



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
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**Testimony COMMENTING on H.C.R. 222  
REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO HIRE A STATE  
VETERINARY MEDICAL OFFICER TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF RAT  
LUNGWORM DISEASE AND OTHER ZOOONOTIC DISEASES IN THE STATE'S  
HUMAN POPULATION AND TO SUPPORT STATEWIDE EFFORTS IN  
PROTECTING AND IMPROVING HUMAN HEALTH.**

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN M. MIZUNO, CHAIR

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Hearing Date: 3/21/2018

Room Number: 329

1 **Fiscal Implications:** If the Department of Health is provided a State Veterinary Medical Officer  
2 position, funding to provide a competitive salary for a well-qualified public health veterinarian  
3 would also be needed. The Department defers to the priorities set forth in the Governor's  
4 Supplemental Budget Request.

5 **Department Testimony:** DOH appreciates the intent of this measure and emphatically agrees  
6 that a well-qualified public health veterinarian could benefit the department greatly. Over 70%  
7 of the emerging infectious diseases in humans over the past 30 years have been zoonotic  
8 (<http://www.oie.int/doc/ged/D14089.pdf>). However, unlike an agricultural, industry, or  
9 companion animal veterinarian, whose focus is on the animal themselves, public health  
10 veterinarians focus on the impact of the interaction between humans and animal health.

11 To serve as a subject matter expert for DOH, a standalone public health veterinarian must be  
12 competent and experienced in applied epidemiology. The educational and experiential criteria  
13 identified by the *Competencies for Applied Epidemiologists in Governmental Public Health*  
14 *Agencies* as requisite for a non-epidemiology professional (e.g. RN, MD/DO, DDS/DMD, DVM,  
15 PhD, RS) senior scientist/subject area expert in an epidemiologic focus area is specific  
16 epidemiology training (e.g., MPH degree, CDC Epidemic Intelligence Service program) and  $\geq 4$   
17 years work experience at a mid-level epidemiologist level  
18 (<https://www.cdc.gov/appliedepi/competencies/pdfs/applied-epi-comps-preface.pdf>).

1 At minimum, a standalone DOH public health veterinarian must be established as a Veterinary  
2 Medical Officer (VMO) III, possess a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) degree or  
3 equivalent, a current license to practice veterinary medicine in the State of Hawaii or a valid  
4 temporary permit to practice, and at least 4 years of veterinary experience. In addition, although  
5 specific public health training or experience is not required of the VMO class series, feedback  
6 from public health veterinarians in other states, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,  
7 and the National Association of Public Health Veterinarians strongly encourages a requirement  
8 for advanced epidemiology training or experience. Therefore, a DOH VMO III should be  
9 selectively certified for these specialized knowledge, skills, and abilities to adequately perform  
10 the duties of the position. The two staff who filled the former VMO III position under DOCD  
11 (Arlena Buchholz and David Sasaki) possessed both DVM and Masters of Public Health degrees.

12 The primary challenge would be successfully competing with Hawaii's private sector and other  
13 states to recruit and maintain qualified personnel at the current compensation range of \$70,932-  
14 \$105,000. According to CareersinPublicHealth.net, Hawaii's public health veterinarian salaries  
15 rank 51<sup>st</sup> among the fifty states and D.C.. By contrast, in the May 2016 U.S. Department of  
16 Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics, Hawaii's private sector  
17 veterinarians ranked #1 among U.S. metropolitan areas for annual mean wage at \$216,840.  
18 Likewise, a 2016 American Veterinary Medical Association Report on the Market for  
19 Veterinarians found that a compensation range of \$110,000-\$120,000 would be required for an  
20 average career satisfaction rating level

21 ([http://www.aavmc.org/data/files/Annual%20Reports/V3\\_ECON\\_2016\\_Report3\\_MketVet\\_0614](http://www.aavmc.org/data/files/Annual%20Reports/V3_ECON_2016_Report3_MketVet_0614)  
22 [16.pdf](#)). Appropriation of adequate funding to provide a competitive salary would be essential  
23 to recruiting and maintaining a qualified individual in this position.

