



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

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**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
**KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO**  
**EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON AGING**  
NO. 1 CAPITOL DISTRICT  
250 SOUTH HOTEL STREET, SUITE 406  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-2831

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB1976 HD1**  
**RELATING TO DEMENTIA**

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
Rep. Chris Todd, Chair  
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

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

Hearing: Wednesday, March 4, 2026, 10:00 A.M. Conference Room: 308

- 1 **EOA Position:** The DOH Executive Office on Aging (EOA), supports HB1976 HD1.
- 2 **Purpose:** This measure mandates dementia-specific training annually for all first responders and
- 3 for EOA to review and recommend curricula focused on recognizing the signs of Alzheimer's
- 4 and related dementias. Our community, including first responders, needs the situational
- 5 awareness and skills necessary to effectively interact with individuals who may have
- 6 Alzheimer's disease or related dementias.
- 7 **Recommendations:** EOA supports this measure to ensure Hawai'i's first responders receive
- 8 essential dementia training. We will collaborate with the relevant departments to recommend
- 9 appropriate training resources. EOA respectfully defers to the Hawai'i Emergency Management
- 10 Agency, Fire Departments, and the Law Enforcement Standards Board on implementation.
- 11 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



# DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

Ka 'Oihana Ho'oka'a'ike no ka Po'e Kīnānā

1010 Richards Street, Rm. 118 • Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813  
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V) • Fax (808) 586-8129 • (808) 204-2466 (VP)

March 4, 2026

## TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

### House Bill 1976 House Draft 1 – Relating to Dementia

The Disability and Communication Access Board supports House Bill 1976 House Draft 1 - Relating to Dementia. This bill requires the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency, fire chiefs, Law Enforcement Standards Board, and Department of Health to provide or require the provision of at least one hour of dementia-specific training for first responders, including law enforcement officers, fire first responders, and emergency medical services personnel. It requires the Executive Office on Aging to take certain steps when reviewing and recommending dementia-specific training curricula. It is effective 7/1/3000.

When first responders do not recognize that a person has dementia and may struggle to understand or follow instructions, routine encounters can quickly become confusing or confrontational. These misunderstandings often lead to unnecessary escalation. Providing specialized training in dementia awareness and communication equips responders to interactions that are supportive for the safety and health of individuals with disabilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

KRISTINE PAGANO  
Acting Executive Director

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**LAW ENFORCEMENT STANDARDS BOARD**  
KALANIMOKU BUILDING  
1151 PUNCHBOWL STREET, #111B  
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RADE VANIC

**VICTOR R. MCCRAW**  
ADMINISTRATOR

March 4, 2026

**RE: TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HB 1976, HD1  
RELATING TO DEMENTIA**

TO:

**House Committee on Finance**

Rep. Chris Todd, Chair

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

FROM:

Victor McCraw

Administrator, Hawai'i Law Enforcement Standards Board

**Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:**

As the Administrator of the Hawai'i Law Enforcement Standards Board (LESB or Board), and on behalf of the Board, I submit this testimony in firm opposition to House Bill 1976, HD1. The Board appreciates the intent of this bill and recognizes the genuine concerns that motivated this legislation. Alzheimer's disease and related dementias present real and growing challenges across Hawai'i's communities, for those living with the disease, their families, and the first responders who encounter them. The Board has no disagreement with the principle that law enforcement officers benefit from broad and ongoing professional development; however, it is the Board's primary and exclusive statutory authority and duty to "*establish minimum criminal justice curriculum requirements for basic, specialized, and in-service courses and programs for schools operated by or for the State or a county for the specific purpose of training law enforcement officers*" and to "*establish and require participation in continuing education programs for law enforcement officers*". See HRS §139-3(4) and (8), respectively.

**This Bill Undermines the Board’s Statutory Authority**

HB1976, HD1 usurps the Board’s statutory duties noted above by encoding a specific training topic, a minimum training duration, and a curriculum source pathway directly into statute, with curriculum oversight assigned to the Executive Office on Aging, an agency with no law enforcement expertise, no role in officer certification, and no accountability under chapter 139, HRS. There is no requirement that the curriculum be reviewed and approved by the Board, delivered by a Board-certified instructor, or evaluated for measurable law enforcement learning outcomes. Any training that does not go through the Board’s approval process would not qualify as required training under the Board’s rules.

HRS §139-3(5) directs the Board to “*consult and cooperate with the counties, agencies of the State, other governmental agencies, universities, colleges, and other institutions concerning the development of law enforcement officer training schools and programs of criminal justice instruction.*” That provision is not intended as a mechanism by which outside non-law enforcement agencies may unilaterally dictate training content, duration, or curriculum sources to the Board. The Board values cooperation as it is legitimately contemplated by chapter 139, HRS. That means when an agency perceives a training need, it brings that concern to the Board, and the Board evaluates how the subject matter best fits within established parameters, existing curriculum, and current rulemaking priorities. That process is especially critical now, as the Board works to finalize comprehensive training requirements for law enforcement officers statewide. Introducing a legislative mandate without any notification to, or engagement with, the Board is not only disruptive to the Board’s process, but it also clearly usurps the Board’s authority and autonomy in regulating the profession of policing in Hawai’i.

