

# SB2543

**Measure Title:**  
RELATING TO DENTAL HEALTH.

**Report Title:**  
Dental Health (\$)

**Description:**  
Appropriates funds to the department of health for the establishment or expansion of community-based dental health clinics that are operated by federally qualified health centers to provide a continuum of dental care to medicaid and QUEST-eligible adults and children, the developmentally disabled, and the uninsured.

**Introducer(s):**  
IGE, CHUN OAKLAND

**Current Referral:**  
HTH/HSP, WAM

LINDA LINGLE  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



CHIYOME LEINAALA FUKINO, M.D.  
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
P.O. Box 3378  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:  
File:

**Senate Committee on Health**  
**Committee on Human Services and Public Housing**

**SB 2543,**

**Testimony of Chiyome Leinaala Fukino, M.D.**  
**Director of Health**

**February 13, 2008**

1 **Department's Position:** The Department appreciates the intent of this measure, but cannot support  
2 it in as much as its implementation replaces or diminishes the priorities of the Executive Supplemental  
3 Budget.

4 **Fiscal Implications:** This bill seeks to appropriate unspecified general funds for fiscal year 2008-2009.

5 **Purpose and Justification:** The purpose of this proposal is to appropriate funds for the Department of  
6 Health to be expended to establish or expand dental clinics at federally qualified health centers that will  
7 provide a continuum of dental care to QUEST eligible children and adults, individuals with  
8 developmental disabilities and the uninsured.

9 We appreciate the over-all concept of this bill because it includes initiatives that are generally supportive  
10 of the Administration's goals and objectives to improve access to healthcare. During the 2006  
11 Legislative Session the legislature appropriated funds to the Department of health for a study to assess  
12 the dental workforce and the status of the continuum of dental care for vulnerable populations. The  
13 Department has a contract with the University of Illinois Chicago for this study. The report, due by the  
14 end of this fiscal year, will provide recommendations to address identified needs. In anticipation of the

- 1 investigators' findings and recommendations for the delivery of care, funding for expansion of services
- 2 and establishment of dental clinics should be postponed until consideration is given to these
- 3 recommendations.
- 4 Thank you the opportunity to testify on this measure.



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
STATE COUNCIL  
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES  
919 ALA MOANA BOULEVARD, ROOM 113  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96814  
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543  
February 13, 2008

The Honorable David Y. Ige, Chair  
Senate Committee on Health  
and

The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing  
Twenty-Fourth Legislature  
State Capitol  
State of Hawaii  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Senators Ige and Chun Oakland and Members of the Committees:

**SUBJECT: SB 2543 – RELATING TO DENTAL HEALTH**

The position and views expressed in this testimony do not represent nor reflect the position and views of the Department of Health.

The State Council on Developmental Disabilities (DD) **STRONGLY SUPPORTS SB 2543**. The purpose of the bill is to improve the State's ability to address the dental health crisis by appropriating funds to DOH for the establishment or expansion of community-based dental health clinics that are operated by federally qualified health care centers to provide a continuum of dental care to QUEST and Medicaid fee-for-service eligible adults and children, individuals with DD, and the uninsured.

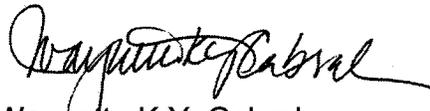
The Council supports community-based dental care services and believes the community health centers have the capability to serve the target populations described in the bill. The centers are located in various communities, have minimal administrative costs, less bureaucratic protocols, and have access to dental care personnel under the community service licensure. The provisions of the bill would increase access to dental care and enable the health centers to increase their capacity and train dental health personnel. It would also allow for best practice strategies and approaches in the treatment of people with DD, and the majority of funds would go directly to individuals with the greatest flexibility.

The Honorable David Y. Ige  
The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland  
Page 2  
February 13, 2008

The Council applauds the Legislature's efforts and commitment to address the oral health needs of Medicaid fee-for-service and QUEST-eligible adults and children, individuals with DD, and the uninsured through this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 2543.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Waynette K.Y. Cabral". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Waynette K.Y. Cabral  
Executive Administrator

To: **The Senate Committee on Health**  
The Hon. David Y. Ige, Chair  
The Hon. Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair

**The Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing**  
The Hon. Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
The Hon. Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair

RE: **Support for Senate Bill 2543: Relating to Dental Health**

FROM: Samuel Ishimura, DDS, FACP, FACD, FICD  
Assistant Director of Education  
Regional Coordinator, Hawaii Region  
Lutheran Medical Center

Allow me to emphatically state my full support for this measure, and to urge approval for as much funding as you can appropriate.

