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**Testimony in SUPPORT of S.B. 2897  
RELATING TO MARRIAGE LICENSE FEES**

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SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, CONSUMER PROTECTION, AND HEALTH  
Hearing Date: February 11, 2020 Room Number: 229

1 **Fiscal Implications:** Increase in the marriage license fee will continue the support of the Hawaii  
2 Birth Defects Program and allow for the modernization of the Vital Statistics data system.

3 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health (DOH) **strongly supports** this measure,  
4 which is part of the Governor's Administrative Package, to increase the marriage license fee to  
5 provide fiscal support to continue the work of the Hawaii Birth Defects Program and modernize  
6 the outdated Vital Statistics data system.

7 As specified in HRS §321.422, the purpose of the Birth Defects Program is to collect  
8 surveillance information on birth defects and other adverse reproductive outcomes;  
9 report the incidence, trends, and causes of birth defects and other adverse reproductive outcomes;  
10 report information for the development of prevention strategies to reduce the incidence of birth  
11 defects and other adverse reproductive outcomes; and develop strategies to improve the access of  
12 children with birth defects to health and early intervention services.

13 There are 43 states that have birth defects programs. The Hawaii Birth Defects Program is  
14 needed for the collection, analysis, and reporting of birth defects data. It is an active surveillance  
15 system in which birth defects data are directly abstracted from medical and other records at  
16 hospitals and other medical facilities statewide. It provides more complete data (birth defect rate  
17 of approximately 4% births) compared to the limited data in the birth certificate (congenital  
18 anomaly rate of less than 0.2% births).

19 To determine which medical records to review, the program analyzes lists of diagnostic codes

1 that meet the criteria to indicate a possible birth defect. The number of possible cases reviewed  
2 increased from approximately 1,000 to over 2,000 cases in the past few years. Of the cases  
3 reviewed each year, approximately 400 babies are found to have birth defects and the entire  
4 medical record needs to be reviewed. All data and diagnoses are entered into the birth defects  
5 database for analysis and reporting. The data is essential to identify and investigate factors  
6 which may cause higher rates of birth defects and to provide information to answer community  
7 concerns about birth defects in Hawaii.

8 Increasing the marriage license fee to support the Hawaii Birth Defects Program will ensure that  
9 the program maintains its mandated responsibilities. The Birth Defects Program has been  
10 supported by a fee of \$10 per marriage license since 2002 as mandated by the legislature to help  
11 support identification of risk factors that may affect adverse birth outcomes. However, the  
12 program's salary and fringe expenses have almost doubled between 2002 and 2019. The  
13 program will not have sufficient funding for operating expenses beginning fiscal year 2021.

14 Increasing the marriage licenses fee will support the DOH system that collects the marriage  
15 license fees and the vital statistics system that issues the marriage certificates. There were over  
16 21,000 marriage licenses issued to couples in Hawaii in 2019. No portion of the current \$60.00  
17 marriage license fee is retained by the DOH to maintain the statewide marriage license  
18 registration system. The current vital statistics computer system that includes the marriage  
19 license issuance and registration system is over 20 years old and needs to be modernized. Post  
20 9/11 laws like the REAL ID Act create an increased demand for marriage records to prove legal  
21 name changes for state-issued driver's license and identification cards. Individuals must  
22 provide proof to the Departments of Motor Vehicles that the individual's last name differs from  
23 their birth certificate's last name due to marriage to obtain their "gold star" by October 1, 2020.

24 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.