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**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
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**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB1422 SD1**  
**RELATING TO NON-GENERAL FUNDS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.**

REP. GREGG TAKAYAMA, CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Hearing Date: March 14, 2025

Room Number: 329

1 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health (DOH) strongly supports SB1449 SD1,  
2 which is part of the Governor's Administrative Package, to repeal the birth defects special fund  
3 and redirect deposits from the birth defects special fund to the vital statistics improvement  
4 special fund; to redirect deposits for certified copies of vital records from the general fund to the  
5 vital statistics improvement special fund; and to appropriate funds out of the vital statistics  
6 improvement special fund.

7 Report No. 21-03 published by the Hawaii Office of the Auditor found that the birth defects  
8 special fund did not meet the criteria of a special fund, in part because there was no clear link  
9 between the birth defects program and marriage license fees, and recommended its repeal.  
10 Repealing the birth defects special fund will satisfy these concerns.

11 It is essential to redirect the deposits from the birth defects special fund into the vital statistics  
12 special fund to support a complete overhaul vital statistics business functions. There previously  
13 have been lengthy backlogs in customer requests due to a decades-old, unreliable computer  
14 system that drives a sub-optimal manual workflow, as well as overall increases in customer  
15 orders.

16 The redirection of deposits from the general fund to the vital statistics improvement special fund  
17 will provide a more reliable stream of resources to offset costs for the daily operations of the  
18 vital statistics systems and to support modernization and automation of the system than a budget

1 increase or appropriation would provide. The department processes approximately 125,000  
2 customer requests a year, which is increasing steadily year after year due to a growing population  
3 and additional requirements for which vital records are essential, such as the REAL ID Act of  
4 2005 (Pub.L. 109-13). Along with the increase in the number of transactions, the cost of security  
5 paper, printers and toner, postage, and other supplies continues to rise. Recovering a greater  
6 share of the fees for certified copies would allow the department to meet operational needs, and  
7 make more immediate investments in business operations, quality improvement, and customer  
8 service.

9 Furthermore, the deteriorating condition of bound volumes, some dating back to the Kingdom of  
10 Hawaii, prompt the need for digitization of those records to improve operations, such as  
11 genealogical research, and preservation for historical purposes. A larger share of the fees would  
12 permit interim preservation and protective actions to be taken, in concert with potential longer-  
13 term interventions. The additional revenue from fees provides more certainty and flexibility than  
14 a base budget appropriation.

15 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.