

LATE TESTIMONY

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**Testimony COMMENTING on HB 1241
RELATING TO HEALTH**

REPRESENTATIVE DELLA AU BELLATTI, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Hearing Date: February 19, 2015

Room Number: 329

1 **Fiscal Implications:** This bill provides an appropriation of \$1,000,000 in general funds to the
2 Department of Health (DOH) for lead poisoning prevention activities.

3 **Department Testimony:** The Department appreciates the intent of the bill, but defers to the
4 Governor's Executive Budget request and the Department of Health's appropriations and
5 personnel priorities. Childhood lead poisoning and its negative impact on the developing brain
6 and other organs is preventable. To conduct lead poisoning prevention activities, the DOH will
7 need additional personnel for outreach to community agencies, health care providers, and
8 families; and resources to develop educational materials, update Hawaii guidelines, and facilitate
9 data collection and analysis.

10 Currently, requests for childhood lead poisoning information and management are
11 received by three programs within the DOH – Children with Special Health Needs Branch,
12 Hazard Evaluation and Emergency Response Office, or Lead and Asbestos Program in the
13 Indoor and Radiological Health Branch. These programs are in contact with each other to assure
14 that the requestor receives the needed information. There has not been a formal effort in place
15 since the ending of the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Childhood Lead
16 Poisoning Prevention Program grant in 2002.

17 Data from the Hazard Evaluation and Emergency Response Office shows that 60,301
18 children were screened from 2007-2014. Of these, 149 children were found to have an elevated
19 blood lead level greater than or equal to 10 micrograms/deciliter of blood, CDC's previous "cut
20 off" level for childhood lead poisoning. In 2012, the CDC established a new "reference level"

1 for elevated blood lead levels at 5 micrograms/deciliter of blood, thereby lowering the level at
2 which evaluation and interventions are recommended. Therefore, the number of children with
3 elevated blood lead levels may actually be higher.

4 Adverse health effects of lead exposure in children include intellectual and behavioral
5 challenges. No safe blood lead level in children has been identified. Childhood exposure to lead
6 can have lifelong consequences. Prevention requires reducing environmental exposures from
7 soil, dust, paint, water, and other sources of lead, before children are exposed to these hazards.
8 Ongoing outreach is necessary to educate primary care providers, parents, and community on the
9 prevention of lead exposure and its health effects.

10 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.