***The LESB would be happy to work with the Executive Office on Aging and other stakeholders in developing a curriculum that would accomplish the purpose of HB1976, HD1 as it relates to law enforcement.*** A structured needs assessment, conducted with the participation of law enforcement administrators, training officers, and relevant health and aging experts, would produce a far more effective and durable outcome than a statutory mandate imposed without that foundation. The Board is prepared to lead that process and bring its statutory authority, expertise, and institutional capacity to work on a goal it shares: ensuring that Hawai’i’s law enforcement officers are equipped to serve every member of their communities with competence and care.

### **There Is No Such Thing as “No Cost” Training**

Supportive testimony submitted on this bill, while heartfelt and reflecting genuine personal experience, is primarily anecdotal. The experiences of caregivers, family members, and advocates, however compelling as human accounts, do not constitute evidence of systemic or documented systematic law enforcement failures, or proof that a one-hour annual training would have changed those outcomes. The Board does not dismiss those experiences; it recognizes that they cannot substitute for the kind of rigorous, data-driven needs assessment that should precede a statutory training mandate of this magnitude.

Proponents of this bill have repeatedly characterized the required training as available “at no cost,” pointing to free online offerings from the Alzheimer’s Association. The Board challenges that framing. The cost of delivering training to law enforcement officers is never limited to the price of the curriculum itself. Every hour an officer spends in mandated training is an hour of compensated duty time. Across the law enforcement agencies of this State, a one-hour annual training requirement translates directly into personnel costs: salary, benefits, overtime for coverage, scheduling coordination, recordkeeping, and supervisory oversight to verify compliance. Agencies may also incur costs related to technology access, reporting infrastructure, and integration of the training into existing in-service programs. The absence of a curriculum licensing fee does not make training free. That characterization understates the actual fiscal impact on departments operating under constrained budgets and staffing challenges.

The most substantive proof of concept cited in support of this bill is an in-person training partnership between the Alzheimer’s Association and the Honolulu Police Department, conducted voluntarily for new recruits. That program exists because an individual law enforcement agency chose to participate on its own terms, in a limited manner, and without a mechanism to measure local effectiveness. HB1976, HD1 would replace that model with a mandatory annual requirement for all current police officers statewide, with curriculum determined by an agency that has no law enforcement expertise and no role in officer certification, and no ongoing responsibility for measurable training-related results. The Board also notes, as observed in testimony submitted by the Hawai’i Emergency Management Agency at both prior hearings on this bill, that assigning training mandates to agencies without the relevant operational expertise or personnel creates accountability gaps and implementation confusion. That concern applies with equal force to law enforcement: effective, lasting training reform in this discipline requires the engagement of the institutions that govern it.

### **The Board's Current Plan Addresses HB1976, HD1's Concerns**

Under the Board's draft administrative rules, currently pending adoption, new officers would complete a proposed minimum of 720 hours of basic academy training, including 40 hours of crisis intervention and mental health response and 24 hours of de-escalation and use of force alternatives. These subjects would be reinforced through Board-approved in-service training as part of a comprehensive, sequenced certification program, not as an isolated, standalone requirement imposed outside that structure. Certified officers would complete a proposed 48 hours of continuing education on a biennial basis, with crisis intervention and mental health response required as a component. Dementia recognition and response falls squarely within those existing competency areas. HB1976, HD1 does not fill a missing element in that framework. It interferes with the Board's ability to incorporate this subject matter appropriately into a comprehensive, professionally sound certification program by attempting to legislate at a level of operational detail that belongs in rule and curriculum, not in statute.

To put this in perspective, the Board's draft rules already propose 64 hours of crisis intervention, mental health response, and de-escalation training within a 720-hour basic academy program and require those subjects as components of a 48-hour biennial continuing education requirement. This bill seeks to dictate a single sixty-minute training requirement, representing between 0.14 and 2 percent of the training hours already proposed by the Board for these competency areas, and makes it state law. That level of micromanagement of the Board's autonomy in setting standards for police training is not only an overreach, but also inconsistent with the statutory framework the Legislature has already established.

### **Summary of Opposition**

For the reasons set forth in this testimony, the Law Enforcement Standards Board urges the Committee to hold HB1976, HD1. The bill encroaches on the Board's exclusive statutory authority over the training and certification of law enforcement officers as defined in HRS §139-1, and was introduced without any engagement with the Board. The Legislature has already established, through HRS §139-6 and §139-10, a framework that addresses training and competency in de-escalation, crisis intervention, mental health response, and use of force at the appropriate level of statutory generality, leaving operational specifics to the Board's rulemaking and curriculum process.

