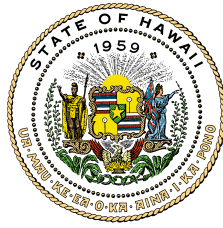


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**Policy Advisory Board for Elder Affairs (PABEA)**  
**Legislative Committee Meeting**  
**EOA Large Conference Room (250 S. Hotel St., Suite 406)**  
**And via Zoom**

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**Friday, January 9, 2026**

**PABEA Board Members in Attendance:** Poki'i Balaz, Beverly Gotelli, William Kinaka, Stephen Lung (left mtg at 11:16am), Sara Medeiros, Shelly Ogata, Marilyn Seely, Barbara Service, Gary Simon (Vice Chair), Rick Tabor (Chair), and Leslie Tanoue

**AAA/Community Members/EOA Staff Attendance:** Daintry Bartoldus, Caroline Cadirao (EOA), Charlene Iboshi, Joanne Kealoha, Roberta Murray, Jason Wong (EOA), and Sara Yuan

**Absent:** Suzie Schulberg (PABEA) and Kathy Wyatt

I. Guest Speakers

A. Representative Lisa Marten, Chair of the Homelessness and Human Services Committee, introduced herself. She represents District 51, which is the Waimanalo-Kailua area. She will be introducing three bills for this legislative session related to kupuna and social services.

1. Long-Term Care Financing Task Force- The task force will review and recommend strategies for financing long-term care services. Its recommendations will carry significant weight and help advance the issue. It will be a new bill introduced this year by Rep. Marten in the House and Senator Moriwaki in the Senate.

2. Hawaii Benefits Hub- a proposed statewide data system designed to streamline benefit applications. The bill was inspired by upcoming federal work requirements for Medicaid and community engagement requirements for SNAP, which now apply to individuals up to age 64 (previously 54–55). To receive SNAP, Medicaid, or federally funded public housing benefits, able-bodied adults without dependents must show work/community engagement. Exemptions

include caring for a child under 13 or caring for a disabled or elderly person. There is concern that many people may lose benefits because they cannot meet these requirements. Additionally, the rules are complex and vary across agencies.

The Hawaii Benefits Hub would allow agencies to access a single data pool to verify eligibility, reducing redundant data collection. This system benefits all recipients of state-administered programs, including older adults, by easing the burden of repeatedly reapplying and re-verifying for benefits.

3. Nonprofit Funding Challenges- Proposal to increase funding to nonprofits contracted by the state. Many nonprofits in the state provide essential social services to various groups, including the elderly. These organizations argue that their contracts do not cover the full cost of delivering mandated or priority services. Due to staffing shortages and retention challenges, state agencies are outsourcing more services to nonprofits, yet contract amounts remain unchanged despite rising operational costs.

#### Discussion/Comments:

- Questions from Zoom Chat whether work requirements were federal. Rep. Marten confirmed that the requirements are federal.
- Marilyn expressed support for the Hawaii Benefits Hub and the Long-Term Care Financing Task Force. She asked to define “able bodied”. Rep. Marten clarified that the definition varies by agency but generally refers to adults ages 18 to 64 who are not medically determined as disabled. Formerly exempt groups included individuals ages 55–64, homeless persons, and formerly incarcerated individuals—groups that may be particularly difficult to employ. Rep. Marten to send a chart detailing definitions and exemptions for "able-bodied" under SNAP, Medicaid, and public housing, as well as bill numbers when available, to the group.

She also mentioned another bill aimed at expanding volunteer opportunities at nonprofit agencies for people who may be unemployable but need to meet work or volunteer requirements. She noted that if individuals lose housing, SNAP, and Medicaid benefits, the resulting cost to the state would be significant.

- Caroline commented that there are volunteer opportunities at EOA and at the County Offices of Aging. Rep. Marten noted that the state plans to consolidate information about volunteer opportunities along with documentation and data collection of work and volunteer hours. She added that another bill will be introduced to provide additional funding to expand volunteer programs.
- Rick and Marilyn both asked how these requirements affect individuals with mental health issues and whether they are exempt. Rep. Marten explained that exemption depends on whether the individual has been medically determined to be “disabled.” Rick also mentioned that in the

past to be qualified for a mental health exemption a person must be unemployable for two years and documented by a doctor with a disability. Rep. Marten hasn't heard about the two years' wait time and will investigate it.

