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February 25, 2019

Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Ty J.K. Cullen, Vice Chair
Committee on Finance

Dear Chair Luke, Vice Chair Cullen, and Committee Members:

RE: HB 330, HD1 Relating to Suicide Prevention

HB 330 sent me to Google to better understand the need for youth suicide early intervention, prevention, and education programs. The statistics are enough to explain the importance of this bill.

Suicide deaths in Hawai'i County, according to our Hawai'i State Department of Health, average 20.4 deaths per 100,000 population, compared to a national average of about 13 deaths per 100,000. When it comes to youth age 15-19, the number is even higher—26.4 per 100,000; and for young adults aged 20-24, higher still—37.9 per 100,000.

My understanding is that statistics for Kauai and Maui are similarly disturbing.

Every one of these deaths is preventable, and if we have the expertise to offer programs that can reach these young people and suggest different paths forward for them, it seems we owe it to them, and to their families, friends, and loved ones, to make the effort. In fact, we owe it to ourselves as a just and caring society.

I hope you will act favorably on HB 330, HD1, and perhaps include funding in the House version of the State budget as well.

Respectfully Submitted,

Harry Kim
MAYOR