February 14, 2019

To: Chair Donovan M. Dela Cruz  
   Vice Chair Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran  
   Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Re: Comments on SB698 SD1

Hrg: February 15, 2019 Conference Room 2111, State Capitol

The Hawaii Public Health Association is a group of over 600 community members, public health professionals and organizations statewide dedicated to improving public health. HPHA also serves as a voice for public health professionals and as a repository for information about public health in the Pacific.

The Hawai'i Public Health Association (HPHA) supports SB 698 SD1, which codifies the 17 United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals in Hawaii Revised Statutes Chapter 226. The Sustainable Development Goals relate to a broad range of social and environmental conditions, including: poverty, hunger, education, climate change, gender equality, water, sanitation, energy, environment and social justice. All of these conditions impact health across Hawai‘i.

These conditions are often referred to as social determinants of health. Social determinants of health are an underlying cause of today’s major societal health dilemmas including obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and depression. As stated by the New England Journal of Medicine, “complex interactions and feedback loops exist among the social determinants of health. For example, poor health or lack of education can impact employment opportunities, which in turn constrain income. Low income reduces access to healthcare and nutritious food and increases hardship. Hardship causes stress, which in turn promotes unhealthy coping mechanisms such as substance abuse and overeating of unhealthy foods.

The 17 United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals provide a clear framework for action to guide Hawai‘i’s development and actions to address environmental challenges. They tackle the root causes of health and health disparities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on important health issues affecting people in Hawai‘i.

Respectfully submitted,

Claire Townsend Ing, DrPH  
Legislative Committee Chair