

Testimony on SB2657 SD1
RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS RESEARCH
Monday, March 16, 2026, 2:00 PM
Conference Room 309 & Videoconference
State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the committee,

My name is Barbara Black and I live in Ninole on the Big Island. I am testifying to strongly support SB265 SD1 that would establish an Alzheimer's and related dementias research unit at the University of Hawaii which would allow the University to receive federal research funding to conduct culturally relevant dementia research, participate in national research projects, and provide local access to clinical trials.

My spouse, Peter, is living with Alzheimer's and I am his caretaker. I think the Alzheimer's research unit at UH would be a huge step forward for the people of these islands, especially for those living with Alzheimer's and their caregivers, they could then have local access to clinical trials and research studies. Culturally relevant Alzheimer's research is much needed in our culturally rich and very diverse state.

Hawai'i is home to more than 31,000 residents living with Alzheimer's disease, and this number is expected to grow as our population ages. Yet despite the increasing need, our state currently lacks a coordinated research structure to better understand dementia, improve early detection, and expand access to new treatments and clinical trials. Families across Hawai'i, especially those caring for loved ones diagnosed at younger ages or experiencing rapid decline, often struggle to find answers or research opportunities close to home.

The proposed research unit would help fill this gap by creating a centralized hub at the University of Hawai'i dedicated to dementia research, collaboration, and community support. Establishing this Unit is the first step Hawai'i needs to eventually qualify for major federal Alzheimer's research funding and to bring more clinical trials and scientific resources to our state. This will ensure that Hawai'i's diverse communities, including Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations who face higher dementia risks, are included in research that reflects their unique needs.

I respectfully urge you to support this important bill so that Hawai'i can build the research capacity needed to better understand dementia of all kinds, improve care, and bring new hope and new resources to families across our islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,
Barbara Black