Years of apathy and an abdication of responsibility by some organizations have resulted in Hawaii having the dubious distinction of suffering from one of the worst, if not the worst, dental and oral diseases among the 50 states.

Because of their availability for expansion, the community health centers are the only entities capable of reaching out and doing their part in providing access and dental treatment to the underserved communities.

Our general dentistry residency, sponsored by the Lutheran Medical Center in Brooklyn, New York, and in partnership with HPCA and the community health centers, recruits and positions residents beyond dental school campuses, beyond medical centers, and into community health centers. Because the residents' stipends, benefit and malpractice premiums are paid by Lutheran, the health centers incur no overhead cost, and whatever clinical procedures are performed by the residents, the billable reimbursements are kept by the health centers. The expansion and addition of clinical space provided by this grant will enable our region to increase the number of residents. Starting with one resident at the Kokua Kalihi Valley in 2002, our program will increase to 9 residents in July of 2007 and 10 in July of 2008. Working with Lutheran, we are poised to expand to a pediatric specialty residency in 2009. This expansion depends on several factors but one big one is the availability of adequate community health center facilities in which residents and faculty can practice.

The ability and mechanism to deliver care along with the will are there. All we need is the financial support.



## **Hawai'i Primary Care Association**

345 Queen Street, Suite 601 Honolulu, HI 96813  
Tel (808) 536-8442 Fax (808) 524-0347

To: **Senate Committee on Health**  
The Hon. David Y. Ige, Chair  
The Hon. Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair

**Senate Committee on Human Services & Public Housing**  
The Hon. Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
The Hon. Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair

### **Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2543**

#### **Relating to Dental Health**

**Submitted by Beth Giesting, CEO**

**February 13, 2008, 1:25 p.m., Room 016**

The Hawai'i Primary Care Association strongly endorses this measure. Community health centers, also known as "federally qualified health centers," are expert in improving the health of people who have the most complex mix of social, economic, and health problems, including the homeless, the poor, the uninsured, Medicaid and Medicare enrollees, people with special language or cultural needs, and residents of rural areas. Hawai'i has a network of 14 independent nonprofit community health centers with 47 locations on six islands serving more than 100,000 individuals per year. They provide a broad array of services, including medical, behavioral health, and dental care.

In 2000, then Surgeon General David Satcher released the first Surgeon General's Report on Oral Health, which found that there was a "silent epidemic" of dental and oral diseases associated with heart and lung disease, stroke, and low birth weight and premature births. The report concluded that oral diseases and conditions are associated with a range of medical problems that are preventable if patients have access to basic dental services. The American Association of Public Health Dentistry, in May 2004, noted that dental caries are the most prevalent infectious disease in children ages 5–17, causing severe pain, infection, and malnutrition, especially among families with low incomes and of racial and ethnic minorities.

Unfortunately, in Hawai'i low income people and many of those living in rural areas are less likely to have access to dental care at the same time that they are at a much higher risk for poor oral health. Our State Dental Health Division provides data on oral health that show that decayed or filled primary teeth among children in Hawai'i, ages 5–9, are more than double and baby bottle tooth decay is nearly triple the national rate for those conditions. At the same time, we under-perform in meeting children's dental treatment needs and in the application of dental sealants. The children most at risk are Filipinos, Southeast Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Native Hawaiians – which also comprise the ethnic groups most likely to seek care at community health centers.

While Hawai'i has many licensed dentists, the number practicing in rural areas is inadequate, and few dentists in any location serve large numbers of low income people covered by Medicaid. People with Medicare coverage, who also need oral health care and often have limited financial resources, do not have dental benefits. Additionally, low-income adults under the age of 65 are the most likely to be without dental coverage even if they have employer-sponsored medical insurance.

Community health centers are the natural point of access for dental care for Hawai'i's underserved people yet their dental capacity remains relatively limited. Only half of the fourteen community health centers currently provide dental care, serving fewer than 20,000 people per year. At least four more health centers are planning to start dental services within the next two years and five of the seven that do offer dental care would expand those services if funds were available to cover the capital costs for program growth.

