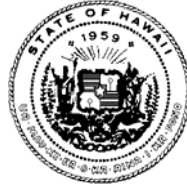


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



CATHY BETTS
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

February 27, 2023

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

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: [HB 617 HD1](#) - RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH.

Hearing: February 28, 2023, 1:30 p.m.
Conference Room 308 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the bill and defers to the Department of Health on implementation and resource needs.

PURPOSE: This measure establishes an oral health task force to review the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve oral health infrastructure in Hawai'i. Appropriates funds. Effective 6/30/3000. (HD1)

The HD1 amended the measure by defecting the effective date and making technical amendments.

DHS appreciates the Legislature's continued investment in and attention to the oral health needs of Hawaii's residents. In 2022, the Legislature appropriated general funds that allowed the restoration of dental benefits for adult Medicaid recipients. DHS will participate as a member of the task force.

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



HAWAI'I ORAL HEALTH COALITION

Date: February 27, 2023

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

Re: Support for HB617 HD1, Relating to Oral Health

Hrg: February 28, 2023, at 1:30pm - Conference Room 308 & via Videoconference

The Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition, a program of the Hawai'i Public Health Institute, is in **strong support of HB617 HD1**, which establishes an oral health taskforce to review information on the status of oral health in the State and make 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.

The mission of the Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition (HOHC) is to improve the overall health and well-being of all Hawai'i residents by increasing access to and equity in oral health care through collaborative partnerships, advocacy, and education. HOHC is a community-driven organization comprised of members representing organizations and individuals from diverse sectors across Hawai'i. The HOHC operates under the auspice of the Hawai'i Public Health Institute.

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 2021ⁱ, and often have long wait lists due to the limited facility and staffing capacity. Additionally, only 240 FQHC and general practice dentists are 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.

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. HB617 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 HB617 HD1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,



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

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



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
Tuesday, February 28, 2023 at 1:30 p.m.

by

Clementina D. Ceria-Ulep, Interim Dean
Nancy Atmospera-Walch School of Nursing

and

Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 617 HD1 – RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the House Committee on Finance, thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 617 HD1 with comments.

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. The recommended members of the Task Force include a faculty member of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Nancy Atmospera-Walch School of Nursing (NAWSON) which includes the Department of Dental Hygiene. The faculty is to be appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives.

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.

The NAWSON also wishes to recognize the incredible talent and dedicated experts in oral health that are faculty of NAWSON. These faculty commit to enhancing access to oral healthcare through the education and training of the future dental hygienist workforce. In addition, Dr. Mattheus, PhD, APRN-Rx, CPNP, FAAN, Nancy Atmospera-Walch Professor in School Health & Associate 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 currently serves at 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 Taskforce member.

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



STATE OF HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543
February 28, 2023

The Honorable Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
House Committee on Finance
The Thirty-Second Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Representative Yamashita and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HB617 HD1 Relating to Oral Health

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities **SUPPORTS HB617 HD1**, which establishes an oral health task force to review the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve oral health infrastructure in Hawai'i. Appropriates funds.

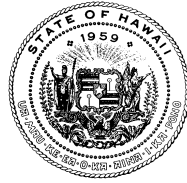
First, we would like to highlight and thank the legislator for reinstating adult dental benefits for Medicaid recipients during the 2022 legislative session. Many of our intellectual and developmental disability (I/DD) community members rely on Medicaid as their source of healthcare coverage, and missing vital dental coverage was taking a toll on our community members' overall health. However, a long-standing issue that our I/DD community has faced is finding dental providers willing to accept Medicaid and work on individuals with I/DD.

Now that our Medicaid community has dental coverage again, many long-standing operations and care are needed for our community members. Our state's current dental infrastructure cannot meet our community's needs, specifically now that Medicaid covers dental services. With the increased number of patients, our dental workforce needs to change and grow with the increased demand. We hope this task force will help bring together dentistry's private and public sectors and promote positive adaptation for our state's dental needs moving into the future.

For any substantive recommendations, we defer to the Statewide Oral Health Coalition. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB617 HD1**.

