



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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In reply, please refer to:
File:

House Committee on Finance

S.B. 105, SD2, RELATING TO HEALTH

**Testimony of Loretta J. Fuddy, A.C.S.W., M.P.H.
Director of Health**

Monday, April 1, 2013, 2:00 P.M.

1 **Department's Position:** The Department of Health supports SB105, SD2, provided that its passage
2 does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in our Executive Budget, and offers comments.

3 **Fiscal Implications:** Appropriates \$\$ for use by DOH.

4 **Purpose and Justification:** This measure is timely as falls and fall related injuries among older adults
5 impose an enormous burden on individuals, society, and Hawaii's health care system. Among older
6 adults 65 years and older, falls are by far the leading cause of injury-related deaths and hospitalizations,
7 and by far the leading cause of EMS attended injuries among older adults. Direct medical charges for
8 fall and fall-related injuries among older adults amount to \$82.8 million, an amount that could be
9 doubled if you were to include the costs of rehabilitation and long term care. Falls impact the quality of
10 life and independence of older adults. Over half of those hospitalized from a fall go to a care home or
11 rehabilitation center and many never regain full independence.

12 However, falls are not an inevitable part of aging and can be prevented. The Department is
13 committed to addressing this critical public health issue and has already taken some steps to address fall
14 injuries among older adults in Hawaii. These efforts include most recently organizing a short-term Fall
15 Prevention Taskforce to develop and support a just completed statewide plan of action for preventing

1 falls and reducing the severity of fall-related injuries that will strengthen existing collaborative efforts to
2 address fall prevention.

3 Considering the magnitude of falls among older adults and the anticipated increase in this age
4 group in the next 20 years to over 22% of Hawaii's population, the current level of dedicated resources
5 for fall prevention are insufficient. The fall prevention and early detection program and the dedicated
6 position proposed in this bill will enable the Department of Health to support a coordinated state-wide
7 approach that is needed to prevent and reduce the impact of falls among older adults. The Department is
8 prepared to carry out the duties as described in the bill in collaboration with community partners.

9 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.