

# hawaii family forum

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February 5, 2003

To: The Committee on Human Services & Housing  
The Honorable Michael Kahikina, Chair  
The Honorable Maile Shimabukuro, Vice-Chair  
Honorable Committee Members  
The Committee on Health  
The Honorable Dennis Arakaki, Chair  
The Honorable Scott Nishimoto, Vice-Chair  
Honorable Committee Members

From: Kelly Rosati

Re: Strong Support for HB 917: Palliative Care & Pain Management  
Joint HSH/HLT Hearing on Friday, February 7, 2003

Hawaii Family Forum is a non-profit, pro-family education organization committed to preserving and strengthening families in Hawaii. One of the most difficult times in the life of any individual and his or her family is facing the dying process. HB 917 will improve end-of-life care for people facing death and, as such, will improve life for many Hawaii families. As such, HFF strongly supports HB 917.

People facing the end of their lives deserve the best possible end-of-life care. They deserve to have both their pain and symptoms managed effectively. They deserve to be comfortable and to understand what is happening at both a physical and emotional level. They deserve to be surrounded by loved ones until death comes.

People facing the end of their lives currently have the right to refuse unwanted medical treatments. They have the right to designate a surrogate to make health care decisions for them in the event of their incapacity. They have the right to engage in advance care planning to determine the course of their future care and treatment. They have the option of dying at home through the use of hospice care.

People facing the end of life also naturally have great fears. They fear pain, they fear losing control and they fear death. They deserve to have their fears addressed.

PAIN

Dying patients should never suffer in unmanaged pain. Advances in medical care are such all pain can be managed. The problem is that many medical professionals are unaware and untrained in these advancements. Another problem is that many physicians falsely believe that aggressive and effective pain management, which may have the unintended and secondary effect of hastening death, is illegal.

**HB 917 will go a long way toward ensuring physicians that effective and aggressive treatment is good medicine that will not subject them to legal scrutiny.**

PALLIATIVE CARE

Palliative care is the relief of distressing symptoms. There are many distressing symptoms that accompany the dying process. Advances in medical care make the relief of those symptoms possible through good palliative care. This is new and emerging area of emphasis for our health care community. And while there is still much to do, many improvements have taken place and are underway in Hawaii (see attached HPACC information sheet).

HB 917 establishes an Advisory Commission on Hawaii palliative care and pain management within the Executive Office on Aging. This Commission will serve both a leadership and coordinating function, which will help place Hawaii among the state leaders in improving end-of-life care.

CONSENSUS NOT CONTROVERSY

Unlike the divisive issue of doctor-assisted suicide, the improvement of end-of-life care is an area of strong consensus. Improving pain management and palliative care are important issues for the legislature and the community. We hope the legislature will respond quickly and decisively to improve end of life care for all Hawaii's people.

We urge you to support HB 917. Mahalo nui loa for your kind consideration.