
**TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB1853 HD1
RELATING TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE
Wednesday, March 18, 1:00 PM
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference
State Capitol - 415 South Beretania Street**

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair McKelvey, and members of the committee,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Girard “Jerry” Perone. I live in Kaka‘ako and serve as a volunteer Ambassador with the Alzheimer’s Association in Hawai‘i. **I strongly support HANAI** because dementia in Hawai‘i is no longer only a private family burden. It is a growing public health, caregiver, and health-system challenge.

HANAI is a practical response. It is designed to create a **statewide dementia care network** with one **Dementia Care Specialist** embedded in each county, **one contracted memory clinic** in each neighbor-island county, **coordination through the Executive Office on Aging**, and an **annual budget target of about \$3 million**. Its intended results are earlier diagnosis, better access to treatment, stronger caregiver and provider support, and fewer emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

This matters because the scale of the problem is already large. Hawai‘i has about **31,200 kūpuna age 65** and older living with Alzheimer’s. Families here **provide roughly 111 million hours of unpaid dementia caregiving** each year, valued at about \$2.8 billion. Alzheimer’s-related Medicaid costs in Hawai‘i are about \$309 million annually, and ED visits among people with dementia are reported at 1,248 per 1,000. Those are not abstract numbers. They represent families in crisis, caregivers under strain, and a system that is too often reacting late instead of helping early.

For HHS, the **central question is whether HANAI will help people sooner and more effectively. It will.** Dementia rarely begins with one dramatic event. It usually starts with confusion, missed medications, wandering risk, falls, caregiver exhaustion, and delayed diagnosis. HANAI helps move Hawai‘i from crisis-driven dementia care to planned care. It gives families a front door into the system, helps them get assessed earlier, connects them to real care pathways, and improves access on the neighbor islands where gaps are often greatest.

HANAI is also fiscally responsible. At a **\$3 million annual appropriation** against a **\$309 million Medicaid dementia cost baseline**, the **break-even threshold is only about 0.97 percent**. If HANAI reduces Medicaid Alzheimer’s spending by **about 1 percent, it pays for itself even** before counting household savings,

caregiver stability, or quality-of-life gains. That is a modest threshold for a program specifically designed to reduce avoidable emergency use, improve coordination, and delay higher-cost deterioration. However, even if the program cost grows to \$5 million the breakeven threshold grows to only 3.24% (see table below)

Break-even table using \$309,000,000 Medicaid baseline

Annual HANAI cost	Break-even Medicaid reduction	One-line interpretation
\$1,000,000	0.32%	Need about 0.32% less Medicaid dementia spend vs. \$309M baseline
\$3,000,000	0.97%	Need about 0.97% less Medicaid dementia spend vs. \$309M baseline
\$5,000,000	1.62%	Need about 1.62% less Medicaid dementia spend vs. \$309M baseline
\$10,000,000	3.24%	Need about 3.24% less Medicaid dementia spend vs. \$309M baseline

Break-even equation:

Break-even Medicaid reduction (%) = (Annual **HANAI** cost ÷ Annual Medicaid Alzheimer's/dementia spending) × 100

Just as important, HANAI can be held accountable. The program structure already contemplates reporting, measurable outcomes, and county-level visibility. That means the Legislature is not being asked to fund a vague idea. It is being asked to support a defined, measurable public health response to a clearly growing problem.

Please pass HANAI. Dementia is already moving through Hawai'i's families, hospitals, and communities every day. The question is whether the State will continue paying for it at the crisis stage or build a system that meets families earlier, treats them with dignity, and manages this challenge with intelligence.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify

Respectfully,
Girard Perone