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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.

HR-192

Submitted on: 3/20/2018 7:03:47 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Dale Sandlin	Hawaii Cattlemens Council	Support	No

Comments:

HR-192

Submitted on: 3/20/2018 5:52:17 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