



**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**

KA 'OIHANA HO'OMOHALA PĀ'OIHANA, 'IMI WAIWAI
A HO'OMĀKA'IKA'I

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT DIVISION

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR

JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA
DIRECTOR

DANE K. WICKER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

DENNIS T. LING
ADMINISTRATOR

No. 1 Capitol District Building, 250 South Hotel Street, 5th Floor, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2359, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96804
Web site: dbedt.Hawai'i .gov

Telephone: (808) 586-2355
Fax: (808) 586-2377

Statement of
DENNIS T. LING
Administrator

Business Development and Support Division
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TECHNOLOGY**

Friday, March 20, 2026
9:30 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 423

In consideration of
SB2259 SD1
**RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
AND TOURISM**

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey and members of the Committee. The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) offers comments on **SB2259 SD1** 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

KENNETH FINK, MD, MGA, MPH
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

CAROLINE CADIRAO
DIRECTOR
Executive Office on Aging

Telephone
(808) 586-0100

Fax
(808) 586-0185

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 COMMENTING on SB2259 SD1
RELATING TO DEMENTIA

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TECHNOLOGY

REP. GREGGOR ILAGAN, CHAIR
REP. IKAIKA HUSSEY, VICE CHAIR

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

Hearing: Friday March 20,, 2026,9:30 A.M. Conference Room: 423

- 1 **EOA Position:** The Executive Office on Aging (EOA), an attached agency to the Department of
2 Health (DOH), appreciates the intent of this measure and offers comments.
- 3 **Fiscal Implications:** Appropriates funds to the Department of Business, Economic
4 Development, and Tourism (DBEDT) for FY2026-2027 to establish and administer the Hawai'i
5 Dementia Initiative Business Recognition Program.
- 6 **Purpose:** This measure proposes a **dementia-friendly business recognition program**
7 under DBEDT to promote awareness and training, empowering businesses to better serve
8 customers, and create a dementia-capable workforce. Businesses completing a one-hour training
9 will receive recognition through badges, decals, and website listings. This initiative addresses
10 the impact of Alzheimer's and dementia on individuals, families, businesses, and tourism in

1 Hawai‘i. It aligns with the **Hawai‘i 2035 State Strategic Plan on Alzheimer’s Disease and**
2 **Related Dementias** and stakeholder priorities.

3 If the measure is adopted, EOA will support DBEDT by 1) providing a Speaker’s Bureau
4 listing of approved organizations that provide dementia training for employees and 2) business
5 recognition by providing images of the Hawai‘i Dementia Initiative files for use in badges,
6 decals, or stickers, indicating a business has met dementia-friendly certification requirements.

7 While EOA does not have business expertise, we affirm that DBEDT has the business
8 relationships, strategic leadership, and experience in business promotion and recognition to
9 administer a successful program.

10 **Recommendations:** EOA appreciates the intent of this measure and to increase the feasibility of
11 the program recommends a technical amendment on page 2, line 13-15 in Section 2. (c),
12 “Businesses that apply shall receive a list of approved organizations that provide dementia
13 training for employees. ~~All current~~ [At least 85%] of employees shall complete a one-hour
14 training session to qualify the business as dementia-friendly.”

15 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Testimony to the House Committee on Economic Development & Technology Friday, March 20, 9:30 AM, Room 423 and Videoconference

2026 Hawaii
Leadership Board

RE: SB2259 SD1 – RELATING TO RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM

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 Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Coby Chock, and I am testifying on behalf of the Alzheimer's Association, Hawai'i Chapter. We **strongly support** SB2259 SD1, Relating to the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism, and offer amendments.

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 SD1 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 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

For these reasons, the Alzheimer's Association Hawai'i Chapter strongly supports SB2259 SD1 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



TESTIMONY OF DAVE ERDMAN
INTERIM PRESIDENT & CEO
RETAIL MERCHANTS OF HAWAII

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

Committee on Economic Development & Technology
Rep. Greggor Ilagan, Chair
Rep. Ikaika Hussey, Vice Chair

March 13, 2026, Conference Room 423

Aloha Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and members of the Committee:

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

RMH supports SB 2259 SD1, which establishes the Hawai'i Dementia Initiative Business Recognition Program within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to promote dementia awareness in the business community.

Retail businesses serve a broad cross-section of Hawai'i's residents and visitors, including many kupuna and families who may be caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's disease or 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.

The recognition program outlined in this measure provides an opportunity for businesses to participate in a simple training program and demonstrate their commitment to serving all members of the community. Programs that improve employee awareness and understanding can help prevent misunderstandings, improve customer service, and foster a more welcoming environment in everyday retail settings.

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. Unfortunately, Hawaii continues to have employee turnover and staffing shortages in retail operations with customer facing roles. Providing the one-hour training may require employers to

schedule paid training time or adjust staffing coverage, particularly for small businesses with limited staff. We encourage consideration of flexible implementation options that allow businesses of different sizes to participate in the program.

Overall, RMH appreciates the intent of this measure to promote awareness and compassion in the community and supports SB 2259 SD1.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

SB-2259-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 12:31:04 PM

Testimony for ECD on 3/20/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Rainbow Family 808	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Rainbow Family 808 supports SB2259. Please pass this bill.

SB-2259-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 12:04:34 PM

Testimony for ECD on 3/20/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Raelene Tenno	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support for SB2259 SD1

We need everything all hands on deck for Demintia awareness and training.

At the time, we were not aware my Aunty had any form of dementia.

Young time, she would mention her forgetting this or that and why she would always write things down to remember We all including her brothers and sisters just passed it off as againg.

Unplanned, I became her caregiver after watchng her confused in the kitchen and stopping her from putting the rice pot in the microwave.

I was clueless! It was about a year later she was officially diagnosed with Dementia.

As Hawaii's population is growing with older adults, we need an all agency hands on to reach out to the cumminty in any means possible for education and access to resources.for families/cargivers.

Thank you for allowing the submission of this testimony.

Raelene Tenno

SB-2259-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/19/2026 8:22:32 AM

Testimony for ECD on 3/20/2026 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

SUPPORT. MAHALO!

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB2259
RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM.**

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TECHNOLOGY

Rep. Greggor Ilagan, Chair

Rep. Ikaika Hussey, Vice Chair

Aloha Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tani Salazar and I'm a Social Worker, born and raised in Hawai'i, testifying as an individual in support of the intent of SB 2259. Three of my grandparents lived with dementia, and my 'ohana has firsthand experience with how challenging it can be to interface with various businesses who may not understand how cognitive impairment is impacting my kūpuna's behavior.

This **business recognition bill** is a low cost initiative that can make a real difference for Hawai'i businesses and families. Let's recognize and support the many small businesses who care for the community. This collaborative and innovative approach can lead the way towards a more age-friendly and dementia-friendly Hawai'i.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Tani K. Salazar

Tani Kalei Salazar, LSW, MSW