

DEPARTMENT OF WATER SUPPLY • COUNTY OF HAWAII

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February 10, 2012

The Honorable Will Espero, Chair
Committee on Public Safety, Government Operations, and Military Affairs
Hawaii State Capital, Room 231
Honolulu, HI 96813

The Honorable Josh Green, M.D., Chair,
Committee on Health
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 222
Honolulu, HI 96813

SENATE BILL 2471

Dear Honorable Chairs Espero and Green:

The Department of Water Supply (DWS), County of Hawai'i, respectfully submits testimony in opposition of Senate Bill (SB 2471).

The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) was signed into law by Congress in 1974 and it established rules that require water purveyors such as the DWS serve potable water, which meets minimum standards to its consumers. In addition, the law was amended in 1996 to provide a scientifically-based and transparent process for selecting contaminants to be regulated and for determining the appropriate maximum contaminant level (MCL). The DWS continually monitors and maintains its 22 water systems to meet the standards set forth under the SDWA and by the State of Hawaii's Department of Health (DOH). The DWS is committed to adhering to the water quality standards set forth by the SDWA and DOH. Providing safe and affordable water to Hawai'i Island's residents and visitors is one of DWS's core missions the DWS strives to maintain.

Total Chromium, which includes Hexavalent Chromium is currently regulated under the SDWA. The MCL for Total Chromium is 0.1 parts per million (or 100 parts per billion). The historical results for Total Chromium in DWS's sources has consistently been below the MCL for Total Chromium. In the Spring of 2011, DWS analyzed selected DWS sources specifically for Hexavalent Chromium. These sources were selected because they showed a presence (but less than the MCL) for Total Chromium. The results of the additional testing showed that these selected DWS sources had an average Hexavalent Chromium level of 1.17 ppb, and the highest source tested had a level of 4.90 ppb. These levels of Hexavalent Chromium are within the expected range of naturally occurring Hexavalent Chromium in Hawai'i, and are not indicative of industrial contamination.

...Water, Our Most Precious Resource... Ka Wai A Kāne...

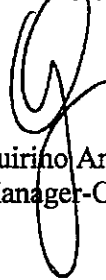
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If DWS is required to reduce the Hexavalent Chromium amount to the levels being proposed by SB 2471, it would place an exorbitant economic hardship on the DWS and its customers. Reverse Osmosis (RO) is one treatment option that could possibly reduce the Hexavalent Chromium levels to the proposed MCL (of 0.06 ppb). From what we understand, there are still questions if RO treatment can reliably reduce Hexavalent Chromium, on a consistent basis, to the proposed MCL. DWS does not currently own or operate a RO treatment system. Thus, if RO treatment were to be selected, the DWS would have to plan, design, possibly acquire land, and construct new RO treatment facilities for the affected water sources. The approximate capital cost to plan, acquire land, design and construct these new facilities could conservatively exceed \$70,000,000.00. This does not include operational and maintenance (O&M) costs, including additional energy requirements, which is estimated to be \$7,000,000.00 to \$10,000,000.00 annually. In addition, DWS would also have to hire additional water treatment plant operators to maintain and operate the systems islandwide. There will also be additional cost to sample and test for Hexavalent Chromium. DWS does not have this amount of capital monies on hand to design and construct new treatment facilities. DWS's capital improvement project budget is already spread thin on replacing aging and deteriorating water system infrastructure as well as projects to address existing Federal and State mandates regarding drinking water. Thus, the added costs to treat the water for Hexavalent Chromium can only be obtained by passing capital and O&M costs to our customers.

To summarize, the DWS respectfully submits this testimony in opposition of SB 2471. We appreciate the intent of the bill to protect public health. However, any such legislation that proposes to establish regulatory minimum standards should seriously consider the technical capability and economic feasibility to achieve the proposed intentions.

Thank you for your time and consideration on DWS's testimony for this proposed bill. Should you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at (808) 961-8050.

Sincerely yours,



Quirino Antonio, Jr., P.E.
Manager-Chief Engineer