
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO HEALTH.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. Zoonotic diseases are diseases that are caused
2 by infection from viruses, bacteria, parasites, or fungi, and
3 can spread between animals and people. These diseases can cause
4 illness of varying severity or even death in people. The
5 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that zoonotic
6 diseases are very common and every year tens of thousands of
7 Americans will get sick from them.

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



1 that can be transmitted to humans and are very well understood
2 and studied by veterinarians.

3 The legislature finds that in the past, the department of
4 health had a public health veterinarian position that was filled
5 by a doctor of veterinary medicine. David Sasaki, doctor of
6 veterinary medicine and a world expert on leptospirosis, had
7 filled the position and also oversaw the production of public
8 health publications that were distributed to Hawaii physicians
9 and veterinarians.

10 The legislature further finds that the publications were
11 well-received and helped educate physicians about disease
12 reporting requirements and informed them about the prevalence of
13 a number of diseases in the State and the appropriate treatment
14 for the diseases. Such information included resistance to or
15 developing resistance to antibiotics of common venereal diseases
16 such as gonorrhoea, and information providing a deeper
17 understanding of the risk of animal diseases to humans.

18 The legislature notes that most health departments have a
19 position filled by a doctor of veterinary medicine that is
20 usually designated as public health veterinarian. Establishing
21 a veterinary medical officer position within the department of



1 health will help combat the spread of rat lungworm and other
2 zoonotic diseases in the State's human population and support
3 statewide efforts to protect and improve human health.

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

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

19 The purpose of this Act is to establish and fund one full-
20 time equivalent (1.00 FTE) permanent veterinary medical officer
21 position within the department of health.



1 SECTION 2. Chapter 321, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
2 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
3 and to read as follows:

4 "§321- Veterinary medical officer. (a) There is
5 established within the department of health a veterinary medical
6 officer position to oversee the protection and improvement of
7 human health through measures for the detection, investigation,
8 assessment, prevention, control, and eradication of zoonotic
9 diseases.

10 (b) The veterinary medical officer shall possess a doctor
11 of veterinary medicine (DVM) degree from a veterinary college
12 meeting all the standards established by the American Veterinary
13 Medical Association and a license to practice veterinary
14 medicine granted pursuant to chapter 471."

15 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
16 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much
17 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2019-2020 and the
18 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year
19 2020-2021 for the establishment of one full-time equivalent
20 (1.00 FTE) permanent veterinary medical officer position in the
21 department of health for the purposes of this Act.



H.B. NO. 146

1 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
2 of health for the purposes of this Act.

3 SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

4 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2019.

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H.B. NO. 146

Report Title:

Veterinary Medical Officer; Department of Health; Zoonotic Diseases; Appropriations

Description:

Establishes and appropriates funds for one full-time equivalent (1.00 FTE) permanent veterinary medical officer position within the Department of Health.

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