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**WRITTEN
ONLY**

**Testimony COMMENTING on SB 303 SD1
Relating to Health**

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SENATE COMMITTEE WAYS AND MEANS

Hearing Date: 03/02/15, 1:00pm

Room Number: 211

1 **Fiscal Implications:** None

2 **Department Testimony:** We appreciate the intent of SB 303 SD1, but defer to the Department
3 of Public Safety as the lead agency in regards to the impact this might have on current capacity.

4 This measure seeks to increase the safe return and disposal of medications and to
5 establish an advisory body to the Department of Public Safety. Based on HRS 329, these
6 responsibilities appropriately belong within the Department of Public Safety.

7 Educating individuals and the public about proper disposal of medications including “Take
8 Back” programs is a promising strategy for reducing prescription drug abuse based on a
9 comprehensive national review of policies and approaches.¹ In support of efforts outlined in
10 SB 303 SD1, the Department of Health is collaborating with the Department of Public Safety on
11 a study to increase understanding of the type of substances responsible for drug poisoning and
12 how these substances were accessed by decedents, as well as educational efforts to increase
13 prescriber use of the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program and appropriate prescribing
14 practices. The Department of Health also conducts ongoing surveillance related to drug
15 poisoning to help shape program and policy efforts and produces an annual report. Last year’s
16 report is entitled “Drug Overdose Deaths among Hawaii residents, 1999-2013” can be accessed
17 at http://health.hawaii.gov/injuryprevention/files/2015/02/hawaii_SER_Drug_Deaths_3.pdf

18 Drug Poisoning is a serious public health problem in Hawaii and across the nation.
19 Based on Hawaii death certificate records, fatal drug poisoning among Hawaii residents have

¹ <http://healthyamericans.org/assets/files/TFAH2013RxDrugAbuseRptFINAL.pdf>

1 increased significantly over the last 20 years to make it the leading mechanism of fatal injuries,
2 surpassing deaths from motor vehicle crashes and falls. There was an almost two-fold increase
3 in deaths from drug poisonings from 78 deaths per year in the 1999-2003 period to 151 deaths
4 per year over the 2009-2013 period. Almost all of the fatal poisonings in the 2009-2013 period
5 were drug-related (88%, or 754 of 856). Prescription drugs were implicated in nearly half (45%)
6 of the unintentional poisonings, including 36% of deaths that involved opioid pain
7 relievers. Death certificate codes further indicated that 52% of these deaths involved illicit
8 substances, most commonly methamphetamine (43%) and cocaine (8%).

9 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.