Hawai'i Public Health Association

February 24, 2024

To: COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
        Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
        Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Re: SUPPORT of HB1773 HD1- Relating to Dementia (Law Enforcement Training)

Hrg: Monday, February 26, 2024 at 10:00am

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.

HPHA supports HB 1773 HD1as the bill aims to require law enforcement officers to review dementia training materials for at least 1 hour per year.

By next year, the number of people living with Alzheimer's disease is expected to rise to over 36,000. A person with dementia may not remember his or her name or address—and can become disoriented, even in familiar places. Six in ten people with dementia will wander at some point. When individuals with dementia are lost, they may show signs of anxiety, fear, or hostility—all of which can escalate to more aggressive behaviors. As the disease progresses and individuals with dementia forget family members and societal norms, there may be cases of false reports and victimization, indecent exposure, and shoplifting. Dementia training for law enforcement officers is critical to meet the growing prevalence of the disease and ensure our state is dementia capable of protecting these individuals.

HPHA strongly supports HB 1773 HD1 and respectfully asks that you pass this measure. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important public health issue.

Respectfully submitted,

Holly Kessler
Executive Director