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KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII

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EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON AGING
NO. 1 CAPITOL DISTRICT
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HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-2831

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB2259 SD1 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: Friday April 2, 2026, 2 p.m.

Conference Room: 308

- 1 **EOA Position:** The Executive Office on Aging (EOA), an attached agency to the Department of Health
- 2 (DOH), strongly supports this measure.
- 3 **Fiscal Implications:** Appropriates funds to the Department of Business, Economic Development, and
- 4 Tourism (DBEDT) for FY2026-2027 to establish and administer the Hawai'i Dementia Initiative
- 5 Business Recognition Program.
- 6 **Purpose:** This measure proposes a **dementia-friendly business recognition program** under DBEDT to
- 7 promote awareness and training, empowering businesses to better serve customers, and create a dementia-
- 8 capable workforce. It aligns with the **Hawai'i 2035 State Strategic Plan on Alzheimer's Disease and**
- 9 **Related Dementias** and stakeholder priorities.
- 10 If the measure is adopted, EOA is willing to work with DBEDT to support materials and
- 11 expertise on ADRD as needed or requested.
- 12 We hope that this bill is signed into law to make our business community one of inclusiveness for
- 13 those living with Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias.
- 14 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

2026 Hawaii Leadership Board

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Senior Vice President
Central Pacific Bank

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Past President
Hawaii Island Chamber of Commerce

Cary Tanaka
Vice President, Legal Affairs
Island Insurance Companies

Caroline Witherspoon
President
Becker Communications

LJ R. Duenas
Executive Director
Alzheimer's Association

April 1, 2026

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

RE Testimony In Support of SB2259: Relating to the Dept. of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism, Hearing Date: Thursday, April 2, 2026, Room 308

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

My name LJ Duenas, testifying on behalf of the Alzheimer's Association – Hawaii in strong support of SB2259 SD1, with suggested amendments.

In Hawaii, over 31,000 individuals are living with Alzheimer's, supported by nearly 60,000 unpaid caregivers, numbers that will only continue to grow. As a global visitor destination, our businesses increasingly serve individuals living with dementia and their families.

SB2259 is a smart, low-cost solution with high impact. Dementia-friendly training equips employees with practical tools to better serve customers, reduce stigma, confusion and stress, and create more welcoming, inclusive environments. It also supports employees who are caregivers themselves, helping them feel seen, supported, and better equipped to balance work and caregiving responsibilities, aligned with Goal 3 in the Hawaii 2025: State Plan on Alzheimer's Disease & Related Dementias.

This strengthens customer experience, builds trust, and reinforces Hawaii's reputation as a compassionate destination. Importantly, these trainings can be provided at no cost through the Alzheimer's Association – Hawaii and community partners, making implementation both feasible and scalable.

Suggested amendments:

- 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.
- Add: (h) The department may require continued training every two years for businesses to renew their status of being recognized under this program.
- Replace: "dementia-friendly" with "dementia-friendly or dementia business champion" on page 2, lines 12, 16, and 21

We respectfully urge your favorable consideration. If you have any questions, you may reach me at [ljduenas@alz.org](mailto:ljudenas@alz.org).

Mahalo nui loa,

LJ R. Duenas
Executive Director
Alzheimer's Association – Hawaii

TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SB2259 HD1

Relating to the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism

Committee: House Committee on Finance

Hearing: Thursday, April 2, 2026 | 2:00 p.m. | Conference Room 308

Position: Strong Support

Submitted by: Girard Perone

*Ambassador for the Alzheimer's Association of Hawai'i
Kaka'ako resident*

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

I strongly support SB2259 HD1 because it gives Hawai'i a practical, business-friendly way to respond to a fast-growing dementia challenge. Hawai'i's frequently quoted 31,200 figure is a 2020 estimate. A more current planning figure is about 35,100 older Hawai'i residents living with Alzheimer's, while the Department of Health is publicly using a simpler statewide figure of about 35,000 residents affected. Using Hawai'i's recent age structure and national age-specific incidence rates, a reasonable planning estimate is roughly 585 new Alzheimer's cases - and at least 725 new dementia cases overall - emerging every month or about 7,000 to 8500 new cases per year. This is no longer a narrow issue; it affects local families, employers, frontline workers, and communities across our state.

For Finance, SB2259 is a smart, low-burden investment. The program is straightforward: businesses complete a one-hour dementia-friendly training from approved organizations and can then receive public recognition through badges, decals, and state website listings. That simple structure makes the program visible, measurable, and easy to join while leveraging existing community expertise instead of building a large new bureaucracy. It gives employees practical tools to respond calmly and appropriately when a customer is confused, disoriented, struggling with communication, or overwhelmed, helping prevent misunderstandings and avoidable crises.