Sincerely,

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator



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. 617 H.D. 1
RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH**

REPRESENTATIVE KYLE T. YAMASHITA, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Hearing Date: 02/28/23

Room Number: CR 308

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The proposed measure appropriates funds out of the State's general
2 revenues for fiscal year 2023-2024 and fiscal year 2024-2025 and 2.0 full-time equivalent (FTE)
3 positions to the Department of Health (DOH) to administer and oversee a contract to hire a
4 consultant to facilitate the work of the oral health task force, including completing the task
5 force's interim and final reports and to lay the foundation for a robust public dental health
6 program in the state. The Department defers to the Governor's Executive Biennium Budget
7 Request for appropriation priorities.

8 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health supports this measure to establish an oral
9 health task force to review information on the status of oral health in the state and make
10 recommendations to improve oral health infrastructure in Hawai'i.

11 An oral health program is a critical part of all state public health departments. However,
12 the DOH Dental Health Division was eliminated as part of the 2009 budget cuts. Oral health
13 disease is a particularly critical issue in Hawai'i with many children and adults suffering from
14 preventable dental disease. Access to dental care is a challenge since most of the primary and
15 specialty oral health providers are in the urban areas of the City and County of Honolulu. The
16 lack of access to oral health care is particularly serious in rural communities on the neighbor
17 islands and in low income urban/rural areas of O'ahu.

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

4 The oral health taskforce will be instrumental in identifying those key elements and
5 additional staff resources necessary to rebuild a public health dental program in the Department,
6 improve overall oral health in the state, and reduce inequalities in oral health.

7 The addition of 2.0 permanent FTE positions will increase the Department’s capacity to
8 conduct the necessary program activities to improve the oral health of children, families, and
9 other vulnerable populations statewide.

10 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

11 **Offered Amendments:**

12 Change Section 2 (e) to read:

13 “The oral health task force shall submit an interim report of its findings and recommendations to
14 the legislature no later than December 1, [2023] 2024. The [~~oral health task force~~] department of
15 health shall submit a final report of [~~its~~] the oral health task force’s findings and
16 recommendations, including any proposed legislation, no later than December 1, [2024] 2025.”

17 Change Section 4 to read:

18 “There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
19 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2023-2024 and the same sum or so much
20 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 for the family health services division of
21 the department of health to hire one permanent full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) program specialist
22 IV and one permanent full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) program specialist V to oversee the
23 contract to hire a consultant to facilitate the work of the oral health task force and to lay the
24 foundation for a robust public dental health program in the State.

25 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department of health for the purposes of
26 this Act.”

HB-617-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2023 12:02:14 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/28/2023 1:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Louis Erteschik	Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This would be a good way to build upon the Medicaid appropriation that the legislature provided last year.



Papa Ola Lokahi
Nana I Ka Pono Na Ma

894 Queen Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Phone: 808.597.6550
www.papaolalokahi.org

House Committee on Finance
Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 28, 2023, 1:30 PM, Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

RE: HB 617 HD 1 – RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH

Position: IN SUPPORT

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee on Finance,

Papa Ola Lokahi testifies **IN SUPPORT** of HB 617 HD 1, which establishes an oral health task force to review the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve oral health infrastructure in Hawaii. Given the limited capacity of the Department of Health to meet the oral health needs across the state, the formation of this task force is critical if we are to advance oral health needs in Hawaii. In addition, with adult dental benefits being restored last year, evaluating our oral health infrastructure and our community's needs is critical to delivering oral health services to those most in need.

Papa Ola Lokahi supports efforts to assess, evaluate, and update our health infrastructure to deliver essential health care services. We appreciate and support the task force structure, which establishes a space for the intersection of community voices, relative administrative units, and oral health professionals. We especially support the recognition of Native Hawaiians who face oral health disparities. Oral disease risk is higher for those who suffer from chronic conditions such as heart disease, emphysema, diabetes, hepatitis C, and obesity. Native Hawaiians experience shorter life expectancies and higher mortality rates due to these chronic conditions and are overrepresented in the Medicaid population. Thus, despite the restoration of Medicaid adult dental benefits, the lack of oral health care service delivery will continue to impact Native Hawaiians disproportionately.

