



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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Testimony COMMENTING on SB 818 SD1
Relating to Tuberculosis Testing

DELLA AU BELATTI, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Hearing Date: March 23, 2016

Room Number: 329

- 1 **Fiscal Implications:** None.
- 2 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health supports the intent of SB818 SD1 and is
- 3 providing comments. This measure supports accepting all tuberculosis (TB) tests that are Food
- 4 and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- 5 (CDC)-recommended for all mandatory TB screening. The Department is in the process of
- 6 updating Chapter 164, Hawaii Administrative Rules (TB) to modify screening requirements that
- 7 will allow for these tests.
- 8 The currently available alternative for the TB skin test that would be available on approval of the
- 9 Hawaii Administrative Rules or adopting this measure is relatively expensive, priced at
- 10 approximately \$200 in Hawaii's retail market.
- 11 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Honorable Representatives:

I am a local girl from Hanapepe, Kauai and graduate of the John A Burns School of Medicine in 1985. Since residency, I have spent my 28 year career in Public Health on tuberculosis elimination and on promoting of the best TB control practices in the US and internationally. I am a former TB Controller in San Francisco 1996-2011 and 8 year member (1998-2006) and chair (2003-2006) of the federal advisory council for tuberculosis (ACET-Advisory Committee for the Elimination of Tuberculosis) which advises the Director of CDC and the US Secretary of Health on matter of tuberculosis. I'm writing to advocate for swift Health and Education Committee review and passage of SB 818 by the House of Representatives this year, as I believe it is a matter of urgency.

SB 818 was passed by the Senate last spring but stuck in committee in the House and from what I know it is not a controversial bill but rather, stalled by other more pressing issues. Another year of delay will deny access to better FDA approved blood tests for tuberculosis infection, known as Interferon Gamma Release Assays (IGRAs). National guidance for IGRAs has been in place for over 10 years and if this bill is passed, it will be an important step forward for Hawaii. Each year, among the immigrant BCG vaccinated adults and children, the TB skin tests causes high rates of falsely positive results (as high as 50% of adults and 80% of children) resulting in unnecessary x-rays, medical evaluation and drug treatment. IGRAs are the recommended test for BCG-vaccinated adults and children over age 5 and can be used in children in younger age groups (CDC 2010 Update on IGRA testing and AAP Redbook 2015 update). Additionally, parents should have testing options, especially when they have concerns of injecting foreign substances into their children or desiring better accuracy offered by IGRAs when 9 months of preventive therapy is recommended based on the inaccurate TB skin test. The published evidence on IGRAs is voluminous and continues to grow. My TB program in San Francisco for which I was director for 15 years adopted IGRAs in 2003 and never looked back (publications available). The New York City Bureau of Health now recommends IGRAs for all TB testing recommended in the city.

Passage of this bill will update Hawaii's public health practices that are no longer in line with national guidelines and will allow more appropriate and higher quality patient care that Hawaii's families and communities deserve. The State Health Department is also in strong support of this bill and has written a letter of support in the past. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "L. Masae Kawamura MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

L. Masae Kawamura, M.D.
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