



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

### Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Finance  
Friday, February 21, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.

by

Clementina D. Ceria-Ulep, PhD, RN  
Dean & The Queen's Health Systems Endowed Professor  
School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene

And

T. Samuel Shomaker, Dean  
John A. Burns School of Medicine

And

Michael Bruno, Provost  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

#### HB 1431 HD1 – RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the House Committee on Finance,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify **in support of HB 1431 HD1**.

This measure establishes an oral health task force to review the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve the oral health infrastructure in Hawai'i. This initiative is in collaboration with the Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition, of which faculty from SONDH and JABSOM both are engaged in and collaborate with.

The recommended members of the Task Force include a faculty member of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene (SONDH), which includes the Department of Dental Hygiene. The faculty is to be appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives. In addition, the Task Force will include a representative of the University of Hawai'i John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM), to be appointed by the President of the Senate.

This Task Force will fill an important role in our state by creating the dedicated entity which will review information on the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve oral health infrastructure in Hawai'i. Benefits of this Task Force include stronger cross-sector collaboration on oral health issues, up-to-date analysis of community oral health status, increased awareness of the importance of oral health, and clear, actionable recommendations for improvements.

SONDH wishes to recognize the incredible talent and dedicated experts in oral health that are faculty of the school. These faculty commit to enhancing access to oral health care through the education and training of the future dental hygienist workforce. In addition, Dr. Deborah Mattheus, PhD, APRN-Rx, CPNP, FAAN, Endowed Professor in School Health & Professor, is the Senior Practice Director and Dental Sealant Program Director for the Hawai'i Keiki: Healthy and Ready to Learn Program. Dr. Mattheus was a recipient of the Achievement Rewards for College Scientists (ARCS) Scholarship, Honolulu Chapter for her doctoral research study on the prevention of early childhood caries in primary care practice and has served as the Hawai'i State Oral Health Champion designated by Harvard University's Center for Integration of Primary Care and Oral Health (CIPCOH). We would like to recommend her as a candidate to serve on the task force.

The UH JABSOM recommends Dr. Jill Omori, Director of the Office of Medical Education, and Dr. Matthew Oishi, part-time faculty in charge of the oral health curriculum for the medical students, as qualified experts who would offer high value contributions to this Task Force.

The SONDH and JABSOM look forward to serving on this important task force.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

# OFFICE OF INFORMATION PRACTICES

STATE OF HAWAII  
NO. 1 CAPITOL DISTRICT BUILDING  
250 SOUTH HOTEL STREET, SUITE 107  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
TELEPHONE: 808-586-1400 FAX: 808-586-1412  
EMAIL: oip@hawaii.gov

To: House Committee on Finance

From: Carlotta Amerino, Director

Date: February 21, 2025, 2:00 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Re: Testimony on H.B. No. 1431, S.D. 1  
Relating to Oral Health

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Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this bill, which would establish an Oral Health Task Force. The Office of Information Practices (OIP) offers **comments** on proposed bill subsection 2(g), on page 8 at lines 13-14, and supports the amended version of subsection (g) proposed by the Department of Health.

As introduced, bill subsection 2(g) would fully exempt the Task Force from the Sunshine Law, part I of chapter 92, HRS. That exemption would preclude all public testimony and participation in the Task Force's work, undermining not only the Sunshine Law's stated purpose of ensuring that the formation and conduct of public policy is conducted as openly as possible, but also the Task Force's purpose of looking into systemic issues with oral health services and recommending improvements. Without public input during the Task Force's work the issues identified may be incomplete, and the recommendations may lack public support. OIP supports the amended version of subsection (g) proposed by the Department of Health, which would allow Task Force members more flexibility to talk about oral health issues outside a meeting while still ensuring public

attendance and participation in meetings of the full Task Force and requiring a record of those meetings in the form of minutes. OIP understands the Department of Health's proposed version of subsection (g) to be as follows:

