



March 18, 2018

To: House Committee on Health and Human Services
The Honorable John Mizuno, Chair
The Honorable Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: **Strong Opposition for SB2843 SD1**

Hrg: March 20, 2018 at 8:30am room 329

The Hawaii Public Health Association is a group of over 600 community members, public health professionals and organizations statewide dedicated to improving public health. HPHA also serves as a voice for public health professionals and as a repository for information about public health in the Pacific.

HPHA strongly opposes **SB2843 SD1** which would lower the tax on large cigars to the lesser of a) 50 cents each or b) 50 percent of the wholesale price for each cigar.

Cigars are tobacco products and are not a safe alternative to cigarettes. Cigars vary widely in sizes, flavor, and packaging that make them appealing and appear less harmful to broader audiences including kids. Cigar smoking causes cancer, heart disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Large cigars can contain more nicotine, tar, and carbon monoxide than cigarettes.

Hawaii ranks among the highest in the nation on passing smoke-free and tobacco control laws protecting our residents and children. Lowering or capping taxes on any tobacco product sends the wrong public health message. Large cigars are already taxed at lower rates than other tobacco products. Lowering the tax on large cigars compared to cigarettes and small cigars will make these products more affordable to price-sensitive youth and encourages those smoking cigarettes to switch to cigars, rather than quit. Further, lowering the tax will make it even more appealing for teens to start smoking.

Hawaii has been leading the way in tobacco control, and this bill is a step backwards for our State. HPHA strongly oppose SB2843 and asks you to hold this bill in committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on important health issues affecting people in Hawaii.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Holly Kessler'.

Holly Kessler, Executive Director
Hawaii Public Health Association