

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
RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH**

REPRESENTATIVE DELLA AU BELLATI, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HOMELESSNESS

Hearing Date: 02/10/23

Room Number: CR 329

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.

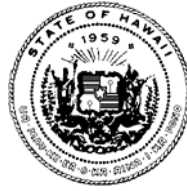
10 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

11 **Offered Amendments:**

12 Change line 2 on page 9 to read: “department of health to hire one permanent full-time
13 equivalent (1.0 FTE)”

14 Change line 3 on page 9 to read: “program specialist IV and one permanent full-time equivalent
15 (1.0 FTE)”

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 9, 2023

TO: The Honorable Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair
House Committee on Health & Homelessness

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

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

Hearing: February 10, 2023, 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 329 & Videoconferencing, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of the measure and defers to the Department of Health on implementation.

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.

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

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



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 Health & Homelessness
Friday, February 10, 2023 at 10:00 a.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 – RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH

Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the House Committee on Health and Homelessness, thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 617 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.



HAWAI'I ORAL HEALTH COALITION

Date: February 8, 2023

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

Re: Support for HB617, Relating to Oral Health

Hrg: February 10, 2023, at 10:00 am - Conference Room 329 & via Videoconference

The Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition, a program of the Hawai'i Public Health Institute, is in **strong support of HB617**, 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 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. 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>

HB-617

Submitted on: 2/8/2023 7:21:21 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/10/2023 10:00:00 AM

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.

 DELTA DENTAL

HDS
Hawaii Dental Service

Testimony in Support of HB617, Relating to Oral Health

February 9, 2023

House Committee on Health and Homelessness

February 10, 2023

10:00 am

Conference Room 329

Aloha Chair Au Belatti, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Committee Members:

Hawaii Dental Service (HDS) strongly supports HB617, which calls for establishing a task force to evaluate the state of oral health and to provide recommendations on the existing oral health infrastructure in an interim report to submit to the legislature by December 1, 2023.

Both HDS and the HDS Foundation appreciate being identified as potential participants for this important task force. We would be glad to collaborate with others in the community and to provide recommendations for the Senate President and House Speaker to consider in their appointments for this task force.

HDS and the HDS Foundation have insights into the oral health gaps and challenges across our state. We are active members of the Hawaii Oral Health Coalition and have collaborated with oral stakeholders in the community for over 60 years to support programs that prevent oral disease, promote oral health education, and improve access to oral healthcare to better serve our community. We appreciate the task force's intention to address systemic issues that may be hindering oral healthcare in our state.

Mahalo for HB617 and for making oral health a priority in our state.

Sincerely,



Dr. Diane Paloma
President and CEO



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 Belatti, Chair
Representative Takenouchi, Vice Chair
House Committee on Health & Homelessness

Re: HB617, relating to oral health
10:00 a.m., Feb. 10, 2023

Aloha Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Takenouchi 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, 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



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 Health and Homelessness
Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Friday, February 10, 2023, 10:00 AM, Conference Room 329 via Videoconference

RE: HB 617 – RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH
Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Member of the Committee on Health and Homelessness,

Papa Ola Lokahi testifies in **SUPPORT** of HB 617, which established 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 are especially supportive of 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.

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.



THE QUEEN'S HEALTH SYSTEM

To: The Honorable Della Au Belatti, Chair
The Honorable Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Members, House Committee on Health & Homelessness

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

Date: February 10, 2023

Re: HB617: 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, 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.

Testimony on House Bill 617
Relating to Oral Health

Submitted by Dr. Steven Pine, DDS., Chief Dental Officer, Hawaii Island Community Health
Center

February 2, 2023

I, Dr. Steven Pine, DDS, currently work as the Chief Dental Officer at Hawaii Island Community Health Center (HICHC) and I strongly support House Bill 617 which establishes an oral health task force in the State of Hawai'i.

At HICHC we believe that oral health indicates much more than simply healthy teeth, as the mouth can be both a cause and a window to individual and population health and well-being. Oral health is critical to general health and well-being as the mouth is the gateway to the rest of the body, providing clues about overall health. It is sometimes the first place where signs and symptoms of other diseases are noticed. Causes of poor oral health are complex and access to dental care for adults and children is crucial for overall health and well-being.

As the largest provider of Medicaid dental services on the Big Island, the community relies on our services to help fill the need of our islands underserved and vulnerable populations. The need for comprehensive dental services on the Big Island far exceeds our capacity to treat. Medicaid patients struggle to find Medicaid providers who are accepting new patients and are experiencing long wait times. This is not a new problem and one that has been systemic in our system for years but has grown in both size and scope because of the pandemic and its aftermath.

House Bill 617 will establish a task force to review the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve the oral health infrastructure and appropriate funds to the DOH to staff its oral health oversight program.

