



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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Testimony COMMENTING on SCR 87

**STRONGLY URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, DEPARTMENT OF
LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES, AND THE AIRPORTS DIVISION AND
HARBORS DIVISION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO
ESTABLISH AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO ADDRESS THE THREAT OF AN
OUTBREAK OF CHIKUNGUNYA VIRUS IN HAWAII.**

SENATOR JOSH GREEN, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Hearing Date: 04/01/15
Time: 2:00 PM

Room Number: 414

1 **Fiscal Implications:** This measure has little fiscal implications.

2 **Department Testimony:** The department supports the intent of this resolution and is willing to
3 be a participant in the advisory committee but offers the following comments illustrating what
4 the department is currently doing.

5 The DOH in partnership with DLNR, DOT, DOA, DBEDT and the University of Hawaii are
6 already working together to address concerns associated with mosquito-borne diseases such as
7 chikungunya, dengue and West Nile through Mamalu Poepoe. This is an interagency monitoring
8 program for points-of-entry and points-of-exit that is administered through the Hawaii Invasive
9 Species Council (HISC); and as such this resolution may not be necessary. However, should
10 this measure pass, it is recommended that the focus of the advisory committee be broadened to
11 include other mosquito-borne diseases.

12 The Vector Control Section within the Department of Health recently hired three Vector Control
13 Workers with a fourth to be filled in April. Their primary duty is to increase the mosquito
14 surveillance activities in and around the Honolulu International Airport and Oahu's ports and
15 harbors.

16 The Department's current budget request includes the establishment of four new Vector Control
17 Workers, with two stationed on Maui and two stationed on the Big Island. The primary duties of
18 these positions are to increase the mosquito surveillance at the airport and harbors on their
19 respective island. The Department respectfully requests legislative support for these new
20 positions as they are critical in creating a long-term mosquito control strategy. Kauai currently

1 has a vector control staff that is able to provide minimal mosquito surveillance at the airport and
2 harbors.

3 The DOH Disease Outbreak Control Division already provides incoming travelers with
4 information on general infectious disease prevention/precautions at the Honolulu International
5 Airport using TV screens. This method of education for incoming travelers can be expanded to
6 include other infectious diseases, including mosquito- (and other vector) borne diseases such as
7 chikungunya, zika, and dengue.

8 The Department also has “Fight the Bite” informational flyers that can be re-printed and
9 provided to communities to hang on doorknobs, educating households on how to reduce
10 mosquito breeding sites around homes/neighborhoods. This has been done previously as part of
11 investigations and control efforts related to identifying persons with imported mosquito-borne
12 disease.

13 Strategies currently employed to prevent mosquito- and other vector-borne (i.e., arboviral)
14 diseases in Hawaii include the following:

15 • Disease surveillance and case identification:

- 16 a. According to HRS 156 Communicable Diseases, Appendices A, B, and C,
17 arboviral diseases are an “Urgent” category reportable disease which shall be
18 reported to DOH.
- 19 b. All laboratory testing from Clinical Laboratories of Hawaii, Diagnostic
20 Laboratory Services, and Kaiser Reference Laboratory, and Tripler Army Medical
21 Center for arboviral diseases are electronically reported to the DOH via Electronic
22 Laboratory Reporting (ELR).

23 • Disease control and prevention:

- 24 a. An investigation is immediately initiated on every suspect arboviral illness report
25 received by DOH Epidemiological Specialists. The information collected
26 includes source/location of infection, travel history, location during period of
27 communicability, etc.
- 28 b. Testing by the State Laboratories Division and/or the CDC is performed as part of
29 the epidemiologic investigation of the reported case.
- 30 c. In the event a probable or confirmed case is identified, the Vector Control Section
31 is advised to conduct mosquito abatement based on an assessment of where the

1 individual lives and the potential for mosquito breeding sites. Also if appropriate,
2 the Vector Control staff will organize staff and volunteers to distribute
3 information and provide education to the neighborhood and ensure mosquito
4 breeding is kept to minimum in the vicinity of the ill individual.