The business benefits are real. Dementia affects not only households, but also Hawai'i's workforce, retail sector, service sector, and visitor industry. A dementia-capable business environment improves customer service, strengthens public trust, reduces stress in frontline interactions, and helps Hawai'i remain a welcoming place for residents and visitors alike. It also gives caregivers more confidence to shop, dine, travel, and participate in community life when they know businesses are prepared to respond with patience, respect, and aloha.

The public benefits are just as important. More dementia-capable communities mean greater dignity for kūpuna, better support for caregivers, and a better quality of life for families throughout the islands. Hawai'i's broader dementia-planning efforts emphasize earlier support, stronger caregiver and provider support, more equal access, and fewer avoidable ER visits and hospitalizations. SB2259 advances those goals in a visible, practical, community-based way.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to pass SB2259 HD1. Mahalo for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Girard "Jerry" Perone

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April 1, 2026

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

RE Testimony In Support of SB2259: Relating to the Dept. of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism, Hearing Date: Thursday, April 2, 2026, Room 308

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We respectfully urge your favorable consideration. If you have any questions, you may reach me at ljduenas@alz.org.

Mahalo nui loa,

LJ R. Duenas
Executive Director
Alzheimer's Association – Hawaii



TESTIMONY OF DAVE ERDMAN
INTERIM PRESIDENT & CEO
RETAIL MERCHANTS OF HAWAI'I

**IN SUPPORT WITH COMMENTS ON SB 2259 SD1 HD1 – RELATING TO THE
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM**

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

Thursday, April 2, 2026
2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

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

My name is Dave Erdman, and I serve as Interim President and CEO of the Retail Merchants of Hawai'i (RMH), a statewide nonprofit trade association representing retailers, shopping centers, restaurants operating within retail environments, and allied businesses across Hawai'i.

Retail Merchants of Hawai'i supports SB 2259 SD1 HD1, which establishes the Hawai'i Dementia Initiative Business Recognition Program within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to promote brain health awareness and support a dementia-capable workforce.

Retail businesses serve a broad cross-section of Hawai'i's residents and visitors, including many kupuna and families caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. Increasing awareness among frontline employees can help create a more supportive and respectful environment for customers who may experience confusion, memory loss, or communication challenges. This can improve customer experiences while strengthening community accessibility.

The voluntary recognition structure outlined in this measure, including a one-hour training program and business recognition through decals and online listings, provides a practical and positive approach for encouraging participation. Recognition programs can help businesses demonstrate their commitment to serving all members of the community while improving staff awareness and service readiness.

RMH respectfully notes that while the training requirement is relatively short, there may still be a cost to businesses because most retail employees are hourly workers rather than salaried staff. Hawai'i retailers continue to experience staffing shortages and turnover, particularly in customer-facing roles. Providing paid training time may require scheduling adjustments, especially for small businesses with limited staffing. **We encourage flexible implementation options and accessible training formats that allow businesses of different sizes to participate.**

Overall, RMH appreciates the intent of this measure to promote awareness, compassion, and customer service across Hawai'i's business community and **supports SB 2259 SD1 HD1.**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

SB-2259-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2026 12:11:19 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jean Simon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I strongly support SB 2259.

As a caregiver for my mom and husband, both with Alzheimer's, any help for dementia and the dementia caregiving community would be a very good thing.

Mahalo,

Jean Simon

To: Chair Todd
Vice Chair Takenouchi
Members of the Committee

Re: **SB 2259 SD1 HD1 – RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM**
Thursday, April 2, 2026
Testimony in Strong Support

My name is **Steven Tam**, and I am submitting testimony in strong support of **SB 2259 SD1 HD1**, which establishes the Hawai‘i Dementia Initiative Business Recognition Program within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism. 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 everyday situations where confusion or disorientation could quickly become stressful or unsafe. Those experiences showed me how important it is for our entire community—not just caregivers and health professionals—to understand dementia.

This bill recognizes something we don’t talk about enough: dementia is not only a health issue. It affects businesses, economic growth, and even visitors to our state. SB2259 acknowledges this reality clearly. Businesses are often the first point of contact when a person living with dementia becomes confused, lost, or overwhelmed. A dementia-capable workforce can make those moments safer and less frightening for everyone involved.

SB2259 creates a program to help businesses become dementia-friendly. Through the Department’s website, businesses can access approved training providers, complete a one-hour employee training, and receive a recognition badge and decal. The Department will also publish a list of certified businesses so families and individuals living with dementia know where they will be supported.

I have spent years volunteering with the Alzheimer’s Association and providing dementia training—including recently for Honolulu Police Department recruits—I have seen firsthand how even a short training session can change the way people respond to someone living with dementia. When employees know what signs to look for and how to communicate calmly and respectfully, situations that might otherwise escalate can be handled with compassion and confidence.

A dementia-friendly business environment is the pono thing to do and fully aligns with Hawai‘i’s values of care, inclusion, and aloha.

I respectfully urge you to pass SB 2259 SD1 HD1.

Mahalo,

Steven Tam

SB-2259-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2026 8:17:50 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glen Kagamida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT!!! MAHALO!