Victor McCraw, Administrator  
Hawaii Law Enforcement Standards Board  
TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HB 1976, HD1  
March 4, 2026  
Page 5

If the Committee chooses to advance this bill, the Board respectfully requests that all provisions implicating chapter 139, HRS, and the law enforcement officers subject to the Board's jurisdiction under HRS §139-1, be removed. Fire service, emergency medical services, and other first responder disciplines fall outside the Board's jurisdiction and are not affected by this request. Removing law enforcement from the bill's scope would preserve the Board's authority to address this subject matter through its established rulemaking process, on a timeline and in a manner consistent with its statutory authority.

The Law Enforcement Standards Board appreciates the opportunity to testify and welcomes further engagement on this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Victor McCraw', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Victor McCraw**  
Administrator  
Law Enforcement Standards Board



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[facebook.com/AARPHawaii](https://facebook.com/AARPHawaii)

**The State Legislature**  
**House Committee on Finance**  
**Wednesday, March 4, 2026**  
**Conference Room 308, 10:00 a.m.**

TO: The Honorable Chris Todd, Chair  
FROM: Keali'i S. López, State Director  
RE: Support for H.B. 1976, HD 1 Relating to Dementia

Aloha Chair Todd, 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 age 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 of House Bill 1976, HD1, which ensures that law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency medical services personnel have the practical skills needed to respond safely to dementia-related situations. Individuals living with dementia often display confusion, fear, or agitation—not resistance or intentional noncooperation. Proper training enables first responders to identify these behaviors, avoid unnecessary escalation, and support safer outcomes for both the individual and the responding team.

First responders regularly encounter individuals with dementia, often without the benefit of specialized training. HB 1976, HD1 provides them with tools that enhance safety, reduce stress, and improve decision-making during high-pressure incidents. People living with dementia experience disproportionately high rates of emergency department visits—many of which are avoidable with appropriate on-scene assessment and response. Dementia-specific training helps first responders determine when transport is necessary and when other care pathways are more appropriate, reducing strain on hospitals and improving outcomes for families.

With increased wildfire threats and emergency evacuation scenarios across Hawai'i, dementia training becomes essential. Individuals with dementia may not understand evacuation instructions or may resist leaving familiar surroundings. Equipping first responders with appropriate communication and safety strategies ensures better protection of vulnerable kūpuna during disasters.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 1976, HD1.



March 2, 2026

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tori Carapelho, and I am submitting testimony on behalf of Hear 4 Hope in **strong support of HB1976.**

Hear 4 Hope works with individuals and families impacted by hearing loss, and we are deeply aware of the growing body of research showing that untreated hearing loss is associated with an increased risk of cognitive decline and dementia. In many cases, individuals may be in the early stages of cognitive impairment without a formal diagnosis, yet begin to act out of character due to confusion, fear, or difficulty understanding what is happening around them.

In emergency or high-stress situations, these communication and cognitive challenges can easily be misunderstood as noncompliance, agitation, or inappropriate behavior. When this occurs, individuals may be treated harshly or unfairly, not because of intent, but because their condition is not recognized.

HB1976 takes an important and compassionate step by ensuring first responders receive dementia-specific training that supports recognition, communication, and de-escalation. This type of training helps protect the dignity and safety of individuals experiencing cognitive or communication challenges, while also supporting first responders in doing their jobs safely and effectively.

For these reasons, Hear 4 Hope supports HB1976 and appreciates the Legislature's attention to this growing public health and public safety issue.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tori Carapelho".

Tori Carapelho

Hear 4 Hope

## Testimony to the House Committee on Finance Wednesday, March 4, 10:00 AM, Room 308 and Videoconference

### RE: House Bill No. 1976 House Draft 1 – RELATING TO DEMENTIA

#### 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

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Coby Chock, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy for the Alzheimer's Association, and we strongly support HB1976 HD1 to require one hour of dementia-specific training annually for all first responders statewide.

Dementia is already part of first responders' day-to-day work and the risk is growing. Today, an estimated 31,200 Hawai'i residents aged 65+ live with Alzheimer's and this number is rising. People living with dementia have 1,248 emergency department visits per 1,000 persons annually, reflecting frequent encounters with police, EMS, and fire personnel. Up to 60 percent will wander at some point, often repeatedly, and can become lost, anxious, afraid, agitated, or aggressive. These realities create avoidable crises when responders have not been trained to recognize symptoms, communicate effectively, and de-escalate.

Hawai'i's first responders are also facing more frequent and intense wildfires and disaster evacuations. In these high-stress events, a person with dementia may not understand commands, resist evacuation, or become combative out of fear. A one-hour, evidence-based annual refresher gives responders practical tools to keep everyone safer.

