

MAR 09 2018

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# SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

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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



1  
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



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1 require that district health officers of the Department of  
2 Health be physicians; and

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4 WHEREAS, the lack of a dedicated physician district health  
5 officer within the County of Hawaii may have contributed to some  
6 of the discrepancies and errors in the Department of Health's  
7 response to the 2004 dengue fever outbreak; now, therefore,

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9 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Twenty-ninth  
10 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2018, the  
11 House of Representatives concurring, that the Legislature  
12 requests the Department of Health to reinstitute the long-  
13 standing practice of having a physician in the role of district  
14 health officer by requiring that each district health officer of  
15 the Department be a physician licensed to practice medicine  
16 under part I of Chapter 453, Hawaii Revised Statutes; and

17  
18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this  
19 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Director of Health  
20 and the Chairperson of the Hawaii County Council.

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22  
23 OFFERED BY: \_\_\_\_\_

*[Signature]*  
*[Signature]*

