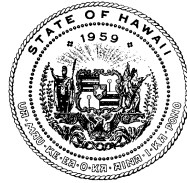


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**Testimony in SUPPORT of H.B. 243
RELATING TO HEALTH**

REPRESENTATIVE DELLA AU BELATTI, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HOMELESSNESS

Hearing Date: 2/15/2023

Room Number: Conference Room 329 &
Videoconference

- 1 **Department Testimony:** Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in SUPPORT of
- 2 House Bill 243, which establishes and appropriates funds for a permanent Veterinary Medical
- 3 Officer position within the Department of Health.

- 4 Veterinary Officers provide expertise in important areas that may be less familiar to most human
- 5 medical practitioners and can contribute valuable experience and knowledge to assist in the
- 6 prevention and control of diseases transmitted to humans by animals and animal products.

- 7 In Hawaii, there are many examples of diseases with significant impact on human populations
- 8 and that are caused by pathogens which spend part of their life cycle in an animal host.
- 9 Toxoplasmosis is a disease that can cause birth defects when pregnant women are infected. The
- 10 primary life cycle is in mammals, with feral cats and wild pigs contributing to this animal pool.
- 11 Other examples include leptospirosis, which is spread to humans via water contaminated by
- 12 waste from infected animals such as cattle, rodents, or mongooses, and murine typhus,
- 13 transmitted from infected rodents to humans by way of fleas.

- 14 Diseases of high potential human impact, such Ebolavirus and Monkeypox and other poxviruses,
- 15 and COVID-19, all are transmissible to certain animals. Many foodborne diseases are associated
- 16 with contaminated animal products, including salmonella and *E. coli*.

1 While the State Veterinarian in Hawaii sits within the Department of Agriculture, many state and
2 local health departments have Veterinary Officers leading key program areas, such as
3 Foodborne, Waterborne, and Vectorborne disease programs. It would be beneficial to the State to
4 have veterinary expertise within DOH to address concerns related to disease transmission related
5 to companion animals, agricultural animals, or wild animal reservoirs.

6 The Department of Health strongly supports establishing a Veterinary Officer position within
7 DOH as a means of furthering the health and wellbeing of Hawaii residents through development
8 of initiatives that address human and animal health as a continuum.

9 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

10

HB-243

Submitted on: 2/15/2023 3:20:27 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/15/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ruth Love	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Unnecessary