5 Healthcare providers and facilities provide the necessary clinical treatment of individuals
6 infected with a mosquito-borne diseases, and others (e.g., insurers) assure the coverage of that
7 care. Should this resolution be passed the Department respectfully recommends the addition of
8 representatives from the healthcare system to the committee to assure that relevant issues are
9 considered and that any recommendations would be representative and feasible.

10 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

DAVID IGE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

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**Testimony of
CARTY S. CHANG
Interim Chairperson**

**Before the Senate Committee on
HEALTH**

**Wednesday, April 1, 2015
2:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 414**

**In consideration of
SENATE RESOLUTION 40 / SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 87
STRONGLY URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, DEPARTMENT OF LAND
AND NATURAL RESOURCES, AND THE AIRPORTS DIVISION AND HARBORS
DIVISION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO ESTABLISH AN
ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO ADDRESS THE THREAT OF AN OUTBREAK OF
CHIKUNGUNYA VIRUS IN HAWAII**

Senate Resolution 40 / Senate Concurrent Resolution 87 proposes to create a Chikungunya Virus Advisory Committee comprised of several state departments, to minimize the threat of a Chikungunya outbreak in Hawaii. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports these measures.**

The Department recognizes that the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito is an invasive species and a vector for several human diseases, including Chikungunya virus. The Department notes that detection and control of human diseases was the responsibility of the Vector Control Branch at the Department of Health (DOH), until a reduction in workforce in 2009 resulted in the loss of this branch and the transfer of remaining employees to a Vector Control Unit within the Sanitation Branch. Since then, *Aedes aegypti* mosquitos have been detected in increasing numbers at Honolulu International Airport. As the Chikungunya virus is established in other parts of the Pacific that are connected to Hawaii via airline and shipping routes, a plan to restore the function of the Vector Control Branch in effectively detecting and controlling mosquitos is much needed.

The Department notes that the Hawaii Invasive Species Council (HISC) has developed an airports monitoring pilot program known as *Māmālu Poepoe*, which may in part address the needs outlined in this measure. The *Māmālu Poepoe* program would promote collaboration among remaining Vector Control Workers, grounds staff at the Hawaii Department of Transportation (HIDOT) Airports Division, entomologists at the Hawaii Department of Agriculture, and research staff at the University of Hawaii to regularly sample the main airports

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LAND
STATE PARKS

in the State and collect baseline data on the presence or risk of invasive mosquitos, ants, coconut rhinoceros beetle, and Africanized honey bees. This effort will be coordinated in part by HISC support staff at the Department, as described by a memorandum of agreement between the Department and HIDOT. This program is scheduled for implementation in 2015, and the Department's biennium budget request includes the establishment of a U fund to allow for the transfer of implementation funds from HIDOT to the Department.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
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April 1, 2015
2:00 P.M.
State Capitol, Room 414

S.C.R. 87 / S.R. 40
STRONGLY URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, DEPARTMENT OF LAND
AND NATURAL RESOURCES, AND THE AIRPORTS DIVISION AND HARBORS
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Senate Committee on Health

The Department of Transportation (DOT) **supports** the intent of these resolutions which call for the establishment of an advisory committee to analyze the threat of chikungunya virus in Hawaii.

The virus is transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito, and cases of the virus and populations of the disease-carrying mosquito have been confirmed in Tahiti, Tonga, American Samoa, and other Pacific islands. The DOT recognizes that our Airports and Harbors facilities may be potential pathways for the introduction of the virus-carrying pest to Hawaii, and is committed to assisting the Department of Health and the Department of Land and Natural Resources in researching ways to control the threat of the virus spreading should it appear at our Airports and Harbors facilities.