HB1976 HD1 is practical, **no-cost**, and ready to implement. The bill directs the Executive Office on Aging (EOA) to review and recommend at least one free, one-hour training aligned with best practices, including recognition, assessment, communication, de-escalation, identifying abuse or neglect, caregiver engagement, disaster response, and safe return. Agencies that already provide similar training may continue their existing programs, while agencies without training have accessible options: the Alzheimer's Association offers a free one-hour online course for first responders, and our Hawai'i Chapter partners with the Honolulu Police Department to provide in-person dementia training for new recruits at no cost. This ensures statewide consistency without requiring new appropriations.

Implementation is straightforward:

- EOA publishes a vetted list that includes at least one no-cost option.
- Departments select from the list and deliver a minimum of one hour annually to all personnel.
- The bill sets clear timelines so implementation is reasonable while also ensuring training begins promptly, with completion of the first annual cycle in 2028.

Why this matters now: With more kūpuna living with dementia in our communities, first responders are the front line of safety. A missed diagnosis on a call can escalate quickly into injuries, restraints, or unnecessary transports. A short, standardized training improves recognition, reduces conflict, prevents avoidable ED visits, and supports faster safe reunification when someone wanders. It also protects responders by giving them proven strategies to manage behavior and communicate under stress.

HB1976 HD1 delivers immediate public safety benefits at no cost to departments, improves outcomes for families, and strengthens Hawai'i's disaster readiness. I respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB1976 HD1.

Mahalo for your consideration. Please contact Coby Chock at 808-451-3410 or [ckchock@alz.org](mailto:ckchock@alz.org) with any questions.

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



## HB1976 Dementia Training SB2867 for First Responders

People living with dementia can easily become lost, anxious, afraid, agitated, and aggressive



31,000 people aged 65 and older are living with Dementia



20,000+ people living with dementia live in their community



60% of people living with dementia will wonder at some point



1,248 ER visits per 1,000 living with dementia



BPSD effect up to 90% of people living with dementia



Increasing number and intensity of wildfires



Proposed training is free and includes understanding dementia, communication strategies, de-escalation techniques, public safety protocols, and basic tools for crisis management



**Testimony to the House Committee on Finance  
Wednesday, March 4, 2026; 10:00 a.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 308  
Via Videoconference**

**RE: HOUSE BILL NO. 1976, HOUSE DRAFT 1, RELATING TO DEMENTIA.**

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, 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. 1976, House Draft 1, RELATING TO DEMENTIA.

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 require annual dementia-specific training for all first responders in Hawaii and ensure that training content addresses: recognition, assessment, and communication; abuse and neglect identification; caregiver engagement; disaster response; and safe return.

The bill would take effect on July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion.

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.

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.**

**Testimony on House Bill No. 1976, House Draft 1**  
**Wednesday, March 4, 2026; 10:00 a.m.**  
**Page 2**

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 has worked closely with the Hawaii Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association on this issue. We are honored to partner with them 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@hawaiiipca.net](mailto:eabe@hawaiiipca.net).

**HB-1976-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 5:32:37 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/4/2026 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Rick Tabor	PABEA & Alzheimer's Association	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for hearing the HB1976 HD1 Bill.

I stand in strong support of the first responder training bill HB1976 HD1. Requiring the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency, fire chiefs, Law Enforcement Standards Board, and Department of Health to provide or require the provision of at least one hour of dementia-specific training for first responders, including law enforcement officers, fire first responders, and emergency medical services personnel. Requires the Executive Office on Aging to take certain steps when reviewing and recommending dementia-specific training curricula.

I am Rick Tabor, from Honolulu, HI, I humbly serve in a few nonprofit leadership roles. Today I testify on behalf of PABEA as their Legislative Committee Chair. In my positions, I testify that The Policy Advisory Board for Elder Affairs and Kūpuna Caucus and as an eight year Alzheimers Association Champion all of who stand in strong support of HB1976 HD1.

Hawai'i has more than 31,000 diagnosed residents living with Alzheimer's disease, many of our Kūpina live in their homes and communities.

As the Operations Manager at an Oahu in-home service program, and in my mental health professional role, as well as helping my mother, and our family assist my Alzheimer's diagnosed mother, who passed two years ago. In each of these roles, I have seen the good, not so good and oh-oh's that can happen when a First Responder encounters someone with Alzheimers issues.

Two thoughts;

1. My In-Home Program would never send an untrained Caregiver into a home to work with an Alzheimer's Client. It was mandatory for the Caregiver to complete the Dementia/Alzheimer's Training.
2. In my thirty years at Seattle Mental Health (now Sound), our agency helped develop and participated in the First Responder Crisis Response Trainings in King County. In Washington State, CIT is a mandatory 40-hour training for officers. This has been an incredible advancement in places that use this training.

As for my mother, she lived in a rural midwest town where family, friends, and good neighbors helped every day, with every incident. Professionals were untrained, over-worked, and grew

weary of her needs. Training and support for everyone would have helped. Hopefully, in time, we'll move past the barriers and become better informed. I appreciate everyone's willingness to learn, understand, contribute and participate. This Alzheimers journey is a challenging one. It'll take all of us, working together, to smooth out the bumps along the road. To me, from each perspective, I've experienced, so far, it's going to be important for us all to learn as much as we can, so we can respond as knowledgeable as possible to our folks living with Alzheimer's/dementia issues.

