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Testimony COMMENTING on SB2259 SD1
RELATING TO DEMENTIA

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

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

Hearing: Thursday, February 19, 2026, 10:30 A.M. Conference Room: 211

- 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** under
- 7 DBEDT to promote awareness and training, empowering businesses to better serve customers,
- 8 and create a dementia-capable workforce. Businesses completing a one-hour training will receive
- 9 recognition through badges, decals, and website listings. This initiative addresses the impact of
- 10 Alzheimer's and dementia on individuals, families, businesses, and tourism in Hawai'i. It aligns

1 with the **Hawai'i 2035 State Strategic Plan on Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias**
2 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.



**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
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JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA
DIRECTOR

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DEPUTY DIRECTOR

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Statement of
DENNIS T. LING
Administrator

Business Development and Support Division
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
WAYS AND MEANS**

Thursday, February 19, 2026
10:30 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 211

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

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

**TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SB2259 SD1
RELATING TO HAWAI'I DEMENTIA INITIATIVE
BUSINESS RECOGNITION PROGRAM**

**Hearing: Thursday, February 19, 10:30am
Senate Committee on Ways and Means (WAM)
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference
State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street**

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki and Members of the Committee:

My name is **Jerry Perone**, and I proudly live in **Kaka'ako**. I am submitting testimony in **strong support** of **SB2259 SD1**, which as you know establishes the **Hawai'i Dementia Initiative Business Recognition Program** within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT) to promote awareness of Alzheimer's disease and dementia and to advance a **dementia-capable workforce**.

With an effective date of **July 1, 2026**, this measure is practical and straightforward: businesses apply online; DBEDT provides applicants the bill-required list of **approved organizations** that provide dementia training; and, once **all current employees** complete a **one-hour training session** as required by the bill, the business earns visible recognition—a website badge, a physical decal—and inclusion on a public list so families can quickly identify dementia-friendly locations.

I support this bill as both a community advocate and as a career executive who spent decades building **quality, safety, and performance systems** in large organizations. I served as **Quality Assurance Executive for the IBM Corporation's Financial Services Sector, Vice President of ESI International, and Executive Director for Program Management at Management Concepts**. Across those roles, one lesson was constant: when frontline staff aren't trained for a predictable scenario, they improvise—this improvisation creates preventable mistakes, unnecessary escalation, embarrassment and real human harm.

At IBM, we had established onsite roles for **safety and medical responders** who were often the first to arrive before the 911 First Responders. They had general safety and first-aid training—but **no dementia-specific training**. When an employee, customer, visitor, or older adult presented with confusion, disorientation,

agitation, or difficulty communicating, the situation was too often **misread as intoxication, substance abuse, a behavioral health issue or just plain insanity**. For a person living with dementia, that misinterpretation can escalate an encounter, delay appropriate help, and strip dignity—especially on large campuses or remote/rural worksites where emergency response times may be longer. In those first minutes, training is the difference between de-escalation and harm.

One point worth highlighting for the Committee is that the bill’s one-hour training requirement can be met through existing training providers in Hawai‘i, consistent with the bill’s approach of using “approved organizations” to deliver the training. That means DBEDT does not need to create a new training curriculum. Instead, DBEDT can focus on what it does best—**program administration, outreach to the business community, distribution of recognition assets (badge/decal), and maintaining the public list of recognized businesses**—while leveraging available training capacity through approved organizations.

Recommendation to improve feasibility for large employers and increase adoption:

Because the bill requires **all current employees** to complete the training to qualify, if the Legislature wishes to maximize participation by large employers without reducing the program’s public benefit, a phased pathway could be considered:

1. **Initial recognition:** prioritize training first for **customer-facing roles** (front desk, reception, call center, customer service, security, hospitality/retail point-of-contact staff) to earn recognition and be listed.
2. **Expanded recognition:** encourage voluntary expansion so **internal departments** (facilities, HR, operations, internal safety/medical response teams, supervisors) can complete training over time, strengthen organization-wide dementia capability and earn their own recognition.

While employed by IBM, this is what we found worked the best when implementing new systems and processes: start where risk and visibility are highest, then expand across the enterprise.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to **pass SB 2259, S.D. 1** and support the **FY 2026–2027** appropriation so DBEDT can launch a program that is practical, scalable, and immediately useful to residents, caregivers, and visitors—**with implementation beginning July 1, 2026**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully, Jerry Perone

Testimony on SB2259
RELATING TO RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM
Thursday, February 19, 2026, 10:30 AM
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference
State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street

Chair Dela Cruz and members of the committee,

My name is Calvin Hara, and I reside in Kaimuki. My career was in senior care and long term care in California and Hawai'i. Throughout those years, I have been with residents with Alzheimer's disease. The disease still exists and there is no cure. I have also been a family caregiver for loved ones with dementia.

I am testifying in strong support of SB2657 that would establish the Hawaii Dementia Initiative Business Recognition Program.

I support this bill because it will help recognize and promote dementia-friendly businesses, small to large and corporations, in our community. This is a positive step toward supporting families and creating more inclusive environments.

Often, employees and their immediate and extended families are confronted with caring for a loved one with dementia. This is an opportunity to bring forward dementia education, support and sharing of available community resources.

The merits of this bill will bring better understanding of Alzheimer's disease, improve care, and bring new hope and new resources to families across our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Calvin Hara

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Thursday, February 19, 10:30 AM, Room 211 and Videoconference
RE: SB2259 SD1 – RELATING TO RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM**

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Caroline Witherspoon,
President Becker
Communications

LJ R. Duenas,
Executive Director
Alzheimer's Association

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committees:

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

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.

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

SB-2259-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 5:41:01 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2026 10:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

SUPPORT!