
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO REQUIRE THAT EACH OF ITS
DISTRICT HEALTH OFFICERS BE A PHYSICIAN LICENSED TO
PRACTICE MEDICINE UNDER PART I OF CHAPTER 453, HAWAII
REVISED STATUTES.

1 WHEREAS, a physician's knowledge and experience facilitate
2 the day-to-day responsibilities of the Department of Health's
3 district health officer position and allow the physician to
4 serve as a dedicated community resource; and
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6 WHEREAS, requiring that district health officers of the
7 Department of Health be physicians is extremely critical to the
8 Department's ability to provide adequate community support,
9 educate the community, and recognize the community's needs and
10 concerns in the face of pressing public health issues; and
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12 WHEREAS, the Department of Health has long recognized that
13 the district health officer in each of the three neighbor island
14 counties should be a physician and, ideally, a physician with
15 experience in community medicine who is also well-versed in
16 public health; and
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18 WHEREAS, for many years, the Department of Health's
19 district health officers met these requirements, but at some
20 point the County of Hawaii district health officer position was
21 filled by a non-physician without medical experience or a
22 master's degree in public health, who served as an acting
23 district health officer for six years; and
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25 WHEREAS, by that point, rather than attempting to recruit a
26 physician district health officer, the Department of Health
27 created the new position of district health officer II (non-
28 M.D.) to accommodate the existing non-M.D. district health
29 officer; and



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2 WHEREAS, when the Department of Health's response to health
3 problems in the County of Hawaii is compared to its response to
4 health problems in the County of Maui, it is evident that health
5 issues, including disease outbreaks, were addressed much more
6 proficiently and with greater community satisfaction in the
7 County of Maui, where the district health officer was a
8 physician with a master's degree in public health; and
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10 WHEREAS, this disparity was clearly demonstrated in the
11 Department of Health's response to two major public health
12 issues: the 2002 dengue fever outbreak in the County of Maui
13 versus the 2004 outbreak in the County of Hawaii; and the rat
14 lungworm disease outbreak in Hana, Maui, versus the current
15 crisis centered around the Puna district of the County of
16 Hawaii, and in both instances, the Department's attention to and
17 engagement with community members was much more effective in the
18 County of Maui than in the County of Hawaii; and
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20 WHEREAS, the Office of the Auditor conducted an audit of
21 the Disease Outbreak Control Division of the Department of
22 Health and the Division's responses to three disease outbreaks
23 within the State, including the dengue fever outbreak in the
24 County of Hawaii, and in Report No. 17-14, dated December 2017,
25 concluded that the Disease Outbreak Control Division and the
26 Department exhibited "an absence or a lack of adherence to
27 plans, policies, and protocols, all of which provide disease
28 response agencies with clarity and direction during the
29 emergency conditions of an outbreak"; and
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31 WHEREAS, the Auditor also noted that the Disease Outbreak
32 Control Division and the Department of Health were unable to
33 provide "sufficient documentation of the analysis and
34 discussions that occurred during the selected outbreaks. Absent
35 such information, we interviewed staff, as well as other key
36 individuals involved, but found inconsistencies in their
37 recollections of events and the details of their efforts during
38 the selected outbreaks."; and
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40 WHEREAS, the members of the Hawaii County Council,
41 recognizing the importance of having a physician in its district
42 health officer position, have petitioned the Legislature to



BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Director of Health and the Chairperson of the Hawaii County Council.

Richard L. ...

Cindy Evans

[Signature]

Mark 6th

L. Lechizone

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and

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