We are very grateful for the opportunity to testify in favor of this measure. Passing it is one of the most important actions the Legislature can take to improve the oral health of Hawai'i.

**testimony**

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**From:** Darrell [teruyadt@worldnet.att.net]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 12, 2008 2:32 PM  
**To:** testimony  
**Cc:** Darrell T Teruya  
**Subject:** Testimony SB 2543 Hearing Wednesday, February 13, 2008 1:25 p.m Conference Room 016

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Senator David Y. Ige, Chair  
Senator Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES AND PUBLIC HOUSING

Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
Senator Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 13, 2008  
1:25 p.m.  
Conference Room 016

SB2543 RELATING TO

Appropriates funds to establishment or expansion of health clinics that are centers to provide a community QUEST-eligible adults, disabled, and the uninsured

for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

The Hawaii Dental Association is in favor of any measure improving access to dental care in Hawaii. The dental clinics in Federally Qualified Health Centers have made it possible for underserved patients to obtain much needed care.

The Hawaii Dental Association has always been a proponent of Community Service Dentist Licenses which have made available dentists who often staff these clinics and introduced successful legislation last year which enabled the licensure program to continue.

Thank you for allowing us to present this testimony.

Darrell Teruya  
President, Hawaii Dental Association

2/12/2008

**COMMUNITY  
CLINIC  
OF MAUI**



Where Aloha is more than just a word

To: **The Senate Committee on Health**  
The Hon. David Y. Ige, Chair  
The Hon. Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2543**

Relating to Dental Health

Submitted by Dana Alonzo-Howeth, Executive Director  
February 13, 2008

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(808) 871-7772  
Fax (808) 872-4029

**Satellite Clinics:**

Ka Hale A Ke Ola  
Resource Center  
670-A Waiale Drive  
Wailuku, HI 96793

Na Hale O Waine'e  
15 Amakua Lane  
Lahaina, HI 96761

The Community Clinic of Maui fully supports this bill, which will enable health centers to develop dental health services or expand them. Undeniably, Hawaii has some of the poorest dental health in the nation. Moreover, poor dental health care is linked to countless medical conditions. It goes without saying that the body cannot truly heal from conditions or remain healthy unless the oral cavity is in good health. Regrettably we see daily how poor dental health extends beyond the physical and impacts the ability of the children we serve to learn in school, eat, and remain robust. For the adults we serve, it means the difference between being hired for a job or being able to keep one due to pain and suffering caused by caries and other oral infections for which they do not have access to treatment. Sadly, resources to meet the dental health care needs of the underserved are scarce. However, given that health centers already serve as the safety net for the underserved and have a proven track record of providing a myriad of services that have a synergistic effect on one another, this bill could without a doubt make the biggest impact on the health of Hawaii's underserved communities. Many health centers are poised to expand services, while others are poised to develop services if given the support to do so. We believe the timing has never been more right than it is now.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this very important bill.

**The Arc in «GreetingLine»  
3989 Diamond Head Road  
Honolulu HI 96816**

**Testimony In Support of SB 2543**  
Relating to Dental Health  
February 13, 2008 1:25 PM  
Conference Room 016

**Senate Committee on Health**  
**Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing**  
The Twenty-Fourth Legislature, Regular Session of 2008

Senator Ige and Members  
Senator Chun Oakland and Members:

I am Thomas Huber, the volunteer President of The Arc in Hawaii and the parent of an adult with a developmental disability.

The Arc in Hawaii thanks and congratulates the 2006 Legislature for its leadership in addressing the crisis in dental care for indigent people with disabilities and others by expanding Medicaid and QUEST dental coverage. And we especially thank you, as chairs of your respective committees for introducing **SB 2543**, which appropriates funds to the department of health for the establishment or expansion of community-based dental health clinics to provide a continuum of dental care to Medicaid and Quest –eligible adults and children, including persons with developmental disabilities.

The Arc in Hawaii **supports Senate Bill 2543**. More needs to be done to truly make essential dental services available to low-income and disabled persons on a timely basis. We support any funding or program that lowers barriers to maintaining dental health. We do not take a position at this time on any particular method or conduit for delivery of dental services. Whatever methodology is supported, it must be broad based and easily accessible to those who need it most.

