



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Day at the Capitol event highlights Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month in March

HONOLULU – More than 350 individuals with developmental disabilities, their family members, and service providers from all islands will participate in the 18<sup>th</sup> annual Day at the Capitol event on Thursday, March 15, 2018, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The event will highlight national Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month in March and provide hands-on opportunities for participants to meet legislators in-person, learn about the legislative process, and network with others.

Individuals with developmental disabilities and their family members can sometimes face enormous challenges in accessing needed support services. Events such as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month help raise public awareness about the rights of individuals with a developmental disability to live independently, exert control over their own lives, and to actively participate in the community through full integration and inclusion. This year's national theme for the annual observance is "See Me for Me."

"When we look past the disability and recognize our similarities, everyone benefits," said Mary Brogan, Hawaii Department of Health Developmental Disabilities Division administrator. "Our goal is to raise public awareness of those with intellectual and developmental disabilities who live, work, play, vote and volunteer in our community, and who make meaningful contributions to society every day."

The all-day event will also include a proclamation signing by Governor David Ige at 9 a.m. in the governor's ceremonial room. Gov. Ige will proclaim March as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month in Hawaii, urging all citizens to recognize the abilities and contributions of people with developmental disabilities and engage and encourage them in their endeavors. Participants from Maui, Molokai, Lanai, Kauai, and Kona will attend the proclamation signing.

"Communities are made stronger when everyone is treated with respect and dignity, and empowered to live self-determined lives," said Patricia Morrissey, director of the Center on Disability Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Daintry Bartoldus, Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities administrator, added "Honoring our diversity and the contributions of those with developmental disabilities enriches our state and signifies Hawaii's commitment to equal opportunity, equal access, and equal rights for all."

This year's Day at the Capitol event is sponsored by the Hawaii Department of Health Developmental Disabilities Division, the Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities, and the Center on Disability Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

An estimated 22,600 people in Hawaii have a developmental disability that substantially restricts their ability to function in several major life activities. Some disabilities may be obvious, for instance requiring the use of a wheelchair. On the other hand, some disabilities—such as cognitive impairments that affect the way a person speaks, learns, or interacts—may not be as easily recognizable or identifiable.

The Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act defines a developmental disability as a severe, chronic disability which is attributable to a mental or physical impairment that substantially restricts the individual's functioning in several major life activities and requires support services that are of lifelong or extended duration. Examples include autism, traumatic brain injury, cerebral palsy, and Down syndrome.

For information about the Department of Health's Developmental Disabilities Division and resources for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families in Hawaii, go to <http://health.hawaii.gov/ddd/>. For information about the Center on Disability Studies visit <https://www.cds.hawaii.edu>, and to find out more about Councils on Developmental Disabilities go to <https://nacdd.org/>.

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