



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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Testimony COMMENTING on HB2663
RELATING TO DISTRICT HEALTH OFFICERS OF THE STATE OF HAWAII.

REPRESNATIVE JOHN MIZUNO, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Hearing Date: February 8, 2018 Room Number: 329

- 1 **Fiscal Implications:** Potential salary and benefits costs adjustments.

- 2 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health (DOH) acknowledges the intent of HB2663
- 3 which is to require a District Health Officer (DHO) to be a Hawaii-licensed physician.

- 4 The department has had a history of competent and effective DHOs coordinating public health
- 5 efforts in rural counties who were both physicians and non-physicians. Since 1995 the Hawaii
- 6 District Health Office has had three DHO that were not physicians, including the current officer,
- 7 who has been in the position on an acting basis for approximately 6 years and was then made
- 8 permeant in December 2011. The incumbent has an extensive environmental health background,
- 9 particularly well-suited for Big Island needs, and has been employed with the Department of
- 10 Health since December 1983, approximately 34 years.

- 11 It is important to note that the primary responsibility of the DHOs is administrative in nature.
- 12 These administrative duties include procurement, payroll, pre-audit, accounting, budget
- 13 management, labor relations, employee benefits and transaction, classification, recruitment and
- 14 examination, training and safety, IT, and facilities management.

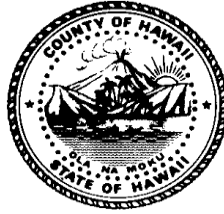
1 The District Health Offices are not independent of the department but are an essential part that
2 provides vital services to neighbor island communities. These public health, environmental
3 health, and behavioral health services receive guidance from a variety of sources in Honolulu
4 and the counties, and it is the role of the District Health Officer to support these efforts and
5 maintain statewide consistency.

6 It is accurate to say that a physician is knowledgeable in medicine, but medicine is not the same
7 a public health, a very distinct field of study, and while a clinical background may lend itself to
8 certain situations, strong administrative talent and a expertise in population health management
9 are also required. Unfortunately, in the current marketplace these types of applicants are difficult
10 to recruit and hire.

11 The Department of Health understands the concerns forwarded by the Hawaii County Council
12 but respectfully suggests that statute requiring specific qualifications is obtrusive and impedes on
13 managerial decisions best left to the executive branch. The department requests to retain its
14 current flexibility to consider both physician and non-physician applicants when recruiting for
15 District Health Officers, to ensure that we are able to consider individuals with the most relevant
16 skills, knowledge and abilities to provide effective leadership and guidance to our District Health
17 Offices statewide. The department respectfully requests this measure be deferred.

18

Eileen O'Hara
Council Member
Council District 4



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Chair: Environmental
Management Committee

Vice Chair: Planning Committee and
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Hawaii County Council

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Representative John M. Mizuno
Chair, House Committee on Health and Human Services
Hawai'i State House of Representatives

February 6, 2018

Re: In Support of House Bill 2663, from Hawai'i County Council District 4
To be heard by HHS on 02-08-18 9:00AM in House conference room 329

Aloha Chair Mizuno and Committee Members:

I'm writing to express my support for House Bill 2663, which requires each District Health Officer of the Department of Health to be a physician licensed to practice medicine under Part I of Chapter 453 of the Hawai'i Revised Statutes.

I introduced legislation at the County level to support this Bill, as the District Health Officer must be familiar with conditions unique to our islands and the numerous responsibilities inherent in serving our diverse communities. Please consider the positive impacts passing this bill will have on the health of our citizens, and contact me if you have any questions about my support or knowledge of the subject.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eileen O'Hara".

Eileen O'Hara
Council Member
Council District 4