(g) Less than a quorum of task force members may discuss task force business together outside a meeting provided that they report the matters discussed at the next duly noticed meeting of the task force, and that no commitment to vote is made or sought. Such discussions shall be a permitted interaction under section 92-2.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

Thank you for considering OIP's testimony.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



RYAN I. YAMANE  
DIRECTOR  
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII  
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELawe KANAKA  
Office of the Director  
P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

February 20, 2025

TO: The Honorable Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair  
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 1431 HD1 – RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH.**

Hearing: February 21, 2025, Time 2:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent and defers to the Department of Health on implementation. DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation align with priorities identified in the executive budget and not replace or reduce requests.

**PURPOSE:** This bill establishes an Oral Health Task Force to review the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve the State's oral health infrastructure. Establishes one full-time equivalent program specialist V position. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

The Committee on Health amended the measure by:

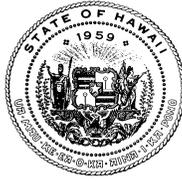
- (1) Changing the appropriations to unspecified amounts;
- (2) Changing the effective date to July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion; and
- (3) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

February 20, 2025

Page 2

DHS appreciates the Legislature's continued investment in and attention to the oral health needs of Hawaii's residents. DHS Med-QUEST division will be glad to participate as a member of the task force.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
**KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO**  
P. O. Box 3378  
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378  
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony in SUPPORT of H.B. 1431 H.D. 1**  
**RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH**

REPRESENTATIVE KYLE T. YAMASHITA, CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Hearing Date, Time and Room Number: 02/21/2025, 02:00PM, CR 308

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The proposed measure appropriates funds out of the State's general  
2 revenues for fiscal year 2025-2026 and fiscal year 2026-2027 and the establishment of a  
3 permanent 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) position to the Department of Health ("Department")  
4 to administer and oversee a contract to hire a consultant to facilitate the work of the oral  
5 health task force. The Department requests that this measure be considered as a vehicle to  
6 provide this needed funding so long as it does not supplant the priorities and requests outlined  
7 in the Governor's executive budget request.

8 **Department Position:** The Department supports this measure offering comments and a  
9 proposed amendment.

10 **Department Testimony:** The Family Health Services Division (FHSD) provides the following  
11 testimony on behalf of the Department.

12 An oral health task force would be beneficial to convene stakeholders to review  
13 information on the status of oral health in the state and make recommendations to improve  
14 oral health infrastructure in Hawai'i.

15 An oral health program is a critical part of all state public health departments. However,  
16 the DOH Dental Health Division was eliminated as part of the 2009 budget cuts. Oral health  
17 disease is a particularly critical issue in Hawai'i with many children and adults suffering from  
18 preventable dental disease. Access to dental care is a challenge since most of the primary and

1 specialty oral health providers are in the urban areas of the City and County of Honolulu. The  
2 lack of access to oral health care is particularly serious in rural communities on the neighbor  
3 islands and in low-income urban/rural areas of O'ahu.

4 Rebuilding the Department's oral public health program will help to fulfill the basic core  
5 public health functions of assessment, assurance, and policy development and meet the dental  
6 health mandates of Hawai'i Revised Statutes Title 19, Chapter 321, Part V §321-61 to §321-63.

7 Based on the specialized topic and comprehensive membership of this task force, it may  
8 be difficult to recruit members that currently work together on related oral health issues as  
9 part of their employment or associations if they will be prohibited from continuing these  
10 professional interactions during their tenure on the task force based on Part I, Chapter 92,  
11 Hawai'i Revised Statutes. We recommend adoption of Office of Information Practices language  
12 to amend H.B. 1431 H.D. 1 for a limited exemption to Part I, Chapter 92, Hawai'i Revised  
13 Statutes that allows interactions/discussions among oral health task force members that need  
14 to talk together about the same issues the task force will be dealing during the course of their  
15 regular work.