- Via the Zoom chat Daintry added that, "A person is NOT 'able-bodied' under SNAP or housing rules if they: Receive SSI, SSDI, or certain VA disability benefits".
- B. Coby Chock, Director of Policy and Advocacy at Alzheimer's Association Aloha Chapter. With ppt slides Coby presented Alzheimer's Association's 2026 legislative priorities, including:
1. Hawaii's Assistance for the Navigation of Alzheimer's Intervention (HANAI) Memory Network- proposal for new statewide initiative within EOA to expand access to early detection, treatment, and long-term dementia care. The network would include: 1) state dementia care specialist embedded in each County Office on Aging, and 2) memory clinics contracted with health systems and based on each county. The memory clinics would be part of a larger health system coordinated and contracted by EOA and staffed by specialized healthcare professionals and provide assessments, care plans, and referrals for patients with dementia. Coby explained that the program aims to improve access to care, particularly in rural areas, and could help reduce Medicaid spending on dementia care by enabling early diagnosis and treatment. Annual budget needed for implementation and start up is estimated at \$3 million for a few years and then will decrease to \$1million, which comes from state appropriations and Medicaid reimbursements. Estimated budget is less than what the state currently spends, about \$309 million annually, on Medicaid for people with Alzheimer's disease.
  2. Dementia Training for First Responders- Critical for first responders to receive training on how to effectively manage situations where someone with dementia is lost, anxious, afraid, agitated and in some cases aggressive. Training includes understanding dementia, communication strategies, de-escalation techniques, public safety protocols, and basic crisis management tools. The Alzheimer's Association offers free one-hour online training. He also mentioned ongoing efforts to standardize training across the state.
  3. University of Hawai'i Alzheimer's Research Center- Coby discussed "Establishing an Alzheimer's Disease Research Center(ADRC)", a 2026 report to the Legislature pursuant to 2025 Senate Resolution 163. The report outlines a plan to establish an Alzheimer's Disease Research Center in Hawaii, which could receive up to \$3 million annually from the National Institute of Health. He noted that an ADRC would bring more clinical trials to Hawai'i and provide those impacted by Alzheimer's disease access to the latest treatment and

be represented in these national trials. Coby shared the link to the report in the chat: [2026 Report to the Legislature: Establishing an Alzheimer's Disease Research Center](#)

Discussion/Comments:

- Marilyn asked if this funding would come from the rural health budget. Coby clarified that this initiative is not the same proposal for the Rural Health Transformation Grant but was unsure where exactly the appropriation would come from.
- Sara raised concerns about the feasibility of a single memory clinic on Hawai'i Island due to its size and pointed out that Maui County is made up of several islands, suggesting a mobile memory clinic. Coby responded by outlining the long-term plan to potentially add more clinics on Hawai'i Island and Maui to improve access.
- Via Zoom chat someone asked, "Is the plan for PCPs to do initial determination to refer to memory clinics? Won't PCPs need training?" Coby responded that PCPs would refer to the clinic and the dementia care specialist. He noted that a lot of PCPS don't have dementia training but noted that the cognitive assessment that most PCPs use have clear instructions and is simple to administer.
- Shelley asked how dementia training would align with the Silver Alert program and reimbursement for PCP services. Coby explained that the Department of Law Enforcement created the Silver Alert website, called C4Watch, which is active. Caregivers can register loved ones with dementia, so law enforcement has background information in advance. Coby was unsure if the Silver Alert program has been fully activated but noted that dementia training for first responders complements the program by equipping them with skills to assist individuals who may be wandering.

Regarding reimbursement for cognitive health services, Coby explained that providers currently bill through the annual wellness visit. Last year's bill mandated cognitive assessments during annual Medicare wellness visits; however, patients not on Medicare have no coverage for these assessments. He provided examples of situations where providers might bill cognitive assessment services and emphasized the importance of cognitive screenings to detect dementia in younger patients. Bill noted that there is a shortage of doctors who provide Alzheimer's and dementia care and asked if it was a critical problem. Coby confirmed that it was a critical issue, particularly in neurology field. He highlighted the need to recruit more neurologists and geriatricians to address professional shortages in the state.

II. Call to Order

Chair Rick Tabor called the meeting to order at 10:25am and roll call was taken. With 9 board members present there was quorum.

III. Community Care Foster Family Homes and Housing Access for Individuals with Disabilities Bill Proposal

Motion made by Shelly to adjust the agenda to move this item earlier in the agenda. Members voted in favor of the motion. There were no objections.

Daintry Bartoldus, Director of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (DDC) discussed a proposal to allow community care foster family homes to accept individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), focusing on aging in place and expanding care options. Daintry explained that this initiative would not force homes to accept IDD clients or would take away beds for older adults but would increase the number of available beds. She also noted that if in the future it decreased the number of available beds the initiative could be stopped. Existing IDD caregivers have already expressed interest in expanding their services. She emphasized that DDC wants to work together and share resources so that individuals with ID/DD can also age in place and not have to move out. the state would, which includes a 40-hour curriculum and ongoing annual training for caregivers. Daintry will share the bills numbers once they are introduced.

#### Discussion/Comments:

- Marilyn asked via Zoom chat how this initiative would affect training requirements. Daintry explained that community care and family foster home caregivers currently receive a higher level of training. The state oversees certification and requires annual training plus an additional 40 hours.
- Bill asked how many people the bill would impact. Daintry stated there are approximately 300 adult foster homes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), housing about 270 individuals. She noted there have been eight community care family foster home transitions over the past five years.

#### IV. Review and Approval of Minutes

The draft December 5, 2025 meeting minutes were distributed. Members asked questions to clarify the meeting minutes.

