



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Education

and

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Monday, February 9, 2026 at 1:00 p.m.

By

T. Samuel Shomaker, MD, Dean,

Lee Buenconsejo-Lum, MD, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs,

Kamal Masaki, MD, Chair, Department of Geriatric Medicine

John A. Burns School of Medicine

and

Vassilis Syrmos, PhD

Interim Provost

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 2657 – RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH.

Chairs Kim and San Buenaventura, Vice Chairs Kidani and McKelvey, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on SB 2657 which establishes and appropriates funds for an Alzheimer's disease and related dementias research center at the University of as the first phase of a strategic plan to build capacity and position Hawai'i for future ADRC designation by the National Institute on Aging. This is a necessary step to eventually be able to apply for a National Institute on Aging (NIA)-designated Alzheimer's Disease Research Center (ADRC).

Although Hawai'i has numerous ongoing and historical dementia-related research projects, education initiatives, and community programs, these activities lack a coordinated structure. The state does not currently have the centralized research infrastructure, shared cores, or integrated data and clinical systems required to be competitive for NIA-funded ADRC designation. Establishing an ADRC Research Center would allow the university to build on existing strengths, reduce fragmentation, and create the foundation necessary for Hawai'i to prepare for future ADRC application cycles.

Hawai'i has the longest life expectancy in the United States, and the aging population is increasing rapidly. Approximately 31,000 people are living with Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia in Hawai'i, reflecting over 11% of the population aged 65 years and older. They require 111 million hours of unpaid care by 62,000 caregivers, valued at 2,891 million dollars in 2025. Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (NHPs) face a

higher risk of dementia, and at younger ages. The odds of early-onset dementia among Native Americans (including Native Hawaiians) are over double that of Caucasians.

Establishing an ADRD Research Center at the University of Hawai'i will create a foundation to apply for future NIA ADRC designation and deliver significant benefits to the university, the state, and its residents. This center will advance interdisciplinary research, bringing together researchers from medicine, public health, nutrition, social sciences and others, thus enhancing UH's research capabilities and reputation, attracting major federal research dollars, and expanding opportunities for local talent in biomedical research and healthcare. The Alzheimer's disease and related dementias research center also creates the opportunity to advance scientific research focused on Asian American and NHPI populations which are historically underrepresented in dementia research, and will include unique genetic, behavioral, socio-cultural, and environmental factors affecting dementia risk. The research will improve patient care and access to clinical trials for our kūpuna. Importantly, this will strengthen collaboration between many academic and community partners, including the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM), UH Cancer Center, UH Center on Aging, Kuakini Medical Center, Hawai'i Pacific Neuroscience, The Queen's Health Systems, Hawai'i Pacific Health, Native Hawaiian Health Systems, the Alzheimer's Association Hawai'i Chapter, and other community-based organizations. It will align with academic growth and workforce development, complementing JABSOM's upcoming Neurology residency program.

The UH Mānoa at Kaka'ako campus has the capacity to physically house the ADRD Research Center, including laboratory and office spaces. The appropriation and establishment of positions at JABSOM in this measure will support statewide community assets, and is in the best interests of our community.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

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

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Education and Health and Human Services Monday, February 9, 1:00 PM, Room 229 and Videoconference

RE: Senate Bill No. 2657 – RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH

Chair Kim, Chair San Buenaventura, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB2657, which establishes a Dementia Research Unit (DRU) at the University of Hawai'i. My name is Coby Chock, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy for the Alzheimer's Association.

Hawai'i urgently needs a coordinated research structure for Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. Nationally, the NIH invests \$3.8 billion annually in Alzheimer's research, and federally designated Alzheimer's Disease Research Centers (ADRCs) can receive up to \$2.925 million per year in direct core funding, along with additional project and clinical trial awards. Yet out of more than 460 NIH funded Alzheimer's trials, Hawai'i currently leads just one. This means substantial federal funding, clinical trials, and scientific partnerships are not flowing into our state because we do not have the foundational infrastructure required to compete for these awards.