16 The DOH appreciates the funds to convene the task force. The establishment of 1.0  
17 permanent FTE position may not be necessary since there is a current Governor's executive  
18 budget request to reestablish the Department's Oral Health Program, including establishing 2.0  
19 permanent FTE positions.

20 **Offered Amendments:**

21 CHANGE: SECTION 2. (g) ~~[The task force shall be exempt from part I of chapter 14-92, Hawaii~~  
22 ~~Revised Statutes.]~~ Less than a quorum of task force members may discuss task force business  
23 together outside a meeting provided that they report the matters discussed at the next duly  
24 noticed meeting of the task force, and that no commitment to vote is made or sought. Such  
25 discussions shall be a permitted interaction under Hawaii Revised Statutes §92-2.5.

26 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



**STATE HEALTH PLANNING  
AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH - KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII  
KE KIA'AINA O KA MOKU'AINA 'O HAWAII

**KENNETH S. FINK, MD, MGA, MPH**  
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH  
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

**JOHN C. (JACK) LEWIN, M.D.**  
ADMINISTRATOR

1177 Alakea St., #402, Honolulu, HI 96813 Phone: 587-0788 Fax: 587-0783 [www.shpda.org](http://www.shpda.org)

February 19, 2025

To: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
And Honorable Members

From: John C (Jack) Lewin MD, Administrator, SHPDA;  
and Senior Advisor to Governor Green On Healthcare Innovation

Re: **HB1431, HD1 - Relating to Oral Health**

Hearing: February 21, 2025 @ 2:00 pm

Position: SUPPORT

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Testimony:

SHPDA fully supports the intent of this bill to promote oral health and close the access gaps to it across the state and particularly in rural areas.

SHPDA, under statutory authority granted by this Legislature, collects claims data for all dental care provided by dental and health insurers in Hawaii. This data is part of the All-Payer Claims Database (APCD) which will become operational in 2025. The APCD is being developed by SHPDA in partnership with the DHS Med-QUEST program and the University of Hawaii. Extracting the de-identified and privacy-assured dental data and turning into useful information for monitoring dental health for all residents statewide will still take some additional time to fully organize and publish, but fortunately it is in development. We also fully support the staff position for the Department of Health the bill proposes, and which is strongly indicated.

SHPDA further believes the proposed oral health task force will greatly benefit from this data when it is available. There are many gaps in oral health for keiki and for residents of all ages, including kupuna, that need to be identified and addressed as a significant aspect of the Governor's Hawaii the Health State vision that SHPDA is charged with fulfilling.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify,

Jack Lewin MD, Administrator SHPDA



## Hawaii Dental Association

Committee: House Finance Committee

Time/Date: 2:00 pm, February 21, 2025

Location: State Capitol Conference Room 308 and via Videoconference

Re: HB 1431 HD1, Relating to Oral Health

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the committee,

The Hawaii Dental Association (HDA) is a professional association comprised of approximately 950-member dentists. **We are in support of HB 1431 HD1**, relating to health. This bill establishes an Oral Health Task Force to review the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve the State's oral health infrastructure.

HDA's number one priority is patient safety. As dentists seek to promote oral health in our state, they are in the best position to assess and monitor the population's oral health status, community needs, and assets; inform and educate people about oral health; mobilize community partners to leverage resources; develop, champion, and implement policies, laws, and plans that support oral health efforts; reduce barriers to care; assure a competent and skilled public and private oral health workforce; and improve public oral health functions through ongoing evaluation and continuous quality improvement. HDA is a proud collaborator with the Hawaii Oral Health Coalition, the Department of Health and its Med-Quest Division, other professional organizations and the state Board of Dentistry.

HDA is a statewide membership organization representing dentists practicing in Hawaii and licensed by the State of Hawaii's Board of Dentistry. HDA members are committed to protecting the oral health and well-being of the people of Hawaii, from keiki to kupuna and everyone in between.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 1431 HD1.



