

EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

HONOLULU

July 10, 2006

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIONS TO SENATE BILL NO. 2133

Honorable Members
Twenty-Third Legislature
State of Hawaii

Pursuant to Section 16 of Article III of the Constitution of the State of Hawaii, I am returning herewith, without my approval, Senate Bill No. 2133, entitled "A Bill for an Act Relating to Health."

The purposes of this bill are to establish a Hawaii health commission within the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs that would develop a comprehensive health plan for people in Hawaii and to restrict the use in Hawaii of vaccines that contain mercury.

This bill is objectionable because it restricts the use of FDA-approved vaccines for no scientifically sound reason. This restriction will put the health and well-being of Hawaii residents at risk, particularly in the event of an influenza pandemic.

Thimerosal, an organic mercury compound, has been used as a preservative in some vaccines for many years. The FDA requires that vials of vaccines that provide multiple doses, such as many flu vaccines, contain preservatives to prevent contamination as individual doses are withdrawn from the vial. When thimerosal is processed by the body, it breaks down into ethyl mercury, one form of mercury. Others are pure mercury, such as that formerly used in thermometers, and methyl mercury, which is produced by microorganisms in water and soil and can accumulate in fish. Exposure to high levels of methyl mercury is toxic.

In 1999, the FDA determined that on a regular vaccination schedule some infants might be exposed to accumulated

doses of *ethyl mercury* that would exceed some guidelines for *methyl mercury*. These forms of mercury are different and are processed differently by the body. Ethyl mercury breaks down much more rapidly and is eliminated more quickly than methyl mercury. But as a precaution, the United States Department of Health and Human Services, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and vaccine manufacturers decided that thimerosal should be reduced or eliminated in vaccines. As a result, the vaccines routinely recommended for childhood immunization no longer contain thimerosal. However, some immunizations for adolescents and adults still do. Further, much of the flu vaccine supply does as well.

Two years after that precautionary decision, the Immunization Safety Review Committee of the Institute of Medicine in the National Academies of Science reported that there was not enough evidence to say that vaccines with thimerosal either do or do not cause various disorders in children such as autism, hyperactivity, and delayed speech. By 2004 enough additional studies had been done for the committee to conclude that there is no causal relationship between thimerosal-containing vaccines and autism.

This bill ignores the body of current scientific evidence on thimerosal-containing vaccines. It also ignores the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Hawaii Academy of Family Practice, the Hawaii Medical Association, the Hawaii Chapter of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and numerous physicians who are on record opposing this legislation. Its enactment could cause some parents to doubt the general safety of vaccines and to decline vaccinations for their children, a step backward in our efforts to encourage families to participate in vaccination and to reduce or eliminate preventable illness and deaths from communicable diseases.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIONS
SENATE BILL NO. 2133
Page 3

Any action that potentially lowers the immunization rate is of concern to me, particularly since Hawaii is a natural gateway for a flu pandemic. Reducing our population's health protection is a risk I am not willing to take.

For the foregoing reasons, I am returning Senate Bill No. 2133 without my approval.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Linda Lingle", written in a cursive style.

LINDA LINGLE
Governor of Hawaii