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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO HEALTH.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that zoonotic diseases  
2 are diseases that are caused by infection from viruses,  
3 bacteria, parasites, or fungi, and can spread between animals  
4 and people. These diseases can cause many different types of  
5 illnesses in people, ranging from mild to serious illness and  
6 even death. According to the Centers for Disease Control and  
7 Prevention, zoonotic diseases are very common and every year  
8 tens of thousands of Americans get sick from diseases spread  
9 between animals and people.

10           The legislature further finds that zoonotic diseases can be  
11 transmitted directly or indirectly from animals to humans by  
12 consumption of contaminated foodstuffs or contact with infected  
13 animals. Leptospirosis, *E. coli* infection, methicillin-  
14 resistant *staphylococcus aureus* infection (MRSA), ringworm,  
15 *toxoplasmosis*, *salmonella* infection, *tuberculosis*, H1N1 and H3N2  
16 influenza virus, also known as bird flu or swine flu,  
17 *brucellosis* caused by *Brucella suis*, and *angiostrongyliasis*



1 *cantonensis*, more commonly known as rat lungworm disease, are  
2 examples of zoonotic diseases. Zoonoses, diseases or infections  
3 that are naturally transmissible from vertebrate animals to  
4 humans, are very well understood and studied by veterinarians.

5 The legislature also finds that in the past, the department  
6 of health had a public health veterinarian position that was  
7 filled by a doctor of veterinary medicine. Dr. David M. Sasaki,  
8 doctor of veterinary medicine, is a world expert on  
9 leptospirosis, served in this position for many years, and  
10 oversaw the production of public health publications that were  
11 distributed to Hawaii physicians and veterinarians.

12 The legislature additionally finds that these publications  
13 were well-received and helped educate and inform physicians  
14 about disease reporting requirements, the prevalence of a number  
15 of diseases in the State, and the appropriate treatment for the  
16 diseases. Such information included resistance to or developing  
17 resistance to antibiotics of common venereal diseases such as  
18 gonorrhoea, and information that provided a deeper understanding  
19 of the risk of animal diseases to humans.

20 The legislature notes that most health departments have a  
21 position filled by a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine that is



1 usually designated as public health veterinarian. Establishing  
2 a veterinary medical officer position within the department of  
3 health will help combat the spread of rat lungworm and other  
4 zoonotic diseases in the State's human population and support  
5 statewide efforts to protect and improve human health.  
6 Furthermore, a public health veterinarian could also revive  
7 public health publications and disseminate the publications in  
8 electronic form, as well as couple the publications with  
9 continuing medical education for physicians, nurses, and  
10 veterinarians to help ensure the continued competence of the  
11 State's health care workforce.

12 The legislature also notes that global warming contributes  
13 to increases in number and types of viruses, bacteria,  
14 parasites, and fungi that are spread between animals and humans,  
15 which makes early detection and study of these vectors and the  
16 illnesses they cause imperative to protect public health.

17 The purpose of this Act is to establish and fund one full-  
18 time equivalent (1.00 FTE) permanent veterinary medical officer  
19 position within the department of health.



1 SECTION 2. Chapter 321, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
2 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated  
3 and to read as follows:

4 "§321- Veterinary medical officer. (a) There is  
5 established within the department of health a veterinary medical  
6 officer position to oversee the protection and improvement of  
7 human health through measures for the detection, investigation,  
8 assessment, prevention, control, and eradication of zoonotic  
9 diseases.

10 (b) The veterinary medical officer shall:

11 (1) Hold a doctor of veterinary medicine degree from a  
12 veterinary college meeting all the standards  
13 established by the American Veterinary Medical  
14 Association; and

15 (2) Be licensed to practice veterinary medicine pursuant  
16 to chapter 471."

17 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general  
18 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so  
19 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2023-2024 and  
20 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal  
21 year 2024-2025 for the establishment of one full-time equivalent




1 (1.00 FTE) permanent veterinary medical officer position in the  
2 department of health.

3 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department  
4 of health for the purposes of this Act.

5 SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

6 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2023.

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INTRODUCED BY: 

JAN 19 2023



# H.B. NO. 243

**Report Title:**

Veterinary Medical Officer; Department of Health; Appropriation

**Description:**

Establishes and appropriates funds for one full-time equivalent (1.00 FTE) permanent veterinary medical officer position within the department of health.

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