



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
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WRITTEN
TESTIMONY ONLY

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB1550 HD2 SD1
RELATING TO HEALTH

SENATOR KARL RHOADS, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Hearing Date: April 1, 2026 @ 10:40 pm

Room Number: 016

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'ŌKELE

JOHN C. (JACK) LEWIN, MD
ADMINISTRATOR

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March 31, 2026

LATE

TO: SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, 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-HD2-SD1 -- RELATING TO HEALTH**

HEARING: Wednesday, April 1, 2026 @ 10:40 am; Conference Room 016

POSITION: SUPPORT with COMMENTS

Testimony:

SHPDA strongly supports HB 1550-HD2-SD1, 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-HD2-SD1. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

■ -- Jack Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA



KUMUKAHI

HEALTH + WELLNESS

Board of Directors March 30, 2026

Lee-Ann Heely, DM
President

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and members of the committee

Nicholas VandenRaadt, DNP FNP
Vice President

I support HB 1550, HD 2 SD1, 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.

Keith Brown, MBA
Treasurer

Elena Cabatu, MBA
Secretary

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.

Martin Rathbun

Marina Padilla, APRN-Rx

Chief Executive Officer

Peter Tuiolosega Silva

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.

Respectfully,

Peter T. Silva
Chief Executive Officer

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A NEW DAY FOR H.I.H.A.F.

HB-1550-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 11:32:38 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/1/2026 10:40:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aaron Ruddick	Testifying for Hep Free Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and members of the committee

Hep Free Hawaii **supports** HB 1550, HD 2 SD1, 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.



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

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1550, HD 2, SD 1

TO: Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and JDC Committee

FROM: Nikos Leverenz, DPFH Board President

DATE: April 1, 2026 (10:40 A.M.)

Drug Policy Forum of Hawai'i (DPFH) **supports** HB 1550, HD 2, SD 1, which excludes drug testing products from the definition of drug paraphernalia under the state's Uniform Controlled Substances Act.

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-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 12:09:52 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/1/2026 10:40:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dajon Lee Francisco	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 1550, HD 2 SD1, which would remove drug testing supplies from the definition of drug paraphernalia under the state’s Uniform Controlled Substances Act. At the same time, a more comprehensive reform—such as that proposed in HB 1549—would be a stronger and more effective approach than creating yet another narrow exception within a law that continues to produce serious unintended harms.

Paraphernalia laws unnecessarily criminalize tools and materials that are essential for overdose prevention and broader harm reduction efforts. They also pose risks to individual and public health by increasing the likelihood of disease transmission and drawing people into prolonged involvement with the criminal legal system.

Even so, explicitly exempting drug testing equipment from the current statute is a meaningful, if modest, step forward. Decriminalizing fentanyl test strips alone, however, is insufficient to address the evolving and increasingly dangerous realities of the illicit drug supply.

HB-1550-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 12:28:31 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/1/2026 10:40:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vanessa Murthy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and members of the committee.

I **support** HB 1550, HD 2 SD1, 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.

HB-1550-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 1:24:13 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/1/2026 10:40:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Thaddeus Pham	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and JDC Committee members,

As a local resident concerned with public safety, I **strongly support HB 1550, HD 2 SD1**, which excludes drug testing products from the definition of drug paraphernalia under the state's Uniform Controlled Substances Act.

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.

Please pass HB1550 HD2 SD1.

Mahalo,

Thaddeus Pham

HB-1550-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 2:17:33 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/1/2026 10:40:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Allison Shiozaki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and members of the committee,

My name is Allison Shiozaki. I work on Hawaii Island in the realm of health and harm reduction services. I also am a student of substance use disorder and the health needs of our island, what is effective and what is not. I **support** HB 1550, HD 2 SD1, 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.

Mahalo for your time.

Sincerely,

Allison Shiozaki

HB-1550-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 10:30:15 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/1/2026 10:40:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair and Committee Members:

I am writing in support of **HB 1550, HD 2, SD 1, Relating to Health**, which excludes drug testing products from the definition of drug paraphernalia under the state’s Uniform Controlled Substances Act.

The failed War on Drugs continues to exist in Hawai’i. Paraphernalia laws criminalizes equipment and supplies that support the provision of overdose prevention and harm reduction services. These dangerous laws also create risks to individual health - increasing the likelihood of viral transmission but also further entangling people in the criminal legal system.

Please pass this sensible harm reduction legislation. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Carrie Ann Shirota, Esq.

Honolulu, Hawai’i