**ALOHACARE**

To: The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair  
The Honorable Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Health

From: Paula Arcena, External Affairs Vice President  
Mike Nguyen, Public Policy Manager  
Sarielyn Curtis, External Affairs Specialist

Hearing: Friday, February 21, 2025, 2:00 PM, Conference Room 308

RE: **HB1431 HD1 Relating to Oral Health**

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AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of HB1431 HD1**. This measure establishes an Oral Health Task Force to review the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve the State's oral health infrastructure; establishes one full-time equivalent program specialist V position; and appropriates funds.

Founded in 1994 by Hawai'i's community health centers, AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan serving over 70,000 Medicaid and dual-eligible health plan members on all islands. Approximately 37 percent of our members are keiki. We are Hawai'i's only health plan exclusively dedicated to serving Medicaid and Medicaid-Medicare dually-eligible beneficiaries. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for access to quality, whole-person care for all.

Oral health is an essential aspect of a person's overall health and quality of life. Good oral health is important for all, but especially for healthy pregnancies, avoiding heart disease, diabetes complications and other conditions. Poor oral health is the cause for a wide range of health conditions that affect one's ability to eat, speak, smile, and have positive self-esteem, which has a significant impact on mental health.<sup>1</sup>

In 2022, the legislature approved \$29.9 million to reinstate an adult Medicaid dental benefit, with services becoming available January 1, 2023. We are grateful for the Legislature and the Med-QUEST Division for this tremendous win for better oral health care for our community. However, even with the recently restored benefit, Hawai'i's oral healthcare system is not meeting the needs of residents.

Establishing an oral health task force of key stakeholders to assess our State's oral health system will give us an opportunity to systematically review and understand our State's needs, current resources and infrastructure, and identify next steps for improving oral health outcomes for our residents. We must continue to invest in our community's health, and this measure is step in the right direction.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB1431 HD1**.

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<sup>1</sup> [The role of self-esteem in the development of psychiatric problems: a three-year prospective study in a clinical sample of adolescents - PMC](#)



## HAWAI'I ORAL HEALTH COALITION

Date: February 20, 2025

To: The Honorable Representative Kyle T. Yamashita Chair  
The Honorable Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
Members of the Committee on Finance

Re: Support for HB 1431 HD1, Relating to Oral Health

Hrg: February 21, 2025 at 2:00 PM - Conference Room 308 & via Videoconference

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The Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition, a program of the Hawai'i Public Health Institute<sup>i</sup>, is in **strong support of HB 1431 HD 1**, which establishes an oral health task force to review information on the status of oral health in the state and makes recommendations to improve or health infrastructure in Hawai'i, and appropriates funds to the Department of Health for two positions to facilitate the work of the oral health taskforce.

Oral health is essential to the overall physical, psychological, social, and economic well-being of Hawai'i's residents. Yet, our residents suffer from poor oral health:

- Hawai'i has among the highest prevalence of dental decay in children and adults compared to other states.
- Low-income families, intellectually and developmentally disabled residents, kūpuna, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations, and neighbor island residents are disproportionately impacted by poor oral health.
- Lack of an in-state dental school, geographic isolation, lack of community water fluoridation, and societal inequities are significant contributors to our poor oral health status.

Forty-two states maintain dedicated public dental health staff responsible for assessing and monitoring the population's oral health status, community needs, and infrastructure; informing and educating the public about the importance of oral health; and working to reduce barriers to dental care. With over 288,000 adults with Medicaid dental benefits, there is a lack of dental providers to adequately meet the need for services among the population.

Our state's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) cared for approximately 40,000 dental patients in 2021<sup>ii</sup>, and often have long wait lists due to the limited facility and staffing capacity. Additionally, only 240 FQHC and general practice dentists were active in Medicaid in Hawai'i. However, it is unclear how many currently accept new patients. While the legislature recently allocated funding to reinstate basic services to adults enrolled in Medicaid, the shortage of Medicaid providers and limited infrastructure hinders the provision of services across the state, primarily in rural and neighbor island communities.

