

HMSA



Blue Cross
Blue Shield
of Hawaii

An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

January 26, 2010

The Honorable Ryan Yamane, Chair
The Honorable Scott Nishimoto, Vice Chair
House Committee on Health

Re: HB 1896 – Relating to Dental Services

Dear Chair Yamane, Vice Chair Nishimoto and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Medical Service Association (HMSA) appreciates the opportunity to testify on HB 1896 which would prohibit health or dental plans from requiring dentists to accept a set fee for a service which was determined by the plan unless the service is covered under the member's plan.

After examining HB 1896 it is difficult to know what issue the language in the measure is attempting to address. When services, either medical or dental, are provided by participating HMSA providers, HMSA does not specify the amount a provider may charge for services that are not covered benefits.

Given that we are unsure of this measure's intent, we'd like to reserve comment until we can further flesh out its objective. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Diesman
Vice President
Government Relations

Hawaii State Legislature
State House of Representatives
Committee on Health

LATE

Representative Ryan Yamane, Chair
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Committee on Health

Tuesday, January 26, 2010, 9:00 am Room 329
House Bill 1896 Relating to Dental Services

Honorable Chair Ryan I. Yamane, Vice Chair Scott Y. Nishimoto and members of the
House Committee on Health,

My name is Glenn Okihiro and a practicing dentist in Hawaii for over 25 years. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of HB 1896 Relating to Dental Services. HB 1896 is to prohibit health and dental insurance companies from setting fees for services that they do not contract for reimbursement by said companies.

The insurance carriers setting fees unilaterally could easily control the types and quality of services dentists could provide. This situation occurred on the Big Island when the major medical insurer set the anesthesiologists fees so low that all the anesthesiologists in Hawaii county left Hawaii or stopped practicing medicine. I personally had to stop providing dental prophys with a major insurer when the reimbursement dropped below half of what I was paying my hygienist.

Delta Dental Plans Association said this is good for patients in that this force dentists to give discounts and keep up a tradition of minimizing financial barriers. If that is their goal I would like their executives to limit their salaries and bonuses to the salary of the general dentists working in a community health care clinic. Instead, one insurer last year paid a million dollars in bonuses to their top executives. Then next month the same insurer raised insurance premiums to our Hawaii patients and employers by double digits.

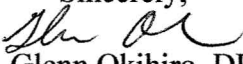
Delta said this would be good for dentists by providing more volume of patients seeking services. I am working 40 to 50 hours a week and booked weeks in advance. I am very adverse to increasing volume at the expense of quality.

Dentists are the ones dedicated to providing affordable dentistry. We have a thousand dentists in Hawaii that patients can choose from. We are very aware of the need to provide a great value for our patients. A dental office visit is not very high on most

people's wish lists already. Please allow us to offer patients the full range of treatment options.

Delta's comment that dentists must adjust services, techniques, and material to remain competitive strikes a raw nerve. I have been told that I need to use a cheaper laboratory in China instead of a Hawaii laboratory that costs 4 times as much. I deal with patients' health and want to be able to maintain the quality of services, techniques and materials I use.

to Centro
Thank you again for allowing me to testify in support of HB 1896.

Sincerely,

Glenn Okihiro, DDS

455-4173
850 Kamehameha Hwy. #110
Pearl City, Hi
96782