



DATE 4 April 2022

To: Rep. Sylvia Luke, Chair  
Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Vice Chair  
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Re: **Testimony in Support of SB 2822, SD 1, HD 1 RELATING TO ASTHMA,  
WITH SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS**

**Hrg: 5 April 2022, 1:30PM Conference room 308**

Dear Chair Luke, Vice Chair Yamashita, 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 SB 2822, relating to asthma. We would like to express our ongoing support for the original intent of Senate Bill 2822, Senate Draft 1, House Draft 1, relating to asthma, and offer suggested amendments. This bill originally provided the needed support that children with asthma in our schools. However, by simply authorizing the Department of Education to create asthma trainings for teachers and not making them mandatory it does not meet the need to have all teachers trained on asthma education, one of the most common chronic childhood diseases in Hawaii. **Therefore, we respectfully ask that the Section 3 of the bill be amended to say that "the department SHALL develop and provide asthma training to teachers and other department employees who interact with students" rather than MAY develop the mentioned training.**

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, and respectfully ask that you pass, SB2822, SD 1, HD 1 to ensure that our children with asthma have the best fighting chance to thrive in all environments. With the suggested amendments, this bill has the possibility of doing that.

Respectfully submitted,

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