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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
Nov. 20, 2015                                                    15-055

### Chronic Disease Symposium Highlights the Need for Statewide Policy Changes

HONOLULU – Dr. Howard Koh, former Assistant Secretary for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and other national experts in chronic disease prevention joined the Department of Health and local experts today at a symposium, "The Weight of the State: Solving the Chronic Disease Crisis through Innovative Policy Change." The event focused on shared best practices and policy priorities that are relevant for Hawaii, given the state's rapidly rising obesity rates and its contribution to developing debilitating chronic health conditions.

"Our state is facing an epidemic of obesity and diabetes type 2 that is preventable, and costly to our health and pocket books," said Director of Health Virginia Pressler. "We need to work collaboratively with leaders across every sector of society if we want to reduce this unnecessary burden on our people and economy." Dr. Koh explained in his keynote address that health is shaped by the policies, conditions, and environments in which people live, labor, learn, play, and pray. Over 100 elected officials, leadership from state agencies, healthcare and community organizations attended the symposium.

More than 60 percent of Hawaii adults—or 3 in 5—are living with at least one chronic disease or condition such as diabetes, heart disease, or cancer. Obesity is associated with a significantly increased risk of preventable chronic disease. Obesity has doubled in the past 15 years, and we are now seeing similar trends with diabetes rates. The Department of Health reported that when data is adjusted for age and awareness, the rates of pre-diabetes and diabetes in Hawaii correspond to rates of obesity. Forty-two percent of Native Hawaiians and 49 percent of Other Pacific Islanders are obese, and 25 percent and 27 percent respectively are estimated to have pre-diabetes or diabetes.

Additionally, Hawaii spends an estimated $470 million on obesity-related medical costs and $770 million on diabetes-related medical costs annually. These figures do not account for indirect costs such as reduced worker productivity and absenteeism that results from having one or more of these diseases or conditions.

A mural developed with input by over 30 organizations statewide was also unveiled at the symposium. The policies illustrated were highly recommended by more than 140 community

partners who participated in the 2015 Physical Activity and Nutrition (PAN) Forum, which took place in May. This mural, called "Healthy Policies for a Healthy Hawaii," depicts the implementation of 19 state-level policies across four sectors of society: Communities, Worksites, Schools, and Health Care Systems. It is a vision for Hawaii where physical activity and access to healthy food, are integrated into our daily lifestyle choices, where residents live, learn, work, shop, and care for each other. Health is integrated into the social, economic, and physical landscape.

The illustrated policies include: creating "complete streets" to ensure that all people in Hawaii have the ability to safely walk, bike, and access mass transportation; fostering a more robust local food system to reduce imports and producing more locally produced foods; institutional policies to access healthier food and beverage options; increasing health and physical education requirements for middle school students; and many others.

"It's been amazing to see partners from all sectors come together and identify solutions to the complex issue of obesity and chronic disease prevention," said Jessica Yamauchi, Chair of the Obesity Prevention Taskforce. "This mural provides a sense of place and what a health promoting community looks and feels like when these recommendations are in place."

To view the mural, or to learn more about the policy recommendations of the PAN Forum, please visit: http://health.hawaii.gov/chronic-disease/events.

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