- Sara noted that on page 2 of the meeting minutes the Primary Care Protection bill would be discussed at today's meeting, but it was not listed on the agenda. She asked if the meeting minutes for this were reflected correctly. She referred to the agenda item under Section VIII, "Other Legislative Bills for Consideration" and asked if it could be discussed under that agenda item. Rick explained that the agenda item was not included this month because the information about the bill was received after the agenda posting deadline. Rick noted that the email about the bill will be sent out to the committee but recommended tabling the discussion for next month. For the purposes of the meeting minutes, Beverly clarified that Sara's question was addressed and that it would be kept in the meeting minutes as recorded.
- Sara asked for clarification on what was meant by "stand down approach", which was listed in the minutes on page 5, section XIV under #1 of the Announcements, "Caroline requests that PABEA support the agency's 'stand down' approach for the upcoming legislative session due to severe capacity constraints and difficult fiscal environment..." Caroline clarified

that it was not meant as a directive but to suggest that PABEA be cautious due to the state and EOA's current fiscal constraints. Sara accepted the explanation that was provided by the EOA Director.

- Shelly suggests adding a clarifying comment to the December meeting minutes to avoid confusion. Shelly motioned to table the approval of the December meeting to the February meeting to amend the minutes to clarify the EOA Director's explanation of what she meant by "stand down approach". Sara seconded the motion. Committee members were in favor of the motion. There was no opposition to the motion.

#### V. Guest Speaker/s

Chair Tabor asked if the committee would like to continue having guest speakers and suggested Tori Caraphelo (Hearing Loss Task Force) for the February meeting. Barbara motioned not to have a speaker for February, and Shelly seconded. There were no objections, and the committee agreed not to have a guest speaker at the February 6 meeting.

Discussion/Comments:

- Marilyn expressed that she values guest speakers, especially when they align with PABEA priorities. Roberta shared her interest in hearing loss and supported inviting Tori. Sara noted there is a lot to discuss but not enough time.
- Sara suggested postponing the speaker for February, emphasizing that the next meeting will have a full agenda.

#### VI. Kupuna Caucus (KC) 2026 Legislative Package- Tabled

Chair Tabor recommended tabling the agenda item. He explained that the committee cannot vote on the Kupuna Caucus bills as PABEA priorities because two of the five bills have been tabled as they are more appropriate for county-level action. At the next Kupuna Caucus meeting, members will need to vote on accepting two alternate bills: State Rent Supplement for Kūpuna and the State Plan on Hearing Loss. Chair Tabor also discussed the possibility of holding an emergency meeting to identify and vote on which bills PABEA will support.

#### VII. Proposed 2026 Legislative Focus

Sara explained that, given the Governor's request for the legislature to limit bills proposing new projects and focus on programs and issues critical to the state in the next fiscal years, PABEA should prioritize three main areas for vulnerable seniors and their families. She emphasized that concentrating efforts would have a greater impact than spreading resources too thin. Sara clarified that "safety" refers to safety and healthcare, including providing basic services.

Suggested focus areas for this legislative session:

- Food (e.g., food insecurity, SNAP)
- Shelter (e.g., high cost of living, affordable housing, homelessness)
- Safety (e.g., healthcare, essential services)

Shelly motioned for the committee to focus on these three areas—food, shelter, and safety—for vulnerable seniors during this legislative session. Sara seconded

the motion. The motion passed with no objections.

Discussion/Comments:

- The committee discussed how the Kupuna Caucus bills and those presented earlier by Rep. Marten and Coby Chock fit into the three proposed focus areas.
- Gary asked about the purpose of determining whether bills align with the focus areas and how this benefits the group. Sara explained that prioritizing bills helps PABEA guide the state's response and aligns with the State Plan on Aging. She noted that while PABEA typically focuses on long-term goals, the current emphasis should be on immediate needs. Gary said that he was not objecting but questioned how this approach improves effectiveness.
- Charlene supported the idea and suggested assigning members to monitor and track bills within each focus area, noting the challenge of monitoring numerous bills. There are eight members available to assist with tracking.

VIII. Suggested Agenda Items for the Next Meeting  
No discussion.

IX. Announcements

1. Fall Prevention Survey- Hard copies of the Hawai'i Falls Prevention Landscape Survey have been provided. The Hawai'i Falls Prevention Alliance (HFPA) is gathering input to better understand falls among older adults and identify ways to strengthen prevention efforts for kūpuna and the community. This anonymous survey is open to all community members. Results of the survey will be shared on the website at [hifallsprevention.org](http://hifallsprevention.org).
2. PABEA Meeting scheduled Friday, January 9th at 12pm. Hybrid meeting held in person in the EOA Large Conference Room 406 and remotely via Zoom.
3. Kupuna Caucus meeting scheduled for Friday, January 9th at 2pm via Zoom.

The next PABEA Legislative Committee meeting is scheduled for **Friday, February 6<sup>th</sup> from 9:30-11am**. Meetings are held in-person in the EOA Large Conference Room 406 and remotely via Zoom.

Meeting adjourned at 11:20 A.M.

*Respectfully submitted by Cristina Valenzuela*