



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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**Testimony COMMENTING on H.B. 2498 H.D. 1
RELATING TO HEALTH**

REPRESENTATIVE SYLVIA LUKE, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Hearing Date: 3/1/18

Room Number: 308

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The Department of Health appreciates the intent of H.B. 2498 H.D. 1, but
2 defers to the Governor's Supplemental Budget Request for appropriations priorities.

3 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health (DOH) offers comments on H.B. 2498,
4 H.D. 1. While zoonotic diseases are one of many infectious disease concerns and a public health
5 veterinary epidemiologist would be helpful, the Department has built a strong partnership with
6 our colleagues at the Department of Agriculture. The State Epidemiologist routinely consults
7 with and refers to the State Veterinarian on animal concerns which impact human health and vice
8 versa. Staff from both state agencies have attended trainings and exercises together regarding
9 public health investigations and emergency response, and readily provide recommendations and
10 assistance in their respective areas of expertise as needed.

11 The responsibilities of the former veterinary medical officer have been assumed by others,
12 specifically epidemiologists, in DOH, and some responsibilities have been adapted based on
13 feedback from partners. For example, the Epi Bulletin has been modified to provide timely and
14 succinct information on important topics such as mumps, flu, norovirus, and rat lungworm
15 disease to public health and healthcare partners on a quarterly basis with current and past issues
16 posted online (<http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/for-healthcare-providers/epi-bulletin/>).

17 A quality public health veterinary epidemiologist, while beneficial to our mission, would require
18 a considerable investment. Comments received by DOH from public health veterinarians in
19 other states and at the federal level as well as the then president of the National Association of

1 Public Health Veterinarians when DOH last attempted to recruit for the position indicated that
2 the salary level was well below expected. A 2016 American Veterinary Medical Association
3 Report on the Market for Veterinarians found that compensation in the range of \$110,000 to
4 \$120,000 per year would be required for an average career satisfaction rating level
5 (http://www.aavmc.org/data/files/Annual%20Reports/V3_ECON_2016_Report3_MketVet_0614
6 [16.pdf](#)). Appropriation of adequate funding to provide a competitive salary would be essential
7 to recruiting and maintaining a qualified individual in this position.

8 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.