



A NEW DAY IN HAWAII

Health - Older Adults and Aging

A Hawaii for All Ages

One of the most important public challenges of our time is to ensure that our rapidly growing population of retirees and elders can live productive and dignified lives.

Currently, our efforts are falling way short of the mark, creating both a social crisis and a crisis of our conscience.

Too many older adults and their families are without the support and resources they need, forcing them to turn to more expensive and less desirable living situations. Many lack the respect and opportunities that they deserve. For older adults who are alone and impoverished, the situation is even worse.

Out of this crisis, we must find opportunities based in the core value of *aloha* that defines Hawaii. After all, Hawaii is the nation's leader in intergenerational households, where grandparents are routinely involved in raising grandchildren. As difficult as caring for our elderly parents and grandparents can be, we also embrace it as our duty.

With the right support and opportunities, we can turn this situation around. Typically, we view aging through a deficit or sick-care lens, thinking of the high costs associated with long-term care and supporting the most frail in society. But the vast majority of adults over 60 are active, able, willing, and increasingly needing to live economically productive lives. We can view our aging population as a tremendous economic and social asset. With more older-adults contributing and engaged, we can significantly mitigate the high costs associated with aging, while improving the quality of life for all—young and old alike.

In an Abercrombie Administration, *kupuna* will be treasured community assets who are fully integrated into the whole of society. The challenges of aging will be seen as a social issue, not just one for families to deal with on their own. We will partner with senior advocacy groups to redefine social attitudes about aging, face our challenges together, and build a Hawaii for all ages.

Guiding Principles: Health – Older Adults and Aging

- Caring for our *kupuna* is a core value of Hawaii
- Aging as an asset in Hawaii
- Enhancing quality of life for older adults

EMPOWERING AGING AT HOME AND IN COMMUNITIES

Empowering people to grow older in their own homes and communities will not require a huge and expensive new government medical program. Rather, it will require a combination of sensible and affordable education, infrastructure improvements, community development efforts, family leave policies and other supports that can come about through collaboration between the public and private sectors. Together, we can create incentives and supports to help those providing care at home, whose actions save public and private dollars that would otherwise go into more expensive care.

CREATE A “SILVER WAVE” OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTIVE OLDER-ADULTS

Ninety-five percent of people over 60 are active, engaged and want to contribute. Through incentives and partnerships with private businesses and nonprofits, we will encourage the creation of many more flexible paid and volunteer opportunities for our elder population. We will recognize private businesses that become model employers and bring in retirees to serve as mentors and trainers. We will also support the growing trend of retirees going back to school for retraining, “re-careering,” and learning skills to start businesses.

DEVELOP A HAWAII CENTER OF EXCELLENCE ON AGING

Our university system, including the community colleges, the private business sector, and non-profits, will be brought together to obtain funding for major research and cutting-edge projects around the subject of aging. We already have outstanding experts and programs at Kapiolani Community College, the University of Hawaii at Manoa, community-based programs throughout the islands, and many others. These can be coordinated to develop training programs, career paths in gerontology, and new advancements that will benefit people in Hawaii and can be exported around the world, particularly in

China, Japan, and Korea, which are rapidly aging. There is no reason why Hawaii cannot be a world leader in this field.

REINVIGORATE THE STATE OFFICE OF AGING

The Office of Aging is the key leader in policy development, evaluation, and development of community partnerships. It must be reinvigorated with widely respected, active leadership that will implement plans developed with seniors, for seniors. It will look at coordination and potential consolidation of duplicative functions in the Department of Health and the Department of Human Services and it will reestablish Hawaii’s longstanding traditions of intergenerational interdependence by encouraging and supporting programs that bring together different age groups. The Office of Aging will think beyond services and consider how we design a community for all ages reflected in our buildings, transportation options, and neighborhood design.

PROMOTE AND SUPPORT COMPREHENSIVE LIFE PLANNING

We will promote positive aging and wellness in all of its facets—physical, social, nutritional, and financial. We can do this by better preparing people for retirement, long-term care, and end of life needs. Working with the private sector, we will make planning and preparing for these events more comprehensive, accessible, and universal.