The SR163 report states that while Hawai'i has many dementia related research activities, they are spread across institutions and not coordinated through shared cores, integrated data systems, or unified leadership. Without an organized research unit, Hawai'i cannot realistically pursue ADRC designation or attract multi year federal support. At the same time, our population offers a unique scientific opportunity. Hawai'i is home to one of the largest Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander populations in the nation, groups that experience earlier onset, higher vascular risk, and younger age at diagnosis. These disparities are underrepresented in national dementia studies, and the lack of local research infrastructure prevents Hawai'i from contributing the data needed to close these gaps.

What SB2657 accomplishes:

- Establishes the DRU as an organized research unit within JABSOM, enabling shared services, collaboration, and coordinated research oversight.
- Provides \$375,000 in start-up funding to hire a senior clinician scientist and a coordinator. These positions are necessary to develop grant applications, clinical protocols, and partnerships that bring in federal funding.
- Unifies existing dementia related assets across the UH Center on Aging, UH Cancer Center, Kuakini Medical Center, Hawai'i Pacific Health, and Queen's Health Systems, creating a statewide structure that meets NIH expectations for competitive centers, trials, and data integration.

The DRU is the essential first step toward unlocking federal research dollars. It creates the foundation needed for Hawai'i to join national clinical trials, host locally accessible research studies, and eventually apply for ADRC designation, which brings large and recurring federal awards. It also improves access to diagnosis and treatment innovation, strengthens workforce development, and brings new economic activity through research jobs and indirect cost recovery. Most importantly, it expands research opportunities for neighbor island and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities that have been historically underrepresented in dementia science.

SB2657 represents a strategic and high value investment. It fills Hawai'i's research gap, strengthens our ability to compete for federal funding, and establishes the structure required for long term growth. By creating the Dementia Research Unit, the Legislature positions Hawai'i to advance scientific discovery, improve care, and capture the federal resources that are currently out of reach.

Mahalo for your consideration. If you have any questions, please contact Coby Chock at 808 451 3410 or ckchock@alz.org.



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

SB2657 Introducer – Senator Kim

[ALZIMPACT.ORG/HAWAII](https://alzimpact.org/hawaii)

PLEASE SUPPORT SB2657 TO ESTABLISH A DEMENTIA RESEARCH UNIT (DRU) AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

- \$3.8 billion is appropriated to the NIH annually for Alzheimer's research.
- Alzheimer's Disease Research Centers (ADRCs) may receive up to \$2.925 million per year in direct costs (P30 core grant) + multiple R01, U01, or P01 research grants, clinical trial funding, supplemental awards, etc.
- Many states begin with research units like a DRU before qualifying for Exploratory Alzheimer's Disease Research Center (ADRC) status

FDA-approved Alzheimer's treatments and hundreds of investigational therapies now exist, but access depends on timely diagnosis and participation in research—making local research capacity essential.



**460+ NIH Funded
Alzheimer's trials
nationwide.
Hawai'i leads just
one.**

What the DRU would do...

- Serve as a centralized hub for Alzheimer's and dementia research in Hawai'i
- Expand local access to clinical trials and observational studies
- Collect Hawai'i-specific data to inform care, policy, and prevention
- Build capacity to participate in national research networks

BUILDING HAWAII'S DEMENTIA RESEARCH CAPACITY

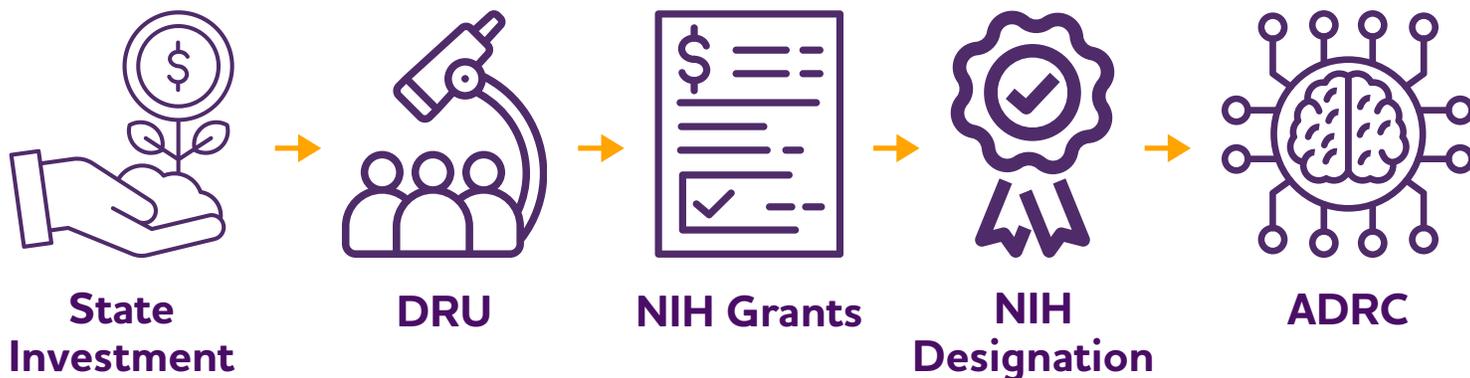
Components of SB2657

- Creates the Dementia Research Unit (DRU) at the University of Hawai'i as an organized research unit administered by a director and affiliated with JABSOM
- Authorizes efficiencies and shared services across JABSOM, the DRU, Center on Aging, and UH Mānoa
- Appropriates \$375,000 to launch the DRU funding 1.0 FTE Senior Clinician Scientist (tenure track) 1.0 FTE Center Coordinator (administrative lead)

Phased Plan to Establish ADRC

- Years 1–2 (Foundation Building): Establish the Dementia Research Unit at JABSOM; recruit a senior clinician-scientist and core staff (foundation-building)
- Years 2–3 (Research Activation): Expand faculty; coordinate statewide dementia research; launch clinical studies and trials
- Years 3–4 (NIH Readiness): Build NIH-aligned research infrastructure and community partnerships
- Year 5 (National Recognition): Apply for National Institute on Aging Alzheimer's Disease Research Center designation

The Path to Federal Funding





**STATE HEALTH PLANNING
AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH - KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO

JOSH GREEN, MD
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII

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

JOHN C. (JACK) LEWIN, MD
ADMINISTRATOR

February 11, 2026

TO: SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Angus L.K. McKelvey, Vice Chair
Honorable Members

FROM: John C. (Jack) Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA, and Sr. Advisor to
Governor Josh Green, MD on Healthcare Innovation

**RE: SB 2657 -- RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED
DEMENTIAS RESEARCH**

HEARING: Wednesday, February 11, 2026 @ 1:00 pm; Conference Room 225

POSITION: SUPPORT with COMMENTS

Testimony:

SHPDA strongly supports SB 2657, with comments.

This bill establishes an Alzheimer's Disease and related Dementias Research Center (ARD) at the University of Hawaii

Alzheimer's disease and related dementias are among the most pressing health challenges of our time, disproportionately affecting Hawaii's aging population. Our state's unique demographic composition—particularly our large Asian American and Pacific Islander communities—presents an unparalleled opportunity to advance research that reflects genetic, cultural, and environmental factors not studied elsewhere. This will lead to more effective, culturally tailored interventions for our residents.

Pulling together the resources associated with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias in a coordinated and collaborative way to build the research capacity within our state makes good sense and would maximize our resources.

We defer to the University regarding the specifics, details and cost of establishing such a center.

SB 2657 testimony of SHPDA (2026), continued.

SHPDA believes that having an Alzheimer's disease and related dementias research center in our state would allow us to build research capacity and be able to design our own evidence-based models focused on our diverse populations.

Thank you for hearing SB 2657.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

■ -- Jack Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA

Testimony on SB2657
RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH
Monday, February 9, 2026, 1:00 PM
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference
State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street

Chair Kim, Chair San Buenaventura, 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 an Alzheimer's research unit at the University of Hawai'i which would allow the University to receive federal research funding to conduct culturally relevant Alzheimer's research, participate in national research projects, and provide local access to clinical trials.

Hawai'i is home to more than 31,000 residents living with Alzheimer's disease, and this number is expected to grow as our population ages. Yet despite the increasing need, our state currently lacks a coordinated research structure to better understand dementia, improve early detection, and expand access to new treatments and clinical trials. Families across Hawai'i, especially those caring for loved ones diagnosed at younger ages or experiencing rapid decline, often struggle to find answers or research opportunities close to home.

The Dementia Research Unit (DRU) would help fill this gap by creating a centralized hub at the University of Hawai'i dedicated to dementia research, collaboration, and community support. Establishing the DRU is the first step Hawai'i needs to eventually qualify for major federal Alzheimer's research funding and to bring more clinical trials and scientific resources to our state. We need to have culturally sensitive and responsible research in our state to address the needs of our multi-cultural and multi-ethnic population.

I respectfully urge you to support this important bill so that Hawai'i can build the research capacity needed to better understand dementia, 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 Joint Committee on Education and Health and Human Services

Monday, February 9, 2026; 1:00 p.m.

State Capitol, Conference Room 229

Via Videoconference

RE: SENATE BILL NO. 2657, RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH.

Chair Kim, Chair San Buenaventura, 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** Senate Bill No. 2657, RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH.

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 establish an Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Research Center at the University of Hawaii as the first phase of a strategic plan to build capacity and position Hawaii for future Aging-designated Alzheimer's Disease Research Center designation by the National Institute on Aging. To do this, the bill would appropriate \$375,000 in general funds for fiscal year 2025-2027, to establish one full-time equivalent faculty senior clinician scientist position, and one full-time equivalent administrative lead staff position.

This bill would take effect on July 1, 2026.

The HPCA notes that the companion to this measure, House Bill No. 1597, was heard by the House Committee on Higher Education on Wednesday, February 4, 2026. That Committee approved the measure in an amended form (House Draft 1) and reported the measure (Standing Committee Report No. 0125-26) out for Second Reading.

Testimony on Senate Bill No. 2657
Monday, February 9, 2026; 1:00 p.m.
Page 2

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 6th leading of death among US adults; and
- The 5th 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.**

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 believes that this bill will further the goal of making the University of Hawaii a leading institution on the research of this malady. We assert that because the vast majority of our population is growing older, we need to better prepare our citizens on how to deal with Alzheimer's Disease and Dementias.

Accordingly, we are honored to partner with the Alzheimer's Association on this important measure 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@hawaiiPCA.net.

SB-2657

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 8:25:45 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/11/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tony Vericella	Testifying for Alzheimer's Caregiving & The Caregivers	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony on SB2657

RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH

Monday, February 9, 2026, 1:00 PM

Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street

Chair Kim, Chair San Buenaventura, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tony Vericella, and I live primarily in Waimea on the Big Island.

My wife, Dana Mehau-Vericella, was diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's seven+ years ago. She's now in the late stages and has been unable to do any activity of daily life for the last five years. Our family has been providing all of her care here in the family home on the Big Island.

In September 2023, we launched an approved tax-exempt 501 (c)(3), Alzheimer's Caregiving & The Caregivers.

Our goal is simple – to pass on the healing, the strength, and the power that comes from understanding and sharing experiences. We have but one mission – *to prepare, equip, and provide evolving support to “families” caregiving for loved ones diagnosed with the progressive and debilitating effects of Alzheimer’s/Dementia.*

I am testifying in strong support of SB2657 that would establish an Alzheimer's research unit at UH which would allow the University to receive federal research funding to conduct culturally relevant Alzheimer's research, participate in national research projects, and provide local access to clinical trials.

Hawai‘i is home to more than 31,000 residents living with Alzheimer’s disease, and this number is expected to grow as our population ages. Yet despite the increasing need, our state currently lacks a coordinated research structure to better understand dementia, improve early detection, and expand access to new treatments and clinical trials. Families across Hawai‘i, especially those caring for loved ones diagnosed at younger ages or experiencing rapid decline, often struggle to find answers or research opportunities close to home.

The Dementia Research Unit (DRU) would help fill this gap by creating a centralized hub at the University of Hawai‘i dedicated to dementia research, collaboration, and community support. Establishing the DRU is the first step Hawai‘i needs to eventually qualify for major federal Alzheimer’s research funding and to bring more clinical trials and scientific resources to our state. This will ensure that Hawai‘i’s diverse communities, including Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations who face higher dementia risks, are included in research that reflects their unique needs.

I respectfully urge you to support this important bill so that Hawai‘i can build the research capacity needed to better understand dementia, improve care, and bring new hope and new resources to families across our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Tony Vericella

Alzheimer's Caregiving & The Caregivers

www.alzcaregiving.org

SB-2657

Submitted on: 2/6/2026 10:49:03 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/11/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Louis Erteschik	Testifying for Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support



1001 Bishop Street #625 | Honolulu, HI 96813
866-295-7282 | aarp.org/hi | hiaarp@aarp.org |
[Twitter.com/aarphawaii](https://twitter.com/aarphawaii) | facebook.com/aarphawaii

**The State Legislature
Senate Committee on Education
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Monday, February 9, 2026
Conference Room 229, 1:00 p.m.**

TO: The Honorable Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
The Honorable Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
FROM: Keali'i S. López, State Director
POSITION: Support for S.B. 2657 Relating to Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementia Research

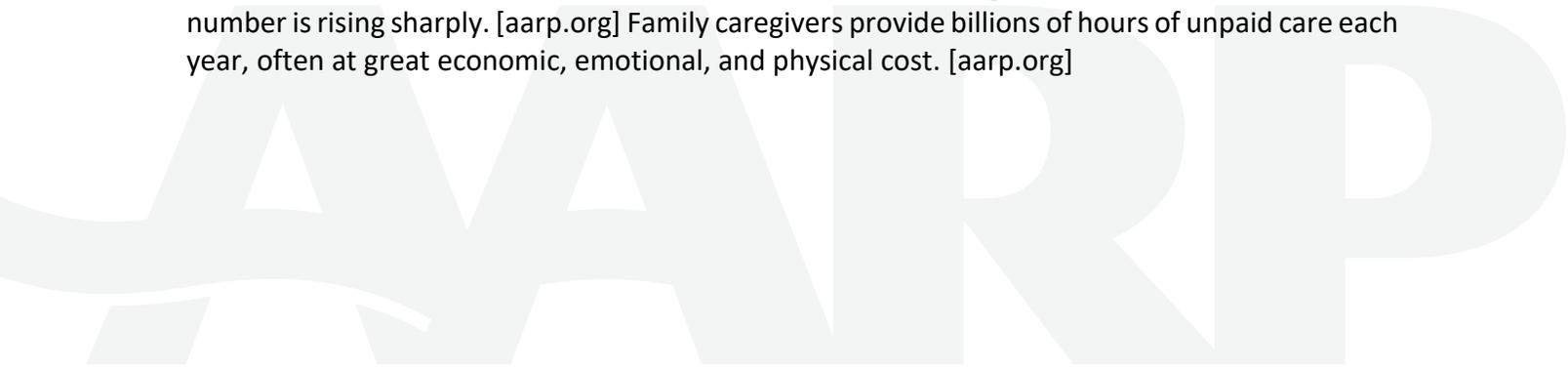
Aloha Chair Mercado Kim, Chair San Buenaventura and Members of the Committees:

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 aged 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 for S.B. 2657, which establishes and provides funding for an Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD) research center at the University of Hawai'i John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM). This measure represents a critically needed investment in the future health, well-being, and economic resilience of Hawai'i's rapidly aging population.

Hawai'i faces a significant and growing burden of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. According to state analyses, more than 31,000 Hawai'i residents are living with Alzheimer's disease, yet as many as half may remain undiagnosed due to limited access to specialized memory services. [alzimpact.org] This demographic challenge is magnified by Hawai'i's unique population makeup. Senate Bill 2657 correctly notes that the state's large Asian American and Pacific Islander population offers a rare opportunity to advance research into genetic, cultural, and environmental dementia-related factors that remain understudied in mainland cohorts.

More than 6 million Americans live with dementia—including Alzheimer's disease—and the number is rising sharply. [aarp.org] Family caregivers provide billions of hours of unpaid care each year, often at great economic, emotional, and physical cost. [aarp.org]



Innovative research is essential because traditional drug-development pathways have repeatedly failed, underscoring the urgency for new approaches and expanded clinical research capacity. Thus, AARP strongly supports efforts that expand research infrastructure, improve diagnosis, foster innovation, and enhance culturally appropriate care—all key goals of S.B. 2657.

The establishment of an Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias research center at the University of Hawai’i represents a forward-looking, cost-effective, and scientifically sound investment that aligns with AARP’s support in dementia research and our commitment to improving the lives of older adults and their families.

We urge the Committee to pass this measure. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support.

Testimony on SB2657
RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH
Monday, February 9, 2026, 1:00 PM
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference
State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street

Chair Kim, Chair San Buenaventura, and members of the committee,

My name is Mansa Devaki, a student at UC Berkeley studying Neuroscience, and I am a resident of Kula. A family friend of mine on Maui was fortunate to be diagnosed with dementia fairly early, allowing them to pursue treatments and lifestyle changes that may extend their independence. But for many, especially those diagnosed late, the options are far more limited.

I am testifying in strong support of SB2657 that would establish an Alzheimer's research unit at UH which would allow the University to receive federal research funding to conduct culturally relevant Alzheimer's research, participate in national research projects, and provide local access to clinical trials.

Hawai'i is home to more than 31,000 residents living with Alzheimer's disease, and this number is expected to grow as our population ages. Yet despite the increasing need, our state currently lacks a coordinated research structure to better understand dementia, improve early detection, and expand access to new treatments and clinical trials. Families across Hawai'i, especially those caring for loved ones diagnosed at younger ages or experiencing rapid decline, often struggle to find answers or research opportunities close to home.

The Dementia Research Unit (DRU) would help fill this gap by creating a centralized hub at the University of Hawai'i dedicated to dementia research, collaboration, and community support. Establishing the DRU is the first step Hawai'i needs to eventually qualify for major federal Alzheimer's research funding and to bring more clinical trials and scientific resources to our state. This will ensure that Hawai'i's diverse communities, including Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations who face higher dementia risks, are included in research that reflects their unique needs.

I respectfully urge you to support this important bill so that Hawai'i can build the research capacity needed to better understand dementia, improve care, and bring new hope and new resources to families across our islands. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,
Mansa Devaki

SB-2657

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 11:53:22 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/11/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
LJ Duenas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I ask for your support in moving this measure forward.

Testimony on SB2657
RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH
Monday, February 9, 2026, 1:00 PM
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference
State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street

Chair Kim, Chair San Buenaventura, and members of the committee,

My name is David Diebold, and I am from Mililani, HI. My father, Carroll Diebold, was an active physician in Hawai'i for almost thirty years and a professor in the department of Psychiatry at JABSOM. I am following in his footsteps as a first-year medical student at the University of Michigan. Three years ago, my dad was diagnosed with Posterior Cortical Atrophy, a rare form of Alzheimer's that first begins deteriorating your vision before slowly erasing your memory.

During his treatment, I was consistently inspired by the compassionate care offered by local healthcare providers, however I was often frustrated by the lack of resources and treatments that my family could access throughout his care. He recently began receiving a monoclonal antibody therapy to slow his symptom progression and restore some final few opportunities that I have had to connect with my father.

However, the proposed treatment came with some frightening potential side effects such as brain bleeds, and it was difficult to find local resources that could capture the treatment's risk. Fortunately, I was able to engage with my professors at the University of Michigan that had experience running trials with the proposed treatment, and my father has now successfully been receiving the therapy for the past five months with little side effects.

I am in a very fortunate position where I can access experts at a world class research institution, but I believe that Hawai'i and JABSOM can lead the way in Alzheimer's research as well. Hawai'i's aging population is one of the most diverse in the US, which makes it a prime location for studying the effects of Alzheimer's and its potential treatment options. JABSOM is known nationwide as a program that develops culturally competent and compassionate physicians that deeply care about their patients and their community. I believe that the State of Hawai'i owes it to its Kapuna and Kapuna around the world struggling with Alzheimer's to establish its own research institution to apply that same level of compassionate healthcare to the study and treatment of Alzheimer's Disease.

Testimony on SB2657
RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH
Monday, February 9, 2026, 1:00 PM
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference
State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street

I am testifying in strong support of SB2657 that would establish an Alzheimer's research unit at UH which would allow the University to receive federal research funding to conduct culturally relevant Alzheimer's research, participate in national research projects, and provide local access to clinical trials.

Hawai'i is home to more than 31,000 residents living with Alzheimer's disease, and this number is expected to grow as our population ages. Yet despite the increasing need, our state currently lacks a coordinated research structure to better understand dementia, improve early detection, and expand access to new treatments and clinical trials. Families across Hawai'i, especially those caring for loved ones diagnosed at younger ages or experiencing rapid decline, often struggle to find answers or research opportunities close to home.

The Dementia Research Unit (DRU) would help fill this gap by creating a centralized hub at the University of Hawai'i dedicated to dementia research, collaboration, and community support. Establishing the DRU is the first step Hawai'i needs to eventually qualify for major federal Alzheimer's research funding and to bring more clinical trials and scientific resources to our state. This will ensure that Hawai'i's diverse communities, including Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations who face higher dementia risks, are included in research that reflects their unique needs.

I respectfully urge you to support this important bill so that Hawai'i can build the research capacity needed to better understand dementia, improve care, and bring new hope and new resources to families across our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

David Diebold

SB-2657

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 2:45:24 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/11/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rosalie Char	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Kim, Chair San Buenaventura, and members of the committee,

My name is Rosalie Char and I live in KzKaneohe. Though I do not have a close, personal connection, I have many friends and neighbors who have been and their stories are heartbreaking. By establling a unit here, not only are we showing support in finding an end to this disease, this would further raise Hawaii's presence in the research world and am important diversification. I am testifying in strong support of SB2657 that would establish an Alzheimer's research unit at UH which would allow the University to receive federal research funding to conduct culturally relevant Alzheimer's research, participate in national research projects, and provide local access to clinical trials.

Hawai'i is home to more than 31,000 residents living with Alzheimer's disease, and this number is expected to grow as our population ages. Yet despite the increasing need, our state currently lacks a coordinated research structure to better understand dementia, improve early detection, and expand access to new treatments and clinical trials. Families across Hawai'i, especially those caring for loved ones diagnosed at younger ages or experiencing rapid decline, often struggle to find answers or research opportunities close to home.

The Dementia Research Unit (DRU) would help fill this gap by creating a centralized hub at the University of Hawai'i dedicated to dementia research, collaboration, and community support. Establishing the DRU is the first step Hawai'i needs to eventually qualify for major federal Alzheimer's research funding and to bring more clinical trials and scientific resources to our state. This will ensure that Hawai'i's diverse communities, including Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations who face higher dementia risks, are included in research that reflects their unique needs.

I respectfully urge you to support this important bill so that Hawai'i can build the research capacity needed to better understand dementia, improve care, and bring new hope and new resources to families across our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Rosalie Char

SB-2657

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 4:26:47 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/11/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lila Mower	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strongly support.

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2657
RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH**

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair

Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Angus L.K. McKelvey, Vice Chair

Aloha Chair Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Tani Kalei Salazar and I'm a Social Worker, born and raised in Honolulu, testifying as an individual in support of the intent of SB 2657. Three of my grandparents lived with dementia. Our 'ohana experienced the struggles of not knowing what type of dementia they had and not knowing what kinds of treatment or care options there were.

I support the establishment of an Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Research Center of Hawai'i within the University of Hawai'i John A. Burns School of Medicine. This would build capacity in our state to more resources for local research on interventions to ensure they are appropriate for our diverse island population. When we met with other community stakeholders, this was a priority shared by several community members, organizations, and caregivers from various backgrounds.

I appreciate the sustainability of these efforts with the new positions and the collaboration outlined in this measure.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Tani K. Salazar

Tani Kalei Salazar, LSW, MSW

SB-2657

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 2:27:04 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/11/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry Support

2657 SB RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH.

SB-2657

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 7:44:15 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/11/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tanya Aynessazian	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I write in support of SB 2657, which establishes the Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias Research Center of Hawaii at the *University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine*.

Our kūpuna, caregivers, families, and communities are deeply affected by Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias — conditions that not only impact cognitive health but reach into every part of daily life, caregiving, and family wellbeing. This bill takes important steps to build research capacity here in Hawai‘i, allowing us to better understand how these diseases manifest in our diverse local population, including Asian American and Pacific Islander communities that are often under-represented in mainland research.

Thank you for supporting SB 2657 so that Hawai‘i can lead the way in research that honors our people, uplifts social, whole-body and medical care of dementia, and brings hope to families facing dementia across the state.