I appreciate your thoughtful consideration on this session's HB1976 HD1 bill, Requiring the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency, fire chiefs, Law Enforcement Standards Board, and Department of Health to provide or require the provision of at least one hour of dementia-specific training for first responders, including law enforcement officers, fire first responders, and emergency medical services personnel.

Your commitment to helping Hawai'i's Kūpuna and families is always appreciate.

Mahalo Nui Loa,

-Rick Tabor

**HB-1976-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 6:00:58 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/4/2026 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Louis Erteschik	Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This training would be very valuable to those who interact with these individuals, particularly so they don't mistake the symptoms for something else that could lead to very negative consequences.

HAWAII ALLIANCE FOR RETIRED AMERICANS  
An Affiliate of Alliance for Retired Americans\  
(AFL-CIO)

**STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF H.B. 1976, HD1**  
Relating to Dementia

Hearing: Tuesday, March 3, 2026; 2:00 p.m.  
Hawaii State Capitol, Conference Room 308  
Via Videoconference

House Committee on Finance  
Rep. Chris Todd, Chair  
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

The Hawaii Alliance for Retired Americans (HARA) **supports** H.B. 1976, HD1 which requires HIEMA, fire chiefs, Law Enforcement Standards Board, and Department of Health to provide or require the provision of at least one hour of dementia-specific training for first responders. The Executive Office on Aging will be tasked with reviewing and recommending dementia-specific training curricula that address recognition and signs of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

*HARA is an organization of senior organizations that represent some 16,000 retirees in Hawaii. HARA's affiliates include retired members of HGEA, HSTA, ILWU, UPW, Kokua Council, and the Hawaii Caregivers Coalition.*

Aging is a risk factor for dementia, and Hawaii's aging population is increasing at a rapid pace. Recognizing this, programs need to be in place to ensure that those living with dementia are addressed appropriately in emergency situations. Training first responders on how to assist those with Alzheimer's and related dementias will help to ensure that they are treated appropriately and avoid needless escalation of problems.

H.B. 1976, HD1 will mandate dementia-specific training for first responders. The cost should be minimal. The Alzheimer's Association already has free training resources available, but H.B. 1976, HD1 will require dementia-specific training be vetted by the State Executive Office on Aging to ensure that first responders receive proper training for their work in the field. EOA collaboration with the Alzheimer's Association will ensure the most appropriate training to keep our kupuna living with dementia safe and able to receive appropriate treatment.

The Hawaii Alliance for Retired Americans **supports H.B. 1976, HD1** and urges passage of this measure to require dementia-specific training for first responders.

Thank you for considering our testimony.

**HB-1976-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 8:41:39 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/4/2026 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tony S Vericella	Alzheimer's Caregiving & The Caregivers	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony on HB1976 HD1

RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

4th day, March, 2026, at 10:00 A.M.

Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tony Vericella, and I live primarily in Waimea on the Big Island. I've been the Caregiver to my wife Dana for seven plus years. Along the way, I discovered a new purpose: to support other Caregivers walking a similar path. That's why our non profit, Alzheimer's Caregiving & The Caregivers, which we launched two years ago this past September, exists today.

- On September 21, World Alzheimer's Day, Dana and I had been married 45 years.
- She's mostly in the late stages of this unrelenting disease:
- Severe disorientation to time and place
  
- No short-term memory
- Long-term memory fragments
- Loss of speech
- Difficulty standing or walking
- Loss of bladder/bowel control
- No longer recognizes family members
- Inability to survive without total daily care

We've made several key changes and additions to our physical environment to be better equipped to handle Dana's activities of daily life.

Our family has accepted that the Dana we knew would live on mostly in our memories. We wait for moments, even seconds, of recognition, of love, of reassurance that she is not suffering. And we plan – how do we take this pain, learn from it, and prepare others.

I am in strong support of HB1976 which would provide memory care across the state with an emphasis on providing access for individuals living on neighbor islands and rural areas.

Hawai'i is facing a growing dementia crisis. Today, more than 31,000 Hawai'i residents are living with Alzheimer's disease, and this number is expected to double by 2050 as our population ages. Many families, especially on neighbor islands and in rural communities, struggle to access timely diagnosis, care planning, or memory care services. This leads to delayed or missing treatment windows, avoidable emergencies, and significant emotional and financial strain.

The HANAI Memory Network offers a statewide solution by creating Dementia Care Specialists in every county and Memory Clinics on each neighbor island. This will help people get diagnosed earlier, connect families to resources, and bring memory care closer to home. Early detection and coordinated support can make a meaningful difference in quality of life for those living with dementia and for the caregivers who support them every day.