The current dental provider network tasked with serving the estimated 329,000 adults and children on Medicaid is inadequate. The largest majority of these patients are seen by Hawaii's 14 FQHC's who together only saw just under 40,000 total people in 2021.

Establishment of this task force on oral health will help move us in the appropriate direction for improved overall health and access to dental services.

For these reasons I strongly support **HB 617**. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Steven C. Pine D.D.S., Chief Dental Officer
Hawaii Island Community Health Center



Testimony in Support of HB 617

Senate Committee on Health and Homelessness

February 10, 2023, 10:00AM

Relating to Oral Health

Dear Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and respected members of the Health and Homelessness Committee,

The Hawaii Dental Hygienists' Association (HDHA) strongly **SUPPORTS HB 617**. 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**. We humbly ask your committee to support the creation of an Oral Health Task Force and thank you for your consideration.

Hawaii Dental Hygienists' Association

2023 Regulations and Practice Committee



ALOHACARE

To: Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Health & Homelessness

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

Hearing: Friday, February 10, 2023

RE: **HB617 Relating to Oral Health**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of HB617**. 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**.

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



Hawaii Dental Association

To: House Committee on Health & Homelessness
Time/Date: 10:00 a.m., February 10, 2023
Location: State Capitol via Video Conference and Room 329
Re: HB 617, Relating to Oral Health

Aloha Chair Belatti, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Dental Association (HDA) provides comments on HB 617, 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.

Date: February 10, 2023

Committee: House Committee on Health and Homelessness

Bill #HB617, RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH

Testifier: Nancy S. Partika, RN, MPH

Aloha Chairperson Au Belatti, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, and Committee Members;

My name is Nancy Partika, and, as a lifelong public health professional, I wish to indicate strong support for HB617, 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 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 HB617.

Date: February 10, 2023

Committee: House Committee on Health and Human Services

Bill #H.B.617, RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH

Testifier: Dr. Don B. Sand DDS

Aloha Chair Della Au Belatti and Vice-Chair Takenouchi; Distinguished 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.

Hawaii does many, many things better than the other 49 states and for this reason we are lucky to live and work in Hawaii. However, according to most of the **oral public health metrics** our state has been receiving a failing score for many years. Even as our medical delivery system is highly respected our oral health system has the highest disparity to access and inequality to dental care as one compares the access the upper and middle class enjoy compared the underserved, vulnerable and homeless.

This bill would establish a **think tank** of the top thought leaders, dental directors, insurance CEO's, University MPH's, DOH officials, top JABSOM data analyzers, Native Hawaiian health leaders, and medical business system experts. Joined to this competent team will be the essential oral health champions who are passionate about improving the disparities for the underserved. This super team must be partnered on the ground level together with the key Legislative decision makers. Without the Legislators in partnership any plan will not have the power, influence or financial support needed to implement the plan. This dream-team of the top leaders in oral health along with the bosses of the healthcare systems can be commissioned to create 3 levels in staged plans: a short term emergency plan is needed today for our oral health crisis; a middle term smart systematic 2-3 year plan and 5-10 year long term road map for our State.

This task force or commission would be authorized to study the many moving parts that have contributed to the failing outcomes, to design plans to improve access and most importantly to become a part of the action-of-change authorized to implement a state master plan

Appropriate funds can then be allocated to support and take action in terms of a dental staff in the DOH, in terms of needed essential infrastructure and in terms of increasing capacity-actions like workforce development, facilities development, expensive dental equipment, digital dental technology and needed proactive crisis mitigation tools like mobile and portable equipment to be deployed immediately. (proactive mobile outreach programs will save the State millions for dollars by slowing down disease and by mitigating chronic and acute infections)

Currently, oral health care in Hawaii is available only to those who can afford it. Those who cannot/do not have adequate dental insurance or large cash reserves struggle to get even acute dental needs met. All ages are adversely affected by the broken oral health system—from young keiki to adults from age 21 to

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

Thousands of our people have some missing front teeth needed to smile for work, for job interviews or to be able to enjoy essential social and behavioral health needs from feeling basic esteem in their smile. Everyday thousands of adults are suffering the inability to enjoy platelunch much less have enough back teeth to meet their minimal nutritional needs. Finally, because the system is broken everyday our people are suffering pain of oral infections and facial infections due to abscessed teeth or gum that is costing the patient and our state. In a recent 5-year Hawaii study, the conclusion is that oral disease that could have been prevented cost our ER hospital systems \$38.7 million, close to half being Medicaid funds lost.

The first big successful step in 12 years since the adult dental Medicaid benefit was lost in 2009, is credited to the **2022 Hawaii State Legislative session** who in their wisdom passed a measure to reinstate Adult Dental Medicaid with an attached allocation of matched State and Federal funds totalling \$25.9 million. These funds are currently waiting in DHS, the MedQuest division.