In addition, the DOT has a memorandum of agreement with the Department of Land and Natural Resources known as Mamalu Poepoe to monitor invasive threats like the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito at our airports which may in part address the concerns outlined in these resolutions.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Testimony by Michael Markrich on
Senate Resolution 40 and Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 87 Strongly Urging
the Department of Health, the Department of Land and Natural Resources, and
the Airports and Harbors Divisions of the Department of Transportation to
Establish an Advisory Committee to Address the Threat of an Outbreak of
Chikungunya Virus

Hawaii State Senate Committee on Health
April 1, 2015

Chair Green and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support of Senate Resolution NO. 40 and Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 87, urging the DOH, DLNR and DOT's Airports and Harbors Divisions to establish an Advisory committee to address the threat of an outbreak of the Chikungunya virus.

Chikungunya is a virus that originated in Africa. There is no vaccine or treatment. Its name in an African language literally means bent over in pain. Mosquitoes carrying the virus inject it in the blood of people they bite, who in turn pass it on to other people as a result of being bitten by more mosquitoes. It goes wherever people carrying the virus travel. It causes severe joint pain and disproportionately affects elderly people, infants, and those with heart, diabetes and other chronic conditions. Its effects can last for years. It is said that once local insects are infected it is hard to stop the disease.

It is now found on Pacific Islands all around us and is travelling fast. Since October 2014, the Chikungunya virus has swept through French Polynesia. In October 2014 92 cases were reported. Today, there are more than 70,000 cases. Approximately one-fourth of the population of French Polynesia has been impacted. Nearly 1,000 have been hospitalized. Twenty dead...

During the peak of the epidemic in places like Moorea, businesses were closed because so many people were incapacitated.

The virus has had a terrible effect on tourism promotion in French Polynesia. In December 2014 Actress Lindsay Lohan was hospitalized with the virus after a trip to Tahiti. I don't have to tell you that flights come from Tahiti, American Samoa and other places where Chikungunya has infected the population every week. I met someone from Tahiti who said he had the disease in a Honolulu restaurant last week

If the virus comes to Hawaii it will have a terrible effect on tourism. It will likely overwhelm our hospitals. Hawaii as a tourist destination will never be the same.

This has already happened in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean which also suffers from the disease. The Caribbean reports more than 700,000 cases. Travel agents report the virus is one of the top concerns of visitors.

In Hawaii there is another impact. Hawaii has the largest proportion of elderly citizens aged 85 plus- in the United States. The elderly are very impacted by this disease. Eighty percent of those affected have some kind of severe joint pain in the hands and wrists that can last for years. This would be very hard on old people in Hawaii.

There are two species of mosquitoes in Hawaii: *Aedes albopictus* and *Aedes aegypti* that spread the disease. It was thought *Aedes aegypti* were wiped out in Hawaii 1949 but have been found in traps at Honolulu International Airport repeatedly since 2012. They are the carriers. They are here and they are active.

What can be done? We need to start spraying immediately against mosquitoes and begin the public awareness campaigns on mosquito prevention that was started a year ago in the Caribbean. Vector control in DOH should start spraying but lacks the resources. It is my understanding that they are now down to 12 people including four for all of Oahu. I was told there were once 29 for the whole state when our population had far less people.

I was told when I wrote an article about this in the newspaper that nothing can be done until the epidemic hits in Hawaii. I was told there was no appetite to be proactive. People are overwhelmed by other issues. The only thing I can say in response is that once this disease is here it is very hard to get rid of. If we get an epidemic it will cause great pain, death and misery. And no one will be able to say we were not warned. Young people in the future might ask us what steps we took to prevent this disease from spoiling life in Hawaii. We should have a good answer.

I would like to conclude with a statement by Garfield Higgins that appeared in the Jamaica Observer on March 29, 2015:

“A few months ago thousands were attacked by the Chikungunya virus (CHIKV). Hundreds today walk with the rocking-chair evidence of the disease. The Minister of Health Dr. Fenton Ferguson told the nation in a national broadcast that he knew about CHIKV two years before it landed on our shores. What did he do to prepare the country for it? He did little, if anything of consequence. Jamaicans called talk-back programs, columnists penned articles and pointed out the incompetence of the Administration, and the Opposition remonstrated. Nothing else happened.”

Do we want this to happen here? Thank you. I am available for questions.