In summary, the Arc in Hawaii supports any increase in the level of support for dental care for persons with developmental disabilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Thomas P. Huber  
President



45-459 Plumeria Street  
Honokaa, HI 96727

Phone: 808.775.7204  
Fax: 808.775.9204

[www.hamakua-health.org](http://www.hamakua-health.org)

To: **Senate Committee on Health**  
The Hon. David Y. Ige, Chair

**Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing**  
The Hon. Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair

## **Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2543 Relating to Dental Health**

**Submitted by Susan B. Hunt, MHA, Executive Director**

The Hamakua Health Center, Inc. strongly endorses this measure to appropriate funding for dental facility expansion at community health centers increasing access to dental care to tens of thousands of people throughout the State who currently cannot obtain care.

Many of Hawaii's children and adults suffer from dental disease. The uninsured, low-income adults and children, and disabled populations suffer disproportionately. Our children have one of the highest rates of dental caries (cavities) in the nation according to a survey conducted by Mark Greer, D.M.D., M.P.H., State Dental Health Division Chief. Low-income adults have access to emergency dental treatment only.

Dentists to address this problem are potentially available as Hawaii has a favorable ratio of dentists to residents – 1 dentist to 1,257 residents. However, a shortage of providers willing to treat these needy and vulnerable populations exists in all urban and rural areas of the Hawaiian Islands. Contributing to the problem of dental disease is the lack of community water fluoridation. Hawaii has the lowest proportion of residents with access to the benefits of fluoridated drinking water which is found only on Hawaii's military bases.

In recent years, numerous bills related to oral health have been introduced into the legislature with significant debate. Many voices call attention to oral health needs but the lack of consensus among concerned parties impedes progress. As a result, in 2002 the Department of Health Office of Planning, Policy and Program Development convened a facilitated group of over forty oral health stakeholders with Statewide representation and formed the Hawaiian Islands Oral Health Task Force. An Action Plan was created with two major priorities: 1) Assurance of Care/Access to Care and 2) Education and Prevention.

Hamakua has the third highest percentage of persons over 65 in the state [*Hawaii Primary Care Needs Assessment Data Book 2005*, p. 9], yet Medicare does not cover dental services. Persons over 65, self-employed individuals or casual hires, can purchase dental insurance on an individual plan. However, such plans by the state's

leading provider cover only 30% of the cost of a dental visit and restorative services are very restricted [documentation attached].

Forty percent (40%) of Hamakua Health Center's patient base of over 3,800 people are either uninsured or covered by Medicaid. Yet Medicaid, because Medicaid's reimbursement rate to private dentists is so low, only one private practice dentist in North Hawaii will accept children on Medicaid.

The *Primary Care Needs Assessment Data Book 2005*, a State Department of Health analysis, reports that in 2002 approximately 35% of persons in our target population did not see a dentist in the past year; and when the others did see a dentist, half had teeth pulled [pp. 69, 71]. This is intervention when the problem is beyond cure. Hawaiian families who are often low income are especially vulnerable. In Hamakua Hawaiians comprise 24% of the population and in North Kohala 31% [p. 14].

### **Seriousness of the Problem**

The seriousness of the state's "silent crisis" in dental care, especially on the neighbor islands, is well evidenced by these facts:

- Children with toothaches miss school and cannot learn because they are in pain. Children and adults without teeth suffer from health problems resulting from poor nutrition. Adults without teeth cannot find jobs, have low self esteem and often suffer from depression. A healthy smile leaves a lasting impression and speaks a thousand words.
- Oral health has a profound impact on overall health, but the association of poor dental health and disease is largely overlooked. Oral health is part of one's total health and the mouth is part of one's body, but in terms of access issues, insurance status and health policies, oral health is viewed separately.
- There is a critical need for dental health care by low-income and vulnerable populations in the Hawaii County. A significant percentage of Hawaii County's preschool and school children have untreated dental disease. In 2004 over 500 children with severe dental disease were flown to Honolulu, many of them making several trips, because so few dentists on the island will see Medicaid or QUEST children.
- Patients and providers face numerous obstacles to receiving QUEST dental care. Patients may lack sufficient knowledge regarding their dental benefits, the importance of dental care (especially preventive care), and have difficulty finding dental providers. Providers object to low reimbursement rates, billing system red tape, and the number of no-show patient appointments.
- There are NO pediatric dentists on this island.
- Community dental resources have insufficient capacity to meet the demand for dental care for low-income and vulnerable populations. There are long waiting times for appointments, and limitations on dental services and on the numbers of patients that can be served. Bay Clinic, Inc.'s Keauu Dental Clinic reports that the need can scarcely be overstated. This relatively new clinic's statistics document over 6,000 dental visits during the past two years. The clinic has a standing waiting list of several hundred. [Source: personal communication, Business Development Office, 1/5/07.]
- Despite the fact that Hawaii County exceeds suggested dental provider ratios, the entire island has been designated a Dental Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA).
- As a designated HPSA site, the Hamakua Health Center is eligible to employ National Health Service Corps (NHSC) personnel, but has insufficient funding to both pay for a NHSC dentist and create the necessary infrastructure for him/her to practice dentistry.