24 A quality public health veterinarian requires strong investment by the State.

25 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR OF  
HAWAII



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Testimony of  
SUZANNE D. CASE  
Chairperson

Before the House Committee on  
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Wednesday, March 21, 2018  
8:30 AM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 329

In consideration of  
**HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 222/HOUSE RESOLUTION 192  
REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO HIRE A STATE VETERINARY  
MEDICAL OFFICER TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF RAT LUNGWORM DISEASE  
AND OTHER ZOOONOTIC DISEASES IN THE STATE'S HUMAN POPULATION AND  
TO SUPPORT STATEWIDE EFFORTS IN PROTECTING AND IMPROVING HUMAN  
HEALTH**

House Concurrent Resolution 222/House Resolution 192 request the Department of Health (DOH) to hire a veterinary medical officer to prevent the spread of rat lungworm disease and other zoonotic diseases. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports these measures.**

The Department is a collaborator on biosecurity issues with DOH, as described in the Hawaii Interagency Biosecurity Plan. Rat lungworm disease is recognized in the Biosecurity Plan as a serious threat to human health and agriculture in Hawaii, vectored by invasive snails and rodents. The Department supports increasing capacity to deal with this and other zoonotic disease issues, and defers to DOH on how best to implement this capacity.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these measures.

**HCR-222**

Submitted on: 3/20/2018 5:51:44 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/21/2018 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Richard P. Creagan	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chair Mizuno, Vice-Chair Kobayashi, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am writing in strong support of HCR222 and HR192. I am providing testimony as a private individual, as a physician, and as a former epidemiological investigator with the Hawaii Department of Health and not as a legislator.

Zoonotic diseases are diseases that are caused by infection from viruses, bacteria, parasites, or fungi and can spread between animals and people. These diseases can cause illness of varying severity or even death in people. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that zoonotic diseases are very common and every year tens of thousands of Americans will get sick from them; and

Zoonotic diseases can be transmitted directly or indirectly to humans by consumption of contaminated foodstuffs or contact with infected animals. Leptospirosis, *E. coli* infection, methicillin-resistant *staphylococcus aureus* infection (MRSA), ringworm, *toxoplasmosis*, *salmonella* infection, *tuberculosis*, H1N1 and H3N2 influenza virus also known as bird flu or swine flu, *brucellosis* caused by *Brucella suis*, and *angiostrongyliasis cantonensis* more commonly known as rat lungworm disease are examples of zoonotic diseases. Zoonoses are animal diseases that can be transmitted to humans and are very well understood and studied by veterinarians; and

In the past, the department of health had a public health veterinarian position that was filled by a doctor of veterinary medicine. David Sasaki, doctor of veterinary medicine, and a world expert on leptospirosis, had filled the position, and oversaw the production of public health publications that were distributed to Hawaii physicians and veterinarians.

The publications were well received and helped educate physicians about disease reporting requirements and informed them about the prevalence of several diseases in the State and the appropriate treatment for the diseases. Such information included resistance to or developing resistance to antibiotics of common venereal diseases such as gonorrhea, and information providing a deeper understanding of the risk of animal diseases to humans.

Most health departments around the country have a position filled by a doctor of veterinary medicine that is usually designated as public health veterinarian. Establishing a veterinary medical officer position within the Department of Health will help combat the spread of rat lungworm and other zoonotic diseases in the State's human population and support statewide efforts to protect and improve human health.

Furthermore, a public health veterinarian could also revive public health publications and disseminate the publications in electronic form, as well as couple the publications with continuing medical education for physicians, nurses, and veterinarians to help ensure the continued competence of the State's health care workforce.

Re-establishing a public health veterinarian position in the department of health will also help battle the current outbreak of rat lungworm disease in humans, dogs, cats, and horses in the State. Global warming contributes to the increase of the number and types of viruses, bacteria, parasites, and fungi that are spread between animals and humans, which makes early detection and study of these vectors and the illnesses they cause imperative to protect public health.

Thank you and all the best,

Richard P. Creagan