



July 23, 2014

Honorable Mazie K. Hirono
U.S. Senate
330 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Hirono:

On behalf of Hep B United, a national coalition to address the public health challenge of hepatitis B, we write to thank you for your leadership and support in the introduction of S. 2538, the "Viral Hepatitis Testing Act of 2014." There has been a growing momentum across the country to address viral hepatitis. Your support of the legislation is critical to ensuring nationwide efforts are supported for improved awareness, prevention, care, and access to treatment for combating viral hepatitis.

As you know, both hepatitis B and C are important health issues for Hawaiians. Hepatitis B affects up to two million Americans – yet the disease is often overlooked and largely under-diagnosed. It is estimated that 1 in 12 Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders is living with hepatitis B, yet nearly 2 out of 3 do not know they are infected. Left untreated, up to 25 percent of people with hepatitis B develop serious liver problems, including cirrhosis and liver cancer.

Our goal is to support and leverage the success of local hepatitis B community coalitions across the U.S. to increase hepatitis B awareness, screening, vaccination and linkage to care for Asian American and Pacific Islander and other at-risk communities. One of our coalitions is Hep Free Hawaii, a community campaign working to increase awareness and health access for those living with both hepatitis B and C. Through your leadership on the Viral Hepatitis Testing Act of 2014, our collective coalitions are closer to eliminating a staggering health disparity.

We thank you for your support in raising the profile of hepatitis and liver cancer as an urgent public health priority, and we look forward to working with you and your colleagues to ensure passage of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Joan M. Block, RN, BSN
Co-Chair, Hep B United
Executive Director, Hepatitis B Foundation

Jeff Caballero, MPH
Co-Chair, Hep B United
Executive Director, AAPCHO