We appreciate the State Legislature's intent to thoughtfully respond to address the oral health care infrastructure across the State by forming a task force and for being included in the membership, for which we are happy to serve.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify **IN SUPPORT** of HB 617 HD 1.

Papa Ola Lōkahi, the Native Hawaiian Health Board, authorized by the federal Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act, is charged with raising the health status of Native Hawaiians to the highest possible level, which we achieve through strategic partnerships, programs, and public policy.



Hawaii Dental Association

To: House Committee on Finance
Time/Date: 1:30 a.m., February 28, 2023
Location: State Capitol via Video Conference and Room 329
Re: HB 617, HD1, Relating to Oral Health

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Kitagawa, and members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Dental Association (HDA) provides comments on HB 617, HD1, relating to oral health. This bill establishes an oral health task force to review the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve oral health infrastructure in Hawaii.

We support the intent of this bill. Oral health is essential for overall health and wellness. One cannot be healthy without a healthy mouth. It can show signs of nutritional deficiencies or general infection. Systemic diseases, those that affect the entire body, may first become apparent because of mouth lesions or other oral problems.

We wholeheartedly agree with the importance of the Adult Dental Medicaid program and its successful implementation. This bill seems to conclude in advance, however, without yet conducting any of task force's work, that an insufficient number of Medicaid-serving dentists will cause the program to fail. We believe that the location of a dental clinic, its accessibility, the volume of patients served, and other factors such as the presence of care coordinators (e.g. Community Dental Health Coordinators), program navigators, and patient transportation are equally as or more important to the Medicaid program's implementation. We also note that only four states in the country have a higher dentist per capita population than Hawaii.

We are strongly interested in assisting the legislature in exploring the supports necessary to effectively implement the Medicaid program and improve overall health. Therefore, we recommend the addition of *at least* one additional dentist from each county to this task force. To create a task force premised on an assumption that there are too few dentists by seating only one dentist of a 20 member task force does not seem set up for optimal success.

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 provide comments on HB 617, HD1.



Testimony in Support of HB 617 HD1

House Committee on Finance

February 28, 2023, 1:30PM

Relating to Oral Health

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and respected members of the Finance Committee,

The Hawaii Dental Hygienists' Association (HDHA) strongly **SUPPORTS HB 617 HD1**. This measure hopes to establish a Hawaii Oral Health Task Force to review the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve the oral health infrastructure in Hawaii. It will also appropriate funds for dedicated oral health staff positions within the Department of Health.

As the largest association representing Hawaii's licensed dental hygienists, HDHA looks forward to being a key stakeholder in the discussion and strongly **SUPPORTS HB 617 HD1**. We humbly ask your committee to show your support through the appropriation of funds for the creation of an Oral Health Task Force. Mahalo for your consideration.

Hawaii Dental Hygienists' Association

2023 Regulations and Practice Committee



ALOHACARE

To: Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Finance

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

Hearing: Tuesday, February 28, 2023 1:30 PM

RE: **HB617, HD1 Relating to Oral Health- Support**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of HB617, HD1**. This measure establishes an oral health task force within the Department of Health and appropriates funds for positions to facilitate its work.

Founded in 1994 by Hawai'i's community health centers, AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan serving over 80,000 Medicaid and dual-eligible health plan members on all islands. Approximately half of our membership are keiki. We are Hawai'i's only health plan exclusively dedicated to serving Medicaid beneficiaries. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for access to quality health care for all. We believe that health is about supporting whole-person care.

Oral health is an essential aspect of a person's overall health and quality of life. Good oral health is important for healthy pregnancies and avoiding heart disease and 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.

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 to the legislature and the MedQUEST Division for this tremendous win for better oral health care for our community. However, even with the new benefit the historical challenge of an insufficient network of dentists to provide oral health care to Medicaid beneficiaries persists. In order for Medicaid beneficiaries to have access to services we need more dental providers. The dental provider shortage for Medicaid and other infrastructure shortcomings impact our rural and neighbor island communities most, putting Hawai'i's most vulnerable populations at risk.

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 understanding of 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 a healthier Hawai'i and this measure is step in the right direction.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB617, HD1**.

