



DATE 8 Feb 2022

To: Representative Ryan I. Yamane, Chair
Representative Adrian K. Tam, Vice Chair
Committee of Health, Human Services and Homeslessness

Re: Testimony in Support of HB 1799 RELATING TO ASTHMA

Hrg: 10 Feb 2022, 9:00 AM House conference room 329 via Videoconference

Dear Chair Yamane, Vice Chair Tam, and Members of the Committees,

The Hawai'i Public Health Association (HPHA) is a group of over 450 community members, public health professionals, and organizations statewide dedicated to improving public health. Our mission is to promote public health in Hawai'i through leadership, collaboration, education and advocacy. Additionally, HPHA aims to call attention to issues around social justice and equity in areas that extend beyond the traditional context of health (e.g., education, digital equity, cultural sensitivity), which can have profound impacts on health equity and well-being. As stewards of public health, HPHA is also advocating for equity in all policies.

HPHA strongly supports HB1799, relating to asthma. This bill provides the needed support that children with asthma require by having all Department of Education teachers trained on asthma education, one of the most common chronic childhood diseases in Hawai'i. While we understand that the Department of Education is taxed with a variety of roles, because of the nature of asthma, it's important that all people that work with children understand what asthma is, how to react in an emergency, and what may trigger asthma attacks. This is particularly important for young children, who make up most asthma-related emergency room visits. While many older children may carry inhalers and need little help when they have an asthma attack because they can identify triggers and use their inhalers themselves, younger children may need the help of a teacher to get through an asthma attack.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), on average, in a classroom of 30 children, about 3 are likely to have asthma. CDC also recommend that schools provide asthma education for students with asthma and education programs for school staff, parents, and families. This bill would allow our state to be in-line with CDC recommendations.



This bill also has significant impact on promoting health equity. Low-income populations, Native Hawaiians, and children living near traffic intersections experience more emergency department visits, hospitalizations, and deaths due to asthma than the general population. Schools are an important part of a child's life by providing a safe and healthy environment for all children to learn and thrive.

We strongly support HB1799, House Draft 1, and respectfully ask that you pass this measure to ensure that our keiki with asthma have the best chance to thrive in all environments. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important public health issue.

Respectfully submitted,

J. Leocadia Conlon, PhD, MPH, PA-C
Legislative Committee Chair
Hawaii Public Health Association