Unfortunately, this allocation does not address the need to increase the capacity of the system. 280,000 patients became eligible for dental care and these patients will not have an easy chance to get an appointment. In fact due to an obvious oral health crisis, a study is not needed as everyone in the system knows that we need an urgent capacity build-out.

Unfortunately, as well, this allocation does not create ongoing and sustainable statewide leadership coordination, nor was there a plan to connect the stakeholders into a task force to lead out in a plan development nor an action oriented implementation team.

One quick example that may illustrate this **huge need** compared to our **existing capacity** can be seen by looking at the rough numbers of patients seen in our 14 safety-net community health centers in 2021. The total estimated **combined patients** seen were just under **40,000**. Please contrast that number 40,000 served to the **280,000 adults** that can now be eligible for Medicaid dental services starting last month Jan 1, 2023. (It may be noteworthy that of those 280,000 eligible it is estimated that 70,000 are Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders.)

The language of this bill asks for a 2 year Task Force on Oral Health. However most best practice models of reform and improvement in the complexity of healthcare systems would need minimally a 3-5 year Task Force for sustainability and continuity. Therefore I can highly support the language and intent of this bill and only ask for 2 additional provisions:

- #1. to extend the period of commitment from 2 years to 5 years.
- #2. to add several National Best practice experts to the taskforce team

Mahalo for your consideration and support of H.B.617.

**TESTIMONY FOR HB617
RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH**

Date of Hearing/Time:

February 10, 2023, @ 10:00 am

Committee:

Committee on Health & Homelessness

Testifier:

Andrew Tseu, DDS, JD

February 8, 2023

Dear Chair Della Au Belatti, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and Committee Members:


Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support on HB617, 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

HB-617

Submitted on: 2/8/2023 3:08:28 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/10/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gerraine Hignite	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in SUPPORT of HB 617.

Mahalo,

Gerraine Hignite BS, RDH

HB-617

Submitted on: 2/8/2023 4:56:29 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/10/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sharon R Shishido	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This is my written testimony and I am in Full Agreement of this Bill.

Sharon R Shishido, AS,RDH

HB-617

Submitted on: 2/9/2023 10:05:39 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/10/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alan B Burdick	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support for this bill. Last year, the Ige Administration blessedly but belatedly corrected a serious wrong that the Lingle Administration did during its final days - her cruel decision to cut all preventative dental services for Medicaid recipients. That decision was purportedly made as a cost-cutting measure, even though it predictably resulted in literal pain and suffering for hundreds, if not thousands of our State's residents. Ultimately, very little, if any, money was saved.

Now, preventative dental services are incorporated into the Executive Budget, BUT the Department of Human Services is NOT making any efforts to promote awareness among the Medicaid-recipient community. That was the message literally given to those of us who attended the meeting on Friday, February 3, 2023, of the Policy Advisory Board for Elder Affairs (PABEA). PABEA's members are leading State and county health care administrators, and they were appalled at the presentation by a DHS representative who told us that DHS was not taking any special measures to inform the community of the new law and new policy.

The Task Force proposed by HB 617 should investigate this situation urgently. Indeed, members of the Legislature should investigate without waiting for HB 617 to become law.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

HB-617

Submitted on: 2/9/2023 10:33:02 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/10/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emi Eno Orikasa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Date: February 9, 2023

To: The Honorable Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair

The Honorable Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Members of the Committee on Health and Homelessness

Re: Support for HB617, Relating to Oral Health

Hrg: February 10, 2023, at 10:00 am - Conference Room 329 & via Videoconference

Aloha Chair Au Bellatti, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Committee Members:

My name is Emi Orikasa and I am a Native Hawaiian Health Care System dentist. I am submitting testimony as a Hawaii resident in strong support of HB617, relating to the establishment of an oral health task force and staffing to rebuild the Department of Health's public health dental program.

The establishment of an oral health task force is essential in evaluating the current state of oral health in Hawaii and proposing recommendations to address the critical needs of our communities. Additionally, dedicated staffing under the Department of Health to facilitate the work of the task force will allow for ongoing data collection and the development of programs to reduce inequalities in oral health and improve outcomes for all Hawai'i residents.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Me ka 'oia'i'o,

Emi Orikasa, DDS



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 10, 2023

The Honorable Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair
House Committee on Health and Homelessness
The Thirty-Second Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Representative Belatti and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HB617 Relating to Oral Health

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities **SUPPORTS HB617**, 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**.

Sincerely,

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator

Date: February 10, 2023

Committee: House Committee on Health and Homelessness

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

To: Chairperson Au Belatti, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, and Committee Members

I am writing in **support of HB617** 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. 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
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Hvizdak11@gmail.com