1357 Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 1250, Honolulu, Hawaii 96814
Call: 973-0712 • Toll-free: 1-877-973-0712 • Fax: 808-973-0726 • www.AlohaCare.org



THE QUEEN'S HEALTH SYSTEM

To: The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
The Honorable Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair
Members, House Committee on Finance

From: Jace Mikulanec, Director, Government Relations, The Queen's Health System

Date: February 28, 2023

Re: Testimony in Support of HB617 HD1: Relating to Oral Health

The Queen's Health System (Queen's) is a nonprofit corporation that provides expanded health care capabilities to the people of Hawai'i and the Pacific Basin. Since the founding of the first Queen's hospital in 1859 by Queen Emma and King Kamehameha IV, it has been our mission to provide quality health care services in perpetuity for Native Hawaiians and all of the people of Hawai'i. Over the years, the organization has grown to four hospitals, and more than 10,000 affiliated physicians, caregivers, and dedicated medical staff statewide. As the preeminent health care system in Hawai'i, Queen's strives to provide superior patient care that is constantly advancing through education and research.

Queen's appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB617 HD1, which establishes an oral health task force to review the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve oral health infrastructure in Hawai'i. In 2022, our Punchbowl facility cared for approximately 5000 patients who need dental procedures; of those served, roughly half are Medicaid enrollees or uninsured. Our services include preventative oral care, treatment of dental diseases, and higher acuity dentistry (dental procedures that can only be done in a hospital based clinic setting). As a dedicated partner in the State's oral health infrastructure, we respectfully request to be considered as a member of this task force.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

The mission of The Queen's Health System is to fulfill the intent of Queen Emma and King Kamehameha IV to provide in perpetuity quality health care services to improve the well-being of Native Hawaiians and all of the people of Hawai'i.

Date: February 28, 2023

Committee: House Committee on Finance

Bill #HB617, HD1, relating to an oral health state taskforce

Testifier: Dr. Don Sand, DDS

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Kitagawa, and Committee Members;

My name is Dr. Don Sand, DDS.

I am a dentist on the front lines of treating the underserved in Hawaii for 8 years and as a **leader in our safety-net sector** for 7 years. I am a founding member of HOHC, Hawaii Oral Health Coalition in 2019, and the **current Chair of the committee on prevention and access**. It is with experience of clinical care and advocacy of the underserved that I stand in strong support of bill H.B.617.

Our state of Hawaii is currently experiencing a crisis to oral health care access. After 13 years without an adult dental Medicaid insurance benefit, the 2022 Hawaii State Legislative session in its wisdom allocated over \$26 million to MQD/DHS to reinstate adult dental benefits. As of 2 months ago, 280,000 Hawaii residents have now become eligible for care but the current system does not allow these patients to get dental appointments.

Unfortunately, the patient appropriation of \$26 million does not address the needs for ongoing and sustainable statewide leadership to develop and implement a plan to dramatically increase capacity, infrastructure, workforce and implementation.

Most severely affected today are those living in rural areas and many areas of our neighboring islands, especially in the Native Hawaiian and Pacific Island communities.

Thousands of our people are missing some of their front teeth needed to smile for work, job interviews, or fulfill essential social health and relationship needs. A healthy smile contributes to self-esteem and impacts mental health. It contributes to better nutrition and overall health and well-being. Every day thousands of adults do not have enough back teeth to enjoy plate lunches or even meet their minimal nutritional needs. With each passing day that the oral health system fails our people, they needlessly suffer the pain of oral and facial infections due to abscessed teeth or gums. Economically, that is costing the patient and our State, but how do you put a cost on needless suffering? A recent 5-year Hawaii study concluded that preventable oral disease costs our ER hospital systems \$38.7 million. Close to half of that is lost Medicaid funds.

Because of the many moving parts of our oral health care system in Hawaii and the lack of capacity designated for underserved dental care all our stakeholders must come together. In this formal taskforce commitment with our Legislative champions as partners we can create a coordinated plan, we can invest together in infrastructure building, and we can partner with a vision to allocate resources to the underserved.