NOTE: In November 2006 *West Hawaii Today* featured lengthy articles about the problem in three issues, one titled, "Insurance problems akin to pulling teeth" [11/11, 12, 13].

Community Health Centers are the natural point of access for care for Hawaii's underserved people yet Hamakua Health Center's dental capacity remains quite limited as we partner with the Office for Social Ministry's Mobile Health Project to bring dental services to North Hawaii via the Mobile Care Van. The cost of delivering dental care is high and although the future looks brighter now that low-income adults have Medicaid dental benefits, this bill will provide the means to address the biggest obstacle – capital cost to develop or expand facilities and equipment to meet the needs of our patients.

February 13, 2008

To: **The Senate Committee on Health**  
The Hon. David Y. Ige, Chair  
The Hon. Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair

**The Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing**  
The Hon. Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
The Hon. Les Ihara Jr., Vice Chair

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2543**  
**Relating to Dental Health**  
**Submitted by L. Jina Lee Lawler, Executive Director**

On behalf of Molokai Ohana Health Care, Inc. and its community board members, I strongly support this measure, which would appropriate funds for dental facility expansion at community health centers. Such expansion will increase access to dental care to many people in my community. If available, we would use such funding to equip another operator.

According to the 2002 & 2003 Hawaii Health Surveys 56.4% of the population of Molokai or 4,093 residents live below the 200% federal poverty guidelines. The island of Molokai has been designated by the Public Health Service as a severe Dental Health Professional Shortage Area. In addition, the State oral health statistics show that Molokai school children have the second highest rates of tooth decay statewide. In conclusion, there is a great need for accessible dental service in Molokai.

- The average number of **decayed or filled teeth** across the country is less than two; in Hawaii, the average is almost four.
- The Medicaid program provides limited dental services for covered adults, **leaving low-income pregnant women, individuals with disabilities, and other adults with no means to pay for non-emergency oral health care.**
- Hawaii is ranked 49<sup>th</sup> (second worst) for participation with only 30% of Hawaii's qualified dentists accepting Medicaid patients.
- Research shows that preventive health services are more cost effective than treatment.

In recognition of the many challenges facing rural Molokai, Molokai Ohana Health Care, Inc was established in May of 2004. The organization's target population consists of the individuals on Molokai who live below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines. In 2006, Molokai Ohana Health Care, Inc. (MOHC) served 1,632 patients with half getting dental care. The need for access to dental care on Molokai is much greater than our current capacity to address.

Molokai Community Health Center is currently housed in a 2345.5 sf office. The office is comprised of a small waiting room, reception area, lab, x-ray room, 4 exam rooms, 2 dental operatories, and very limited areas for administration. The space is insufficient even for current needs. The operation has rapidly outgrown its present space. By minimal standards, the space is inadequate for the activities taking place. The dental clinic operates in 2 operatories vs. the recommended 6 operatories (used by a dentist and dental hygienist) for optimal use of patient flow and efficient use of clinical staff.

As a federally qualified community health center, MCHC's target population is the uninsured and underinsured population. Currently, the majority of patients are uninsured or Medicaid-covered. Therefore in addition to insurance reimbursements and patient co-pays, MCHC must seek other revenue sources. MCHC is subsidized through its major annual grant from the federal Department of Health and Human Services as well as through grant programs of the State of Hawaii. It continually seeks other public and private funding for its medical, dental, behavioral health, and community outreach programs. While it has made significant financial progress for a new-start clinic, the center does not have sufficient collateral or income to support a loan.

