



Statement of Honor for ALL

Before the

Hawaii State Legislature Health Committee

DECLARING JUNE 27 OF EACH YEAR AS POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS INJURY AWARENESS DAY AND DESIGNATING THE MONTH OF JUNE OF EACH YEAR AS POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS INJURY AWARENESS MONTH IN HAWAII

Hearing Date: Thursday, March 21st, 2019

Chairman Mizuno, Vice Chair Kobayashi, and distinguished members of the committee, on behalf of Honor for ALL I would like to extend our gratitude for being given the opportunity to provide our support for a bill requiring the Governor of Hawaii to proclaim annually the month of June as Post-traumatic Stress Injury (PTSI) Awareness Month, and to proclaim annually June 27th as Post-traumatic Stress Injury Awareness Day in honor of all citizens suffering from Post-traumatic Stress Injury. Honor for ALL applauds the committee's continued dedication in addressing the critical issues surrounding mental health care; and sincerely thank all concerned who introduced this important legislation.

My name is Tom Mahany. I am a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley and a former cadet at the United States Military Academy from July of 1965 to April of 1968. In May of 1969 I was deployed to Vietnam with the 101st Airborne Division. I lost a brother-in-law to suicide after a long struggle with PTSI acquired in Vietnam. In December 2009 I founded Stop the Loss Foundation, now Honor for ALL, following a 29 day hunger strike to raise awareness of the issue of PTSI and suicide.

Honor for ALL is a 501(c) 3 established in 2010 to promote understanding and recognition of the signature wounds of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Although initially a veterans focused organization, our concern has grown to include all who suffer the psychological and moral injuries now grouped together under the term *post-traumatic stress disorder* (PTSD), a term that carries with it significant stigma that can add to the ensuing adversity of these wounds, discouraging some from seeking care and others from caring - a deplorable as well as avoidable circumstance which can lead to personally dangerous behavior.

Post-traumatic Stress Injury is a public health issue. It affects individuals, families, and communities.

Service members, veterans, fire fighters, police men and women, and rape victims are most at risk for Post-traumatic Stress Injury and require optimal support for emotional and mental health needs.

Attitudes, beliefs, and environmental barriers discourage impacted individuals and prevent them from moving forward and seeking evaluation or treatment for fear of reprisals or negative consequences impacting their careers.

An integrated network of support capable of providing effective mental health services is needed.

An annual gubernatorial proclamation establishing the month of June as Post-traumatic Stress Awareness Month, and June 27th as Post-traumatic Stress Awareness Day in honor of all citizens suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Injury would provide an opportunity for state and community organizations to join together to raise awareness about Post-Traumatic Stress Injury; host events; and highlight resources to promote hope and healing for those impacted by Post-traumatic Stress Injury.

Some scholars have observed that commemorative legislation has universal and patriotic appeal and provides an opportunity to connect directly with constituents, which can help fulfill representational responsibilities to Members' district or state.¹

With respect to using the term "Injury" as opposed to "Disorder, Post Traumatic Stress *Injury*" would help to make clear that the injured party is not at fault. The natural human reaction to a life-threatening incident should not be labeled a disorder.

Finally, consider the sentiments of Dr. Bertram Brown - former Director for the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) in Bethesda, MD who asserts that *[t]he change of PTSD to PTSI will NOT change the basics of the biology and clinical manifestations of this diagnosis. It WILL provide a sense of dignity to the men and women and their families who were injured when they were in "harm's way"*.

Anything we can do to get away from the word "disorder" can be considered intellectual growth. Removing the "D" takes away from the stigma and that is good. Adding the "I" for injury introduces honor and that is better.

Now is the time for the Hawaii State Legislature to do its part and make permanent a gubernatorial proclamation proclaiming *June* as Post-traumatic Stress *Injury* Awareness Month and *June 27th* as Post-traumatic Stress *Injury* Awareness Day.

Thank you.

CONTACT

Tom Mahany

Executive Director

Honor for ALL

[249.224.4875](tel:249.224.4875)

¹<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R44431.pdf>