I respectfully urge you to support this legislation to ensure that all of Hawai'i's kūpuna, no matter where they live, have access to timely memory care, early diagnosis, and the support they need.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Tony Vericella

Founder & CEO

Alzheimer's Caregiving & The Caregivers

March 3, 2026

House Committee on Finance  
Chair Chris Todd  
Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi  
Members of the Committee

**Re: HB 1976 HD 1 – Relating to Dementia – SUPPORT**

Aloha kākou!

LeadingAge Pacific West is pleased to support House Bill 1976 HD 1 which revises training requirements for specified first responders to require one hour of dementia-specific training to assist in their interactions with individuals living with Alzheimer’s disease or related types of dementia.

LeadingAge Pacific West is a leading advocate for quality, mission-driven housing, care and services for older adults. Our nonprofit members include providers of affordable senior housing, residential care facilities for the elderly (assisted living), life plan communities, skilled nursing care, home and community-based services, home health and hospice care.

Currently, there are over 31,200 individuals in Hawaii living with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias, which accounts for 11.3% of adults over the age of 65<sup>1</sup>. In addition, Alzheimer’s disease is the 5th leading cause of death in Hawaii. HB 1976 HD 1 will provide first responders with the necessary information and tools to respond to situations involving individuals with cognitive diseases and allow them to better support those individuals and their families.

HB 1976 HD 1 is a small step toward supporting individuals living with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. For these reasons, LeadingAge Pacific West is pleased to support HB 1976 HD 1 and urges your support for this important measure.

Sincerely,  
Amber King  
Vice President, Legislative Affairs

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<sup>1</sup> State data provided by: [Alzheimer's Association](https://www.alz.org)

**RELATING TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE OF FINANCE**

**Wednesday, March 4th 10:00 am Conference Room & Videoconference 308  
Hawaii State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street**

Aloha 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 because she was a caregiver for such a long time it eventually took a toll on her mental health.. This is why I wholeheartedly am in full support of HB 1976 HD 1 . 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

**HB-1976-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 9:59:36 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/4/2026 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ivy Castellanos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony on HB1976 HD1

RELATING TO DEMENTIA

Wednesday, March 4, 10:00 AM

Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the committee,

My name is Ivy Castellanos and I live in Kaneohe. Both of my grandmothers lived with dementia - one with vascular dementia and the other with Alzheimer's. I am in strong support of HB1976 HD1 which would the establishment of dementia training for first responders across the state to ensure the safety of those living with Alzheimer's.

Hawai'i has more than 31,000 residents living with Alzheimer's disease, and many remain in their homes and communities. As dementia progresses, people may become confused, disoriented, frightened, or unable to communicate clearly. Six in ten people living with dementia will wander, often repeatedly, and may get lost even in familiar places. When first responders encounter someone with dementia who is scared or unable to understand commands, situations can escalate quickly.

At the same time, Hawai'i's first responders are dealing with increasing medical emergencies, natural disasters, and more frequent wildfires, all of which require rapid action and clear communication. A person with dementia may not respond in expected ways during an evacuation, a traffic stop, or a medical call, placing both the individual and responders at risk.

This bill simply requires one hour of dementia-specific training each year for first responders. The Alzheimer's Association already provides this training at no cost, and it covers communication techniques, de-escalation strategies, recognizing signs of dementia, and how to safely assist a person who is lost or distressed. This short training can prevent injuries, reduce unnecessary hospitalizations, and help responders bring people home safely.

I respectfully urge you to support this bill so that Hawai'i's first responders have the tools they need to interact safely and effectively with people living with dementia, and so families can feel more confident that their loved ones will be treated with understanding and care during an emergency.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Warm regards,

Ivy Castellanos

**HB-1976-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 10:00:40 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/4/2026 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Barbara J. Service	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this bill to mandate dementia training for first responders.

TheAlzheimer's Association offers such training via Zoom, one hour, no cost.

Mahalo for allowing me to testify.

Barbara J. Service. MSW

Child Welfare Services supervisor (ret.)

Passionate Kupuna advocate

**HB-1976-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 1:04:47 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/4/2026 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
lynne matusow	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This is a very important bill. At least two very close friends of mine have recently been diagnosed with dementia. One is still functioning but in a facility. The other is unable to care for herself. She lost 50 pounds in a year because she forgot to eat. None of her clothes fit. Her grown children, who live on the mainland, had intended for her to move there. She was going to travel alone and at the last minute cancelled the trip last summer. Then, in December one of the children came to visit and she agreed to travel with him. At the last minute she backed out. In February a daughter came to visit. When the mother was told she would be traveling to the mainland with her to move in with another child she balked. End result, one of the sons flew in to help the daughter. They had safety in numbers and she flew out with them the other day. This is just one example of what people with dementia are experiencing. This training is important. It will undoubtedly save lives.

We are living longer than previous generations. Thus, we are seeing diseases crop up which used to be rare. Many of us are alone. No family. Very often it is a first responder on the scene and this responder needs to recognize what they are seeing.