Additional funding for dental expansion will help us increase the number of dental visits we provide at Molokai Ohana Health Care, Inc. and for the above reasons; we strongly support this bill.

**Date:** 02/13/08

**TO:** *Senate Committee on Health,  
The Honorable David Ige, Chair*

*Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing  
The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland*

**FROM:** *David Peters  
Chief Executive Officer  
Ho`ola Lahui Hawai`i*

**Testimony in Support  
SB 2543, Relating to Dental Health**

*Wednesday, 02-13-08 at 1:25 pm in Senate conference room 016*

I strongly support this bill which will appropriate funding to establish or expand dental services at federally qualified health centers. Our health center, like other FQHCs, provides comprehensive primary care services, including dental care. In fact, there is as great a demand for our dental services as for medical care because so few dentists outside our system are open to Medicaid patients. We also serve a relatively large percentage of low-income Medicare-covered patients who have no dental benefits but many dental service needs.

We would certainly be happy to benefit from the funding proposed by this bill and would use it to expand our existing dental program in Kapa`a by three dental operatories.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of this bill.

To: **Senate Committee on Health,**  
The Honorable David Ige, Chair

**Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing**  
The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair

From: May Akamine, RN, MS, Executive Director

**Testimony in Support Senate Bill 2543**  
**Relating to Dental Health**

*Wednesday, 02-13-08 at 1:25 pm in Senate conference room 016*

As Executive Director of Waimanalo Health Center, I strongly support this measure, which would appropriate funds for dental facility expansion at community health centers. In fact, this bill couldn't be more timely as Waimanalo Health Center is struggling to develop funding to begin dental services in FY 2009.

Waimanalo Health Center serves 3,500 people per year, with 75% being either uninsured or covered by Med-QUEST. Virtually all our patients are below 200% of poverty and nearly half are Native Hawaiians. These people are at greatest risk of oral health needs while being most likely to have barriers to getting care: lack of accessible dental care in the community, poverty and insurance barriers, and cultural needs. They really need us to deliver dental care and we really need your help to make that happen.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this measure which is so important to my health center and the people we care for.

Mahalo and ALOHA!



**Waimanalo Health Center**

Ph. (808) 259-7948  
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## Bay Clinic, Inc.

224 Haili Street, Building B • Hilo, HI 96720 • Tel: (808) 961-4071 • Fax: (808) 961-5167

February 13, 2008

To: **The Senate Committee on Health**  
The Honorable David Ige, Chair  
The Honorable Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair

**The Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing**  
The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
The Honorable Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2543  
Relating to Dental Health  
Submitted by Brian Michael J. Higa DMD, Director of Dental Services**

Bay Clinic, Inc. strongly supports this measure, which would appropriate funds for dental facility expansion at community health centers. Such expansion will help increase access to dental care by a population in urgent need of it, in my community.

The Bay Clinic, Inc. serves nearly 15,000 people per year, 28% of which are uninsured. From Laupahoehoe to Ka'ū on the island of Hawai'i, we serve a geographical expanse of 2,048 square miles with a population of 86,000 (27% of whom live below the federal poverty line). The people we care for tend to have the poorest oral health, due to lack of access to dental care.

Our health center presently provides dental care to about 3,000 patients per year (95% of which are either insured by Medicaid or uninsured). This number is far less than those who need and want such care in our community. However, we are currently incapable to meet the needs of our community due to our lack of resources and providers. Through comprehensive and preventive dental care, we would be able to prevent minor problems (cavities, gingivitis, etc.) from developing into larger problems (abscesses, severe gum disease, etc.) eventually leading to loss of tooth and bone structure. Unfortunately, our current focus must be the onslaught of emergency cases. These are cases in which disease has already reached an advanced stage, and unless treated immediately, can lead up to generalized health problems including death. With additional funding, we can make plans to expand facilities, recruit and retain quality providers, and purchase equipment needed to increase the access to dental care that this community really needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this measure, which is so important to my health center and the people we care for.



**ADMINISTRATION:**  
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**KALIHI-PALAMA HEALTH CENTER**  
*Hale Ho'ola Hou – House of New Life*

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February 13, 2008

To: **The Senate Committee on Health**  
The Honorable David Y. Ige, Chair

**The Senate Committee on Human Services & Public Housing**  
The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2543**  
**Relating to Dental Health**  
**Submitted by Emmanuel Kintu, CEO**  
**Kalihi-Palama Health Center**

As CEO of Kalihi-Palama Health Center, I strongly support this measure, which would appropriate funds for dental facility expansion at community health centers. Such expansion will increase access to dental care to many people in my community.

