



DATE: 4 April 2022

To: Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Re: Strong Support for HB 598 Relating to Tobacco Products

Hrg: 5 April 2022, 10:00 AM Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

Dear Chairs Rhoads and Dela Cruz, Vice-Chairs Keohokalole and Keith-Agaran, 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 HB 598, which will create parity between e-cigarettes and other tobacco products by applying a tobacco tax to e-cigarettes at the same rate as other tobacco products; requiring licensing and permitting for tobacco retailers and wholesalers to help implement and enforce current laws and regulations; restrict online sales of e-cigarette products.

In Hawai'i, one in three high school students and one in five middle school students report "current use" of e-cigarettes (2019 YRBS). E-cigarettes are now the most popular tobacco product among youth – and that's largely because it's not subject to many of the regulations other tobacco products are subject to. By implementing the same policies and regulations Hawai'i used to reduce cigarette use to record lows, we can reverse the trends in youth e-cigarette use.



E-cigarettes are the only tobacco products without a tax. Taxing tobacco products and cigarettes is a proven strategy to reduce youth initiation and encourage those who smoke or use tobacco products to quit.

We strongly support HB 598 and respectfully ask that you pass this measure. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important public health issue affecting members of our community, especially our keiki.

Respectfully submitted,

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