Please pass this bill.

Lynne Matusow

**HB-1976-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 2:18:27 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/4/2026 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kristy Arias	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am in full support on this bill. One hour is not a lot of time to spend on when it comes to our dementia community.

Mahalo

**Testimony on HB1976 HD1  
RELATING TO DEMENTIA  
Wednesday, March 4, 10:00 AM  
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference  
State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street**

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the committee,

My name is Peter Black and I have Alzheimer's. My home is in Ninole on the Big Island where I live with my wife and caretaker, Barbara. I strongly support HB1976 which would require annual dementia training for first responders across the state to ensure the safety of those of us living with Alzheimer's. And I note that this training is provided by the Alzheimer's Association at no cost to the State.

I have no clear idea of what my future will be, but if I live long enough for my dementia to render me incompetent to be on my own, I really hope any encounter I might have with a first responder, be it policeman or fireman, is an encounter with someone who is ready to deal with me appropriately.

Hawai'i has more than 31,000 residents living with Alzheimer's disease, and many remain in their homes and communities. As dementia progresses, people may become confused, disoriented, frightened, or unable to communicate clearly. Six in ten people living with dementia will wander, often repeatedly, and may get lost even in familiar places. When first responders encounter someone with dementia who is scared or unable to understand commands, situations can escalate quickly.

At the same time, Hawai'i's first responders are dealing with increasing medical emergencies, natural disasters, and more frequent wildfires, all of which require rapid action and clear communication. A person with dementia may not respond in expected ways during an evacuation, a traffic stop, or a medical call, placing both the individual and responders at risk.

This bill simply requires one hour of dementia-specific training each year for first responders. The Alzheimer's Association already provides this training at no cost, and it covers communication techniques, de-escalation strategies, recognizing signs of dementia, and how to safely assist a person who is lost or distressed. This short training can prevent injuries, reduce unnecessary hospitalization, and help responders bring people home safely.

I respectfully urge you to support this bill so that Hawai'i's first responders have the tools they need to interact safely and effectively with people living with dementia, and so families can feel more confident that their loved ones will be treated with understanding and care during an emergency.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,  
Peter Black

To: Chair Todd  
Vice Chair Takenouchi  
Members of the Committee on Finance

Re: **HB 1976 HD1 – RELATING TO DEMENTIA**  
**Wednesday, March 4, 2026**  
**Testimony in Strong Support**

My name is Steven Tam, and I am submitting testimony in strong support of HB 1976 HD1, which would require annual dementia-specific training for first responders across Hawai‘i. I support this bill in memory of my father and three uncles, all of whom passed away from Alzheimer’s disease. Like many families in Hawai‘i, we often found ourselves in situations where confusion or disorientation could quickly become stressful or unsafe. Those experiences are why it’s so important to me that first responders have the tools they need when they meet someone living with dementia.

Today, more than 31,000 people in Hawai‘i are living with Alzheimer’s, and over 62,000 family caregivers are helping them every day. As our population ages, these numbers will continue to rise. First responders will be called on more often to help families like mine. But right now, Hawai‘i does not have a statewide requirement for dementia-specific training. This means responders may not have the same level of preparation, and families may not get the support they need during a crisis.

HB 1976 HD1 would change that by making sure all first responders receive consistent dementia training. In 2025, as an Alzheimer’s Association volunteer Community Educator, I had the opportunity to provide this type of training to Honolulu Police Department recruits. We talked about communication, de-escalation, recognizing signs of Alzheimer’s, and how to safely help someone who is lost or distressed. What stood out to me was how much the recruits appreciated learning these skills. It was clear that this training can make encounters safer and less stressful for everyone involved.

The Alzheimer’s Association Hawai‘i Chapter already offers this training at no cost, and agencies can use these resources without needing additional funding. This makes the bill both practical and affordable.

HB 1976 HD1 will help keep our communities safe, support first responders, and protect our kūpuna and their families. It is a simple, meaningful step that will make a real difference.

I respectfully urge you to pass HB 1976 HD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

**Steven Tam**

**HB-1976-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 9:24:35 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/4/2026 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jo Hittner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony on HB1976 HD1

RELATING TO DEMENTIA

Wednesday, March 4, 10:00 AM

Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the committee,

My name is Jo Hittner, and I live in Hilo. I come from a family with generations of family members with dementia. Before my father was diagnosed and placed in a memory care unit, he would walk to areas where he would become disoriented, wonder where he was, and eventually return home, confused and scared. He would talk to me about how afraid he was when he was having periods of confusion. When he had these periods, he would not respond the same as when he was not confused. He did not come in contact with first responders, but if he had, he would not have been coherent or cooperative. I am in strong support of HB1976 HD1 which would enable the establishment of dementia training for first responders across the state to ensure the safety of those living with Alzheimer's.

