SB 2113 – RELATING TO ANIMALS

Chairs Gabbard and Baker, Vice Chairs Riviere and Tokuda, and members of the Committees:

The University of Hawai‘i (UH) opposes SB 2113 and finds that the opening paragraph of the measure troubling as it leads to a general public misconception that UH uses animals for cosmetic or household product testing. While UH is authorized to conduct research on animals for the purpose of science, medicine and education, it has not ever, and does not intend to use vertebrate animals for cosmetic or household product testing.

In addition, the measure duplicates federal requirements already in place on a national level for the protection of research subjects and the safety of those working with them. For more than 30 years UH has been required by law to comply with the USDA Animal Welfare Regulations (AWR) and the Public Health Service (PHS) Policy on Humane Care and Use of Animals, and the U.S Government Principles for Utilization and Care of Vertebrate Animals Used in Testing, Research, and Training.

Proposals to use animals are reviewed and approved by the federally mandated UH Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) before commencement of activities, to ensure that investigators have appropriately considered alternatives to procedures that can cause more than slight or momentary pain or distress in animals, consistent with sound research design. If it is demonstrated that there is no in vitro alternative or better models to replace the use of animals, the UH IACUC ensures that fewest number of animals are used, and that elimination or reduction of unnecessary pain and distress in animals, is consistent with sound scientific practice and the goals of the study.

The language of the proposed bill reads that the states of California and New Jersey enacted similar bills to mandate the use of alternate test methods in lieu of traditional animal test methods; however, the law practiced in these states apply to only manufacturers and contract testing facilities, and the regulation does not apply to research facilities such as a University of Hawai‘i.
Lastly, UH uses diverse species for non-medical activities. The broad language of SB 2113 intended to protect animals from cosmetic or household chemical testing, may instead inadvertently impact animal studies intended to help the people of Hawai‘i and to advance scientific knowledge. Examples of these studies include, but are not limited to controlling rat lung worm and eradicating the coqui frog and other invasive species. Additionally, the measure could disrupt the academic endeavors conducted by UH investigators who conduct animal studies for non-medical purposes.

The University of Hawai‘i appreciates the opportunity to comment on this measure.