Kalihi-Palama Health Center serves 14,000 people per year, 37% being uninsured while another 49% are covered by Med-QUEST. 84% of our patients are below 100% of poverty and 29% need interpreter services. The people we take care of – Asians and Pacific Islanders - are those most likely to have the poorest oral health and least likely to have access to dental care.

Our health center presently provides dental care to about 4,500 patients per year. This number is far less than those who need and want such care in our community but we do not have the capacity to expand to meet their needs. The biggest obstacle to our expansion is shortage of capital funding to add dental operatories for dental services. An appropriation for this need will allow us to start planning and get more of these services that are in increasing demand by our community.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this measure which is so important to my health center and the people we care for.



**Aloha United Way**

**KALIHI-PALAMA HEALTH CENTER is a 501(c)3 non-profit, federally qualified, community health care center.**

# West Hawaii Community Health Center, Inc.

## Ola Ke Ola Waena O Hawai'i Komohana

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75-5751 Kuakini Highway, Suite 101A • Kailua-Kona, HI 96740 • phone (808) 326-5629

February 13, 2008

To: **The Senate Committee on Health**  
The Hon. David Y. Ige, Chair  
The Hon. Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair

**The Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing**  
The Hon. Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
The Hon. Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair

### **Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2543 Relating to Dental Health Submitted by Richard Taaffe, Executive Director**

As the Executive Director of the West Hawaii Community Health Center, I strongly support this measure, which would appropriate funds for dental facility expansion at community health centers. Such expansion will increase access to dental care to people in my community who presently can't get care they need.

The West Hawaii Community Health Center serves over 3,000 people per year, 40% being uninsured while another 35% are covered by Med-QUEST. 87% of our patients are below 200% of poverty and 48% are Native Hawaiian, Asian, Pacific Islanders and Hispanic, many of whom need interpreter services. The people we take care of are those most likely to have the poorest oral health. We are very concerned that not only uninsured people but those covered by Med-QUEST – especially our keiki – have access to oral health services. In a recent survey of dentists in West Hawaii, no dentist is accepting new Med-QUEST patients. Dental health care is a top priority for the West Hawaii Community Health Center and without it we cannot provide quality health care to our patients

We believe that community health centers are the best place to house accessible dental care. However, our health center does not presently provide this service because we don't have the funding to either acquire or remodel space and purchase equipment for dental services. It is our goal to begin to offer dental services as soon as we can. With this appropriation we can do that.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this measure which is so important to my health center and the people we care for.

**testimony**

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**From:** DaCoconutWireless [DaCoconutWireless@hawaii.rr.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 12, 2008 4:21 PM  
**To:** testimony  
**Subject:** SENATE BILL SB SB 2543 - TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF THIS MEASURE

**SENATE BILL SB SB 2543 - TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT**

Senator David Y. Ige, Chair  
Senator Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair  
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

***Scott Orton***, an HIV/AIDS Awareness Advocate  
1130 Hassinger St. #3A  
Honolulu, HI 96822 (808) 383-2016

· NOTICE OF HEARING

DATE: Wednesday, February 13, 2008  
TIME: 1:25 PM  
PLACE: Conference Room 016  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street

**SENATE BILL SB 2543 - TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF THIS MEASURE**

**RELATING TO DENTAL HEALTH.**

Appropriates funds to the department of health for the establishment or expansion of community-based dental health clinics that are operated by federally qualified health centers to provide a continuum of dental care to Medicaid and QUEST-eligible adults and children, the developmentally disabled, and the uninsured.

Aloha Senator David Y. Ige, Chair, Senator Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

My Name is Scott Orton, and I am living with HIV/AIDS.

Dental Care for HIV clients on Oahu have been put on a wait lists this past year. Also several years ago, the same thing happened, and that wasn't the first time. When you are HIV positive, dental care is absolutely a top priority. Dental care that is put off can lead to serious consequences.

This has been brought up at numerous support groups where this issue is now on the

HOT list of services that are being denied to Clients of the Life Foundation from time to time. Frustration over getting actual dental work is leading to emergence procedures that could have been avoided with prompt preventative care.

