEMENTIA

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair

Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair

Testimony of Caroline Cadirao
Director, Executive Office on Aging
Attached Agency to the Department of Health

Hearing: Tuesday, February 3, 2026, 1:00 P.M.

Conference Room: 229

- 1 **EOA Position:** The Executive Office on Aging (EOA), an attached agency to the Department of Health (DOH) appreciates the intent of this measure and offers comments.
- 2 **Fiscal Implications:** Appropriates funds to the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT) for FY2026-2027 to establish and administer the Hawai'i Dementia Initiative Business Recognition Program.
- 3 **Purpose:** This measure establishes a business recognition program within the DBEDT to promote dementia-friendly businesses, empowering businesses to better serve and support customers while creating a dementia-capable workforce. Businesses that complete the one-hour training will receive recognition and visibility through badges, decals, and listings on the department's website.

1 Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia affect not only individuals and families
2 but also Hawai'i's businesses, workforce, and tourism industry. Establishing a dementia-friendly
3 business recognition program will help create a more inclusive environment, improve customer
4 service, and support caregivers, while positioning Hawai'i as a leader in community and
5 economic development. By promoting awareness and training within the business community,
6 this initiative strengthens our economy and demonstrates that dementia is not just a health
7 issue—it is a shared responsibility that impacts the entire state. Additionally, this initiative aligns
8 with the Hawai'i 2035: State Strategic Plan on Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias and
9 responds to priorities identified by stakeholders during the implementation process. While EOA
10 does not have the business expertise, we affirm that DBEDT has the business relationships,
11 expertise, strategic leadership, and experience in business promotion and recognition to
12 administer a successful program.

13 If the measure is adopted, EOA can support DBEDT by 1) providing a Speaker's Bureau
14 listing of approved organizations that provide dementia training for employees and 2) business
15 recognition by providing images of the Hawai'i Dementia Initiative files for use in badges,
16 decals, or stickers, indicating a business has met dementia-friendly certification requirements.

17 **Recommendations:** EOA appreciates the intent of this measure and to increase the feasibility of
18 the program provides this alternative language on page 2, line 13-16 in Section 2. (c),
19 "Businesses that apply shall receive a list of approved organizations that provide dementia
20 training for employees. All current [At least 85%] of employees shall complete a one-hour
21 training session to qualify the business as dementia-friendly."
22 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Testimony to the Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism
Tuesday, February 3, 1:00 PM, Room 229 and Videoconference
RE: SB2259 – RELATING TO RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM

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*

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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

Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committees:

My name is Coby Chock, and I am testifying on behalf of the Alzheimer's Association, Hawai'i Chapter. We **strongly support** SB2259, Relating to the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism, with one suggested amendment.

The Alzheimer's Association Hawai'i Chapter is dedicated to supporting individuals and families affected by Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. We understand the critical importance of accessibility, patience, and understanding in business and customer service settings for people living with Alzheimer's and related dementias, as well as their caregivers in our community.

Currently, approximately 31,200 people in Hawai'i are living with Alzheimer's disease, supported by nearly 60,000 unpaid caregivers, and these numbers are expected to grow significantly in the coming years. This reality intersects directly with Hawai'i's tourism and service industries, which serve both residents and visitors from around the world.

SB2259 provides meaningful benefits to Hawai'i's tourism economy and community, including the following:

- **Enhances economic growth while improving the social environment in the Hawai'i tourism industry** - As dementia prevalence continues to rise, businesses increasingly interact with customers who may experience memory loss, confusion, or communication challenges. This includes visitors traveling to Hawai'i while living with dementia or caring for a loved one who does. By encouraging dementia-friendly training, this bill helps businesses create more inclusive, welcoming environments—improving customer satisfaction, reducing misunderstandings, and strengthening Hawai'i's reputation as a compassionate and accessible destination.
- **Low cost of implementation with high positive impact** - The implementation of this bill would require little to no cost. Proposed dementia training can be provided at no cost by the Alzheimer's Association and potentially other nonprofit partners in the brain health space. Trainings can be tailored to specific business types and focus on practical, relevant best practices. With approximately 62,000 unpaid caregivers in Hawai'i providing more than 19 million hours of care annually, creating informed and supportive public spaces benefits not only individuals living with dementia, but also their families and caregivers.
- **Increases trust and confidence between businesses and the community and tourism industry** - Dementia training helps employees feel prepared, confident, and empowered to respond appropriately when customers need extra assistance. This fosters trust, reduces stress for both workers and consumers, and strengthens relationships between businesses and the communities they serve—ultimately benefiting Hawai'i's workforce and visitors alike.

Suggested amendment:

Add: (g) The department may collaborate with the executive office on aging for the implementation and management of the program, including but not limited to creating or reviewing the list of organizations eligible to provide training and sharing designs.

For these reasons, the Alzheimer's Association Hawai'i Chapter strongly supports SB2259 and respectfully urges your favorable consideration of this measure.

Mahalo for your consideration. Please contact Coby Chock at 808-451-3410 or ckchock@alz.org with any questions.

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

RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM.

**Tuesday, February 3rd 1:00pm
Conference Room & Videoconference CR 229
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street**

Aloha Senator DeCoite and Members of the Committee,

My name is Hayden Cobb, and I am an orphan because of what dementia has done to my family. My dad passed away from Alzheimer's disease at the age of 65 after struggling with it for five long hard years. His death led to my mom passing away from liver cancer due to the mistreatment and negative stigma that was placed on our family by her workplace and the different business that we would bring my dad to. The lack of knowledge that my parents' workplace and the different businesses my family came across had on dementia care created an unsafe environment for my family. This was caused by the workers of these businesses mistreating my family since they had no understanding of how harmful this disease is. This is why I wholeheartedly am in full support of SB 2259, which is a bill that aims to implement dementia training programs within the business community.

The implementation of this bill has the ability to help boost workforce retention and morale while removing a negative stigma with Aloha for consumers in the Hawai'i Tourism Industry that are impacted by dementia. Dementia care training is what builds a strong sustainable foundation for workers within the business community by providing them the proper knowledge on how to work with those living with dementia which is a demographic that becomes more prevalent and detrimental for the population of Hawai'i. For those who were living with the disease like my dad and who were caregivers like my mom this bill has the ability to remove the negative stigma that my family suffered through and many other families by helping preserve precious memories with loved ones.

On behalf of my lost loved ones and those impacted by dementia, thank you for allowing the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

Mahalo,

Hayden Cobb

LATE

SB-2259

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 8:47:45 AM
Testimony for EDT on 2/3/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tani Salazar	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee,

Mahalo for your leadership in hearing this business recognition bill. I'm a social worker in Hawai'i, testifying as an individual, in strong support for SB 2259. Three of my grandparents had dementia and a program like this would've ensured that they could interact in the community with businesses who were dementia friendly. It's a growing issue in the world, and especially in our state with the highest life expectancy. Hawai'i businesses can lead the way with this program at DBEDT.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.