



February 27, 2023

To: Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary

Re: Testimony in Support of SB1 SD1

Hrg: 1 March 2023, 9:20 AM, Conference Room 016

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. Therefore, as stewards of public health, HPHA is also advocating for equity in all policies.

We strongly support SB1 SD1, which will help ensure access to reproductive health care and protects an individual's reproductive autonomy in the state of Hawai i. It is important to bolster State policies related to reproductive health particularly in light of the United States Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* (2022).

The public health community strongly believes that abortion care is healthcare. Access to abortion care is an essential component of the right to healthcare. Already, more and more women on the mainland are dying due to restrictive laws surrounding abortion and without abortion access, more women will die. A report from the Commonwealth Fund published in December 2022 showed that overall death rates for women of reproductive age (15-44) in abortion-restrictive states were 34 percent higher than in abortion-access states¹. Specific to pregnancy related deaths, in 2020 maternal death rates were 63 percent higher in abortion-restriction states than in abortion access-states¹. Additionally there are significant inequities as racial and ethnic minority groups have a higher burden of maternal deaths¹. This cannot happen in Hawai i, and this bill is a crucial step towards ensuring equitable access and protection for all regarding a right in our State. With the expansion to include more public health professionals to include licensed physician assistants, this will help lower the burden of the medical community as physician assistants are highly trained and nationally certified. The bill would also provide shield provisions to protect Hawai i abortion providers from the long arm of foreign jurisdictions. Each state has the right to make their own decisions and allowing other states to dictate their laws upon Hawai i undermines our sovereignty as a state. Policy and law that respects people's need for health care is following the Hawaiian principles of Pono, Kuleana, and Aloha.

We strongly support **SB1 SD1** and respectfully ask that you pass this measure to ensure that Hawai i remains a state that protects access to reproductive health care and an individual reproductive autonomy. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important public health issue that impacts the health and well-being of our community.

Respectfully submitted,

Holly Kessler
Executive Director

1. Eugene Declercq et al., *The U.S. Maternal Health Divide: The Limited Maternal Health Services and Worse Outcomes of States Proposing New Abortion Restrictions* (Commonwealth Fund, Dec. 2022). <https://doi.org/10.26099/z7dz-8211>