



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
Wednesday, February 28, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.

by

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

and

Lee Buenconsejo-Lum, Interim Dean
John A. Burns School of Medicine

and

Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 2744 HD1 – RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on **HB 2744 HD1 in support.**

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

The dental hygiene program at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Nancy Atmospera-Walch School of Nursing (UHM NAWSON) is the only baccalaureate level program in the state and is accredