



February 9, 2015

LATE TESTIMONY: Written Only

To: The Honorable Josh Green, Chair
The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair
The Honorable Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair
The Honorable Brian T. Taniguchi, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection
Members of the Senate Committee on Health

From: Hawaii Public Health Association (HPHA)

Subject: SB1030 Relating to Health

Dear Chair Green, Chair Baker, and Members of the Committees,

HPHA is an association of over 600 community members, public health professionals, and organizations statewide dedicated to improving public health. HPHA also serves as a voice for public professionals and as a repository for information about public health in the Pacific.

HPHA supports SB1030 which increases the legal age of sale of all tobacco products, including electronic smoking devices (ESDs), from 18 to 21.

In Hawai'i, ESD use is alarmingly high and measures to limit accessibility to youth and young adults will help protect younger generations in Hawai'i from being exposed to nicotine during formative years. According to the Hawaii Youth Tobacco Survey, lifetime e-cigarette use among high school students tripled from 5.1 percent in 2011 to 17.6 percent in 2013. Use also quadrupled among middle school students, from 1.8 percent to 7.9 percent, during the same time period. The rate of uptake for these products is alarming and the passage of measures to decrease accessibility to ESDs at a young age is urgently needed.

In addition to targeting high school and middle school youth with interventions to prevent smoking, the U.S. Surgeon General Report states that prevention efforts must also focus on young adults ages 18 through 25. Statistics show that almost no one starts smoking regularly after age 25. Nearly nine out of ten individuals started smoking by age 18, and 99% started by age 26. Progression from occasional to daily smoking almost always occurs by age 26. Efforts to raise the age of sale of all tobacco products to 21 may delay access that can save thousands of young people from adopting the lifelong habit.



According to the CDC, nicotine use by youths in any form is unsafe and can harm adolescent brain development. Novel products such as e-cigarettes threaten to undermine progress made in tobacco control over the last 20 years by luring kids into an addiction to nicotine. As a community desiring better health outcomes for our young people than was possible for our parents, the HPHA encourages the State Legislature to raise the legal age of sale of all tobacco products to 21 and proactively consider other regulations that protect youth and young adults from the harmful effects of tobacco.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on one of Hawai'i's most pressing health issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Holly Kessler, Executive Director
Hawaii Public Health Association