The establishment of a 2-year Task Force on Oral Health will help to connect in dialogue all oral health players and to accelerate development of a systematic plan to move us in the direction of improved health and dental services access and delivery.

The additional language our private practice, Hawaii Dentists Hui would like to amend: Since the FQCHs may soon reach their capacity, we know that a lot of the heavy lifting would need to come from the private practice dentist sector. If this is true that it would be wise to include several positions to the taskforce from grassroots/front line dentists and mission minded outreach dentists lending their voice about the needs, participating in the road map and engaging in the implementation.

Mahalo for your consideration of HB 617,HD1.

Dr. Don B. Sand, DDS



Ambassador on Oral Health Care to the State of Hawai'i

Development Director CSI-Hawaii

Hawaii Dental Hui, President

Hawaii Oral Health Coalition Chair of Prevention/Access

DrSandSmiles@gmail.com

808-428-1572



Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.

To: Representative Yamashita, Chair
Representative Kitagawa, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

Re: HB617 SD1, relating to oral health
1:30 p.m., Feb. 28, 2023

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and committee members:

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **STRONG SUPPORT** of House Bill 617 SD1, relating to oral health.

2023 is a promising time for oral health in our state. Just last month, dental benefits for adults on Medicaid were reinstated. This comes after the legislature's commitment last session to make this investment.

With this momentum in full swing, we must continue our work to rebuild a robust oral health system. This bill establishes an oral health task force, among other provisions. The task force will be vital to developing a statewide oral health strategic blueprint. The task force and this blueprint will help us identify opportunities and challenges so our state can make informed, strategic decisions. We appreciate that task force membership is diverse and representative of varied constituencies so that our numerous communities can be served well.

Additionally, we appreciate that the task force will be integrated into the Department of Health. We believe that **oral health strategies must be holistic**. They must incorporate both preventative measures and services and access to regular and emergency dental care. We believe, as the state's public health agency, the Department of Health is the most appropriate state agency to facilitate the task force. We look forward to their leadership in this work.

HB617 is important to chart the future of oral health in Hawaii. Please advance this measure.

Mahalo,

Ke'ōpū Reelitz
Director of Early Learning and Health Policy

HB-617-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/26/2023 11:29:14 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/28/2023 1:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caroline Azelski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support of HD1. Thank you.

Date: February 28, 2023

Committee: House Committee on Finance

Bill #HB617, HD1, RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH

Testifier: Nancy S. Partika, RN, MPH

Aloha Chairperson Yamashita, Vice-Chair Kitagawa, and Committee Members;

My name is Nancy Partika, and, as a lifelong public health professional, I wish to indicate strong support for HB617, HD1, which establishes an oral health task force to review the status of oral health in the State, and make recommendations to improve oral health infrastructure in Hawaii, as well as appropriate funds to DOH to staff its oral health oversight program.

We are all aware that Hawaii's oral health system has been ailing for decades, and has struggled to meet the growing needs of its populations statewide, especially those with health and social disparities. Hawaii has a long history of neglect and systemic problems in oral/dental health, which have not been resolved to date.

Currently, oral health care in Hawaii is available to those who can afford it. Those who cannot/do not have adequate dental insurance struggle to get even acute dental needs met. All ages are adversely affected by the broken oral health system—from young keiki to our elderly, as are all islands.

State oversight of oral health is problematic and lacks clear lines of responsibility and communication. Communication between DOH and DHS, the primary leads for the state on oral health, appears to lack regular dialogue on the broader coordination of systemic roles and responsibilities. Also, there has been a significant lack of resources over long period of time to fix/build the leadership infrastructure, which should be facilitating clear evidence-based policies and programs.

The 2022 Hawaii State Legislative session allocated over \$25 million to MQD/DHS to reinstate adult dental benefits and MQD-DHS has rolled out the reinstatement of adult dental benefits for Medicaid as of January 2023. Unfortunately, does not address the needs for ongoing and sustainable statewide leadership and coordination.

