

**Testimony on HB1853 HD1 SD1
RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE
Tuesday, April 7, 10:31 AM
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference
State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street**

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the committee,

My name is Barbara Black and I live in Ninole on the Big Island. I strongly support HB1853 HD1 which would provide a network of memory care across the state with an emphasis on providing access for individuals living on neighbor islands and rural areas.

I am the caregiver for my spouse, Peter Black, who lives with Alzheimer's. Peter was diagnosed about 10 years ago. We were extremely lucky in that early diagnosis, and it was possible only because we had the ability to go to Oahu and to San Francisco. There were no memory care facilities on this island and, as we all know, PCPs are overwhelmed on the neighbor islands. Moreover, many are reluctant to care for those with dementia of any kind.

Peter's relatively early diagnosis was a gift to us as we contemplated our future. We were able to plan how we would manage this disease as it inevitably progressed.

I have had the opportunity during this time to learn (online and in person) more about the disease and caregiving. This has been incredibly helpful to me as we have moved forward through the progression of this disease. Caregiving for a spouse with Alzheimer's is complex and difficult; the ability to adjust and learn as early as possible has helped me immensely.

Early detection also provides the possibility of early access to treatments to slow progression of the disease. Treatments are becoming more accessible and effective every day.

Access to early detection, treatment, and coordinated support should be easily available and accessible to all those dealing with this disease throughout the state.

Hawai'i is facing a growing dementia crisis. Today, more than 31,000 Hawai'i residents are living with Alzheimer's disease, and this number is expected to double by 2050 as our population ages. Many families,

especially on neighbor islands and in rural communities, struggle to access timely diagnosis, care planning, or memory care services. This leads to delayed or missing treatment windows, avoidable emergencies, and significant emotional and financial strain.

The HANAI Memory Network offers a statewide solution by creating Dementia Care Specialists in every county and Memory Clinics on each neighbor island. This will help people get diagnosed earlier, connect families to resources, and bring memory care closer to home. Early detection and coordinated support can make a meaningful difference in quality of life for those living with dementia and for the caregivers who support them every day.

I respectfully urge you to support this legislation to ensure that all Hawai'i's kūpuna, no matter where they live, have access to timely memory care, early diagnosis, and the support they need.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Barbara Black