

Testimony on SCR30
Monday, March 30, 1:07 PM
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference
State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and members of the committee,

My name is Barbara Black, and I live in Ninole. My husband Peter has Alzheimer's and I am his caregiver. I am in strong support of SCR30, which requests the Auditor to assess the social and financial effects of mandating health insurance coverage for brief cognitive assessments for individuals 50 years of age and older.

We were stunned when we learned that Peter has Alzheimer's. However, that relatively early diagnosis turned out to be a blessing since it led us to plan for the future, and for Peter, access to one of the new Alzheimer's drugs. I, meanwhile, was learning all I could about Alzheimer's and caregiving.

Covering brief cognitive assessments for those over 50 would help fill the gap for people who are not yet eligible for Medicare but may already be experiencing cognitive decline. Early screening can lead to earlier diagnosis, care planning, and access to treatment that may slow disease progression and improve quality of life.

Hawai'i is facing a growing dementia crisis. More than 31,000 residents are currently living with Alzheimer's disease, and this number is expected to double by 2050. Many individuals are diagnosed at the dementia stage rather than mild cognitive impairment because early cognitive changes are missed. This delay often means lost treatment opportunities, avoidable emergencies, and significant emotional and financial strain on families.

I respectfully urge you to support SCR30 so all Hawai'i residents have a better chance at early detection, coordinated care, and support.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,
Barbara Black

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