Case after case is being deferred with unwanted consequences. Simple cavities left untreated, lead to expensive caps and root canals and put the individual at risk for much more serious health consequences.

What can we do to help vulnerable clients obtain dental services? HIV medications make people living with HIV more at risk for need of dental care. This issue keeps popping up even though we are spending thousands of dollars for HIV medications. More needs to be spent on adequate dental care to keep this population healthy.

Thank you for you consideration of this emergency situation. We need to keep costs low by adequate, preventative dental care for people living with HIV.

Love and Aloha,

***Scott Orton***, an HIV/AIDS Awareness Advocate

**SENATE BILL SB 2543 - TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT**

Bcc: Dacoconut Wireless Members



# Life Foundation

## WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Hawaii State Senate  
Committee on Health  
Committee on Human Services and Public Housing  
Wednesday, February 13, 2008, 1:25 p.m., Room 016

FIGHTING AIDS  
IN HAWAII  
AND THE PACIFIC

### SB 2543 - RELATING TO DENTAL HEALTH

Chairpersons Ige and Chun Oakland and members of the committees:

Life Foundation, Hawaii's oldest and largest AIDS program, asks to be recorded in support of the bill before you that seeks to increase the availability of dental care for lower income people in Hawaii through funding to the various community health centers.

At this time, Life Foundation is providing case management and other services for more than 700 HIV positive people on Oahu. All but seven of these people are adults and more than half are income eligible for Medicaid.

In the past five years, Life Foundation has paid out approximately a half million dollars to cover critically needed dental care for more than 500 of our clients at an average cost of \$1,000 per client/patient. None of these services have been elective or cosmetic. They have all related to legitimate dental health issues including the elimination of pain, treatment of infection and restoration of the ability to successfully chew and eat.

At all times, we have attempted to keep costs low by using the state dental clinic and the dental clinic at the Queen's Hospital. Because dental services for Medicaid beneficiaries, even following the recent welcomed expansion of services, are so limited, we find that most of our clients derive little effective benefit from Medicaid and QUEST with the result that community programs such as Life Foundation often bear the brunt of the result.

For some reason, the mouth is no longer part of the body when health insurance is at issue. However, poor dental health can quickly compromise general health, especially for people with weakened immune systems.

The current system of dental care for people on fixed incomes continues to be inadequate and should be addressed. The steps proposed in this bill comprise a strategy that can be part of the needed solution. On behalf of the clients of the Life Foundation, I would greatly appreciate your most serious consideration of this important bill. Mahalo.

Paul S. Groesbeck, Executive Director

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**testimony**

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**From:** Robert Zimmer [robertzimmer@hawaiiantel.net]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 12, 2008 10:28 PM  
**To:** testimony  
**Subject:** SENATE BILL SB SB 2543 - TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF THIS MEASURE

**SENATE BILL SB SB 2543 - TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT**

Senator David Y. Ige, Chair

Senator Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair

**COMMITTEE ON HEALTH**

**RELATING TO DENTAL HEALTH.**

Appropriates funds to the department of health for the establishment or expansion of community-based dental health clinics that are operated by federally qualified health centers to provide a continuum of dental care to Medicaid and QUEST-eligible adults and children, the developmentally disabled, and the uninsured.

Aloha Senator David Y. Ige, Chair, Senator Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair, and Committee Members

I write in strong support of this bill. Dental care as well as other health care is an urgent matter to protect and maintain the health of individuals who are unable to provide themselves with insurance to cover care

There are two things in life I always face with in trepidation. One is taking my care in for repairs and the other is going to the dentist. A novice never knows what is wrong and someone who does not have the means just knows it is going to put you in debt. Dentistry procedures have come a long way in treatment and that care needs to be provided for those who can not afford to treat themselves.

We have people who continue to fall through the cracks of life in Hawaii. Let a full measure of support be your Aloha to those in need. Good health care is a right for all citizens.

I have had AIDS/HIV for the past 25 years and being able to acquire a measure

of help in keeping stable has kept me on a good path. I also have Hepatitis B, Prostate Cancer survivor, HBP, Glaucoma, and a neurogenic bladder, to name a few. For many of us it is not just one thing that keeps us from working.

Please be generous in your support for this bill.

Robert L. Zimmer  
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