
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 can
3 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 finds that the publications were well
11 received and helped educate physicians about disease reporting
12 requirements and informed them about the prevalence of a number
13 of diseases in the State and the appropriate treatment for the
14 diseases. Such information included resistance to or developing
15 resistance to antibiotics of common venereal diseases such as
16 gonorrhoea, and information providing a deeper understanding of
17 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 to oversee the protection and improvement of human
7 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 2018-2019 to
18 establish and fill one full-time equivalent (1.00 FTE) permanent
19 veterinary medical officer position within the department of
20 health.



1 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
2 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, 2018.
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INTRODUCED BY:

Rick L. Lujan

Dr. Q

Mark L. ...

Carl ...

A. Lopez

Dr. HLT
Tom ...

Greg ...

Mark J. Hall

John ...

Sh...

...

Calvin ...

Tom M. ...

...

...

...

Cindy Evans

Arthur ...

...

...

Nicole E. ...



Lyn Deloitte

L.A. +

Annell

Indochina
Hand

Nadine K. Nakamura

in

Brid Kolyashi

San Ouil

John Brown
John

B. T. A.

John Brown

John

John M. Brown
John

John

John

John



H.B. NO. 2498

Report Title:

Veterinary Medical Officer; Department of Health

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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