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In reply, please refer to:
File:

Committee on Health

**HCR 17, URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO MAKE IT A
PRIORITY TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC ON THE PROPER CLEANING OF
PRODUCE**

Testimony of Chiyome Leinaala Fukino, M.D.

Director of Health

February 24, 2009

9:30 a.m.

1 **Department's Position:** The Department of Health supports the intent of this resolution and offers
2 comments.

3 **Fiscal Implications:** The costs are unknown at this time, but depending on the scope of the
4 media/information campaign, it could run into the tens of thousands of dollars. A simple mail out to all
5 households in the state will run in the hundreds of thousands, media time may be more expensive unless
6 it can be a public service announcement/free news conference.

7 **Purpose and Justification:** The purpose of the resolution is to educate the public on the "proper
8 cleaning" of produce to mitigate the occurrence of rat lungworm disease.

9 The Department of Health recognizes the need for a strong recommendation that all people wash
10 any raw produce prior to eating. The scope of the resolution should be expanded to all emerging and
11 known pathogens and contaminants that may affect raw produce consumption. The public must realize,
12 however, that there is no panacea to combat rat lungworm disease, E.coli, Salmonella, and numerous
13 other pathogens and physical contamination that is presently inherent in produce farming and
14 production. Eating any raw produce does have inherent risks, albeit small, even if washed. The risk is

1 still relatively very low in the U.S., but recent local and national media have brought to light a host of
2 problems connected with the consumption of raw agricultural commodities. The public must also
3 realize that at present, there are no U.S. Food and Drug Administration or State of Hawaii, Department
4 of Health "approved method" of washing raw produce.

5 We note that fresh produce is important to a healthy diet, and we do not want to unnecessarily
6 frighten people from eating important foods. The department has issued public service announcements
7 regarding the rat lungworm disease and its recommendation of visual inspection and proper washing of
8 produce prior to consumption. It is a good recommendation to better educate the public, and the costs
9 need to be weighed against the risks to determine the value of this education relative to other funding
10 priorities within the department.

11 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.