The dental provider network to serve an estimated 329,000 adults and children currently on Medicaid is totally inadequate, and significantly depends on the dental services provided by Hawaii's 14 FQHCs, which served just under 40,000 persons total in CY 2021. Only 11% of Hawaii's dental providers serve 100 or more persons on Medicaid, likely due in part to the fact that adult recipients have had emergency-only benefits from 2009-2022.

Infrastructure issues as well as roles and responsibilities need more open discussion, and a wider and more diverse evidence-based process to work through the chronic infrastructure problems that Hawaii faces in addressing oral health needs. HB 617, HD1 proposes to establish a statewide oral Health Task Force with 21 representatives from the public and private sectors tasked to examine all available oral health data and evidence, discuss the issues/problems/barriers, and make policy recommendations on how to improve our oral health system in Hawaii. This model was successfully implemented most recently in Massachusetts, where their State Legislature passed legislation to create a Special Commission on Oral Health. This task force, if implemented here in Hawaii, can enable us to develop a more systemic approach to improving oral health, particularly for those who are underserved.

The establishment of a 2 year Task Force on Oral Health will help to move us in the direction of improved health and dental services access and delivery. Mahalo for your consideration of HB 617, HD1.

February 26, 2023

The Honorable Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair
The Honorable Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Health and Homelessness

Estimony in Support of H.B. 617 HD1 Relating to Oral Health

Hearing Date: Tuesday, February 28, 2023
1:30 PM House Conference Room 308, Videoconference

My name is Julie Kauakahi. I work for Child and Family Service and am a member of Westside Christian Center Church and E Ola Mau O Kekaha; however, these opinions are my own and do not represent these organizations. I Support this measure to establish an oral health task force to review information on the status of oral health in the state and make ten recommendations to improve oral health infrastructure in Hawai'i.

Many adults in Hawaii suffer from preventable oral diseases. Here on Kauai, the only options are emergency extractions, out-of-pocket payment to pricy providers, or Ho'olalahui, but appointments are at least six months out. This leaves many without appropriate and preventable care and forced to have teeth extracted to relieve the pain. In addition, Kauai, as with other counties, has explosive methamphetamine problems that destroy a person's oral health. Again without appropriate options, people suffering from pain have their teeth extracted. When these individuals begin to change their lives and overcome substance use, their oral complaints do not heal. Many are left without vital teeth for eating and presentability. They have a hard time gaining self-esteem, employment, or a healthy diet.

As with the State Department of Health, Ka' Oihana Olakino, we agree that an oral health task force will be instrumental in identifying those key elements and five additional staff resources necessary to rebuild a public health dental program in the Department, to improve overall oral health in the state, and reduce inequalities in oral health.

Myself, I began adulthood as a single parent. I maintained regular health care and annual dental exams and cleaning. I had several medical issues with medications that caused Dry Mouth. This treatable side effect caused significant decay in my molars, which caused severe pain. When I sought treatment, I could pay hundreds of dollars to fix or extract the teeth under my insurance. I am left with one molar, closest to the front on the left side of my mouth.

In my later years, I developed a methamphetamine addiction which decayed my remaining front teeth. In recovery, I was afraid to smile and had poor self-esteem. Regardless of how much my life had changed, those two things didn't. The state of my smile has been one of the hardest things to overcome.

Anything that would help others not endure what I have would aid their overall health and well-being and bring much hope to recovery. A program designed to support vital oral health and care for adults would limit the state's emergency room costs for tooth pain and increase individuals to be healthy contributing members of society.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Julie Kauakahi (she/her)
juiekauakahi@gmail.com
P.O Box 522 Kekaha, HI. 96752

**TESTIMONY FOR HB617 HD1
RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH**

Date of Hearing/Time:

February 28, 2023, 1:30 pm

Committee:

Committee on Finance

Testifier:

Andrew Tseu, DDS, JD

February 27, 2023

Dear Chair Kyle Yamashita, Vice Chair Lisa Kitagawa, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **strong support** on HB617 HD1, relating to the establishment of an oral health task force and staffing to rebuild the Department of Health's public health dental program.

My name is Andrew Tseu and currently employed as a community center dentist. I am submitting testimony as a Hawaii resident.