Furthermore, between 2016 and 2020, there were a total of 29,536 emergency department (ED) visits with a dental related diagnosis by adults aged 21 years and older in Hawai'i, two-thirds of which were admitted for primary dental diagnoses. A significant proportion of these ED visits were Medicaid recipients (9,680), and/or Native Hawaiian/Part Native Hawaiian (5,018). Medicaid claims constituted 45% of the cumulative total charges for the ED visits with a primary dental diagnosis (\$12.3 million). Additionally, higher rates of ED visits were found for Hawai'i County, Kaua'i County, and adults ages 21 to 44<sup>iii</sup>.

It is imperative that we invest time and resources into further examining the oral health landscape in Hawai'i to better understand the full scope of oral health needs, resources, infrastructure, and to identify evidence-based best practices, which can best address the barriers and gaps in our existing oral health care systems. A dedicated oral health task force comprised of key stakeholders is necessary to identify and develop the strategies that address the critical needs of our communities.

Additionally, dedicated staffing under the Department of Health to facilitate and advance the work of an oral health task force will lay the foundation for ongoing assessment of oral health trends and systems, and the development of effective approaches to improving oral health outcomes for all Hawai'i residents.

The State has begun to reinvest in the oral health of its most vulnerable residents. HB 1431 HD1 is an effective approach to supporting the success and sustainability of this investment. Most importantly, this measure will promote a strong foundation for improved and inclusive oral health outcomes.

For these reasons, we respectfully ask you to pass HB 1431 HD1 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,



Patrick Donnelly  
Statewide Oral Health Coalition Manager  
Hawai'i Public Health Institute

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<sup>i</sup> Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI) is a hub for building healthy communities, providing issue-based advocacy, education, and technical assistance through partnerships with government, academia, foundations, business, and community-based organizations.

<sup>ii</sup> <https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/data-reporting/program-data?grantNum=H80CS06640>

<sup>iii</sup> Matsunaga, M.; Chen, J.J.; Donnelly, P.; Fok, C.C.T.; Partika, N.S. Emergency Room Visits with a Non-Traumatic Dental-Related Diagnosis in Hawaii, 2016–2020. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 2022, *19*, 3073. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19053073>

February 20, 2025

**Testimony in Support of HB 1431 HD1, Relating to Oral Health**

House Committee on Finance  
Friday, February 21, 2025  
2:00 pm  
Conference Room 308

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Committee Members:

Hawaii Dental Service (HDS) **strongly supports HB 1431, HD1, Relating to Oral Health**, because we recognize that improving the oral health of our community is everyone's kuleana, a shared responsibility. Establishing an oral health task force is essential to identifying Hawai'i's most pressing oral health challenges and driving collaborative, strategic solutions to close critical gaps.

HDS and the HDS Foundation are committed to bridging critical gaps in oral health by investing in nonprofit programs that expand access to care, advance oral health education, and promote disease prevention. To strengthen Hawai'i's dental workforce, we also provide scholarships for dentists and dental hygienists, ensuring future providers can deliver high-quality, patient-centered care within their communities. However, lasting improvements in oral health require collective action. Meaningful progress depends on collaboration, shared expertise, and a unified commitment to enhancing the overall health and well-being of Hawai'i residents.

Representatives from both HDS and the HDS Foundation are honored to be included on the list of proposed members to participate in the state's oral health task force. We are committed to sharing our efforts in collaboration with others on the task force and engage with all to advance our State in oral health.

An oral health task force, composed of representatives from different areas of our oral health system, will support diversity and enable Hawai'i to create a comprehensive state dental plan to address our oral health disparities. It is also an opportunity to identify and replicate oral health programs that are having a positive impact.

Thank you for your support of this important bill. Please do not hesitate to contact us at [OralHealth@HawaiiDentalService.com](mailto:OralHealth@HawaiiDentalService.com) with any further information.

Sincerely,



**Dr. Diane S. L. Paloma**  
President and CEO  
Hawaii Dental Service

**HB-1431-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 4:51:23 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Caroline Kunitake	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1431 HD1.