Hawai'i has more than 31,000 residents living with Alzheimer's disease, and many remain in their homes and communities. As dementia progresses, people may become confused, disoriented, frightened, or unable to communicate clearly. Six in ten people living with dementia will wander, often repeatedly, and may get lost even in familiar places. When first responders encounter someone with dementia who is scared or unable to understand commands, situations can escalate quickly.

At the same time, Hawai'i's first responders are dealing with increasing medical emergencies, natural disasters, and more frequent wildfires, all of which require rapid action and clear communication. A person with dementia may not respond in expected ways during an evacuation, a traffic stop, or a medical call, placing both the individual and responders at risk.

This bill simply requires one hour of dementia-specific training each year for first responders. The Alzheimer's Association already provides this training at no cost, and it covers communication techniques, de-escalation strategies, recognizing signs of dementia, and how to safely assist a person who is lost or distressed. This short training can prevent injuries, reduce unnecessary hospitalizations, and help responders bring people home safely.

I respectfully urge you to support this bill so that Hawai'i's first responders have the tools they need to interact safely and effectively with people living with dementia, and so families can feel more confident that their loved ones will be treated with understanding and care during an emergency.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Jo Hittner

**Testimony on HB1976 HD1  
RELATING TO DEMENTIA  
Wednesday, March 4, 10:00 AM  
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference  
State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street**

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the committee,

My name is Liane Briggs, and I live in Kāneʻohe. **I am in strong support of HB1976 HD1** which would establish dementia training for first responders across the state to ensure the safety of those living with Alzheimer's.

I help co-facilitate a caregiver support group, and speaking with caregivers, I am aware that Alzheimer's may manifest with different symptoms for different people. Some patients with Alzheimer's can become combative, some wander away with no memory of their home, some may be without their medication causing symptoms that may be related to Alzheimer's or to their underlying conditions. Six in ten people living with dementia will wander, often repeatedly, and may get lost even in familiar places.

When 9-1-1 is called, first responders may encounter someone with dementia who is scared or unable to understand commands, and the situation can escalate quickly. At the same time, Hawai'i's first responders are also dealing with increasing medical emergencies, natural disasters, and more frequent wildfires, all of which require rapid action and clear communication. A person with dementia may not respond in expected ways during an evacuation, a traffic stop, or a medical call, placing both the individual and responders at risk.

HB1976 HD 1 simply requires one hour of dementia-specific training each year for first responders. The Alzheimer's Association already provides this training at no cost, and it covers communication techniques, de-escalation strategies, recognizing signs of dementia, and how to safely assist a person who is lost or distressed. This short training can prevent injuries, reduce unnecessary hospitalizations, and help responders bring people home safely.

**I respectfully urge you to support HB1976 HD 1** so that Hawai'i's first responders have the tools they need to interact safely and effectively with people living with dementia, and so families can feel more confident that their loved ones will be treated with understanding and care during an emergency.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,  
Liane Briggs

**Testimony on HB1976 HD1  
RELATING TO DEMENTIA  
Wednesday, March 4, 10:00 AM  
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference  
State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street**

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the committee,

My name is Barbara Black and I live in Ninole on the Big Island. My spouse, Peter, is living with Alzheimer's and I am his caretaker. I strongly support HB1976 which would require annual dementia training for first responders across the state to ensure the safety of those living with Alzheimer's. And I note that this training is provided by the Alzheimer's Association at no cost to the State.

It breaks my heart to think of Peter wandering somewhere, confused and possibly frightened, being treated harshly and without compassion. I remember a neighbor, out walking and clearly unaware of who we were but who took our hands with a smile as we walked her to her home. And while most people are kind and caring when they see an uncertain and possibly lost person, and I am always grateful to be living on this wonderful island, that may not always be the case.

Hawai'i has more than 31,000 residents living with Alzheimer's disease, and many remain in their homes and communities. As dementia progresses, people may become confused, disoriented, frightened, or unable to communicate clearly. Six in ten people living with dementia will wander, often repeatedly, and may get lost even in familiar places. When first responders encounter someone with dementia who is scared or unable to understand commands, situations can escalate quickly.

At the same time, Hawai'i's first responders are dealing with increasing medical emergencies, natural disasters, and more frequent wildfires, all of which require rapid action and clear communication. A person with dementia may not respond in expected ways during an evacuation, a traffic stop, or a medical call, placing both the individual and responders at risk.

This bill simply requires one hour of dementia-specific training each year for first responders. The Alzheimer's Association already provides this training at no cost, and it covers communication techniques, de-escalation strategies, recognizing signs of dementia, and how to safely assist a person who is lost or distressed. This short training can prevent injuries, reduce unnecessary hospitalization, and help responders bring people home safely.

I respectfully urge you to support this bill so that Hawai'i's first responders have the tools they need to interact safely and effectively with people living with dementia, and so families can feel more confident that their loved ones will be treated with understanding and care during an emergency.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,  
Barbara Black

**HB-1976-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 2:31:23 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/4/2026 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lila Mower	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this measure.