The establishment of an oral health taskforce will be essential in evaluating the existing oral health environment in the State and propose recommendations to improve the oral health infrastructure in Hawaii. This task force will also help facilitate the collaboration/partnerships between the oral health stakeholders moving forward to improve the access and oral health care for Hawaii residents. The addition of staffing for the public health dental program is necessary to help reestablish the department's program to improve overall oral health in the state and reduce inequalities in oral health.

Thank you for your review. Please feel free to contact me at (808) 781-3613 to discuss my testimony further.

Best regards,



Andrew Tseu, DDS, JD

Date: February 28, 2023

Committee: House Committee on Finance

Bill #HB617, HD1, Relating to Establishment of an Oral Health Task Force

Testifier: Joseph P. Mayer, Jr., DDS, DT-1980, Retired FQHC Dental Director

Aloha Chairperson Yamashita, Vice-Chair Kitagawa and Committee Members:

I strongly support HB617. A wide ranging analysis of the multiple contributing factors to the deplorable oral health of the underserved population is necessary to understand the problems, target resources and most likely require amending some HRS and HAR. Areas I believe requiring investigation:

- 1) What are the current programs within the Department of Health, Family Health Services that address the oral health needs of beneficiaries?
- 2) What effect has the lack of a dental department, headed by a full-time dental director at the Department of Health had on the oral health issues?
- 3) How does Department of Human Services, Med-Quest and CM&MS establish covered benefits and reimbursement levels?
- 4) Why are private dental providers not participating more fully in the Med-Quest dental program?
- 5) Why has the Hawaii Dental Association not engaged with the legislature to improve oral health care?
- 6) What does the State of Hawaii Dental Board consider as its part in addressing the oral health needs of the State?
- 7) Federally Qualified Health Centers, through Dept of Health & Human Services, and State Hospitals, through the Primary Health Care Association, obtain subsidies to provide treatment to Medicaid patients. How does that program work?

These are just a few of the issues that could be addressed by the Oral Health Task Force, that would improve identifying problems in accessing oral health care and helping to avoid wasteful spending in future State oral health programs. Mahalo for your consideration of HB 617.

Testimony on HB 617 by Sheila Kitamura, RDH

Oral health is often a forgotten aspect of a person's overall health and well-being. Nevertheless, poor oral health can negatively affect a person's health in so many ways, some of which could be devastating. The inability to eat would impact a person's ability to take in proper nutrition and periodontal disease has been linked to heart disease and even increased risk of miscarriage in pregnant mothers.

The formation of an Oral Health Task Force is critical to the overall health of Hawai'i's citizens, especially the keiki. Dental caries remains the most common communicable disease among children and in Hawai'i, the rate of childhood tooth decay is almost four times the national average. The rate has been unchanged for decades.

The State Department of Health's Dental Hygiene branch used to collect and quantify all data related to the rate of tooth decay in elementary school-aged children, but that branch was dissolved several years ago, so the data is spotty at best. In addition, the preventive fluoride treatments provided by that branch ended and preventive measures such as fluoride varnish application are mostly provided to underserved populations via community health clinic outreach. Needless to say, those clinics can serve a very limited number of patients.

The Oral Health Taskforce will assess current needs of Hawai'i's communities as well as establish plans for addressing those needs.

Date: February 28, 2023

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Support of Bill #: HB617 HD1, Development of Oral Health Task Force

To: Chairperson Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair, Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair, and Committee Members

I am writing in **support of HB617 HD1** which provides funds for a Hawaii Oral Health Task Force. As a member of the Hawaii Oral Health Coalition and the Hawaii Dental Hygienists' Association, I support the testimony both have offered on HB617 HD1. I am grateful and was very supportive of the 2022 effort to reinstate Medicaid Adult Dental Health benefits in Hawaii. Positive momentum and collaboration that is occurring statewide support utilization of a Task Force. The Oral Health Task Force could support a coordinated approach to the complex issues surrounding unmet oral health needs.

Mahalo

Anne Hvizdak, BSDH, CDHC
Member Hawaii Oral Health Coalition
Member Hawaii Dental Hygienists' Association
669 Aewa St. #375
Eleele, HI (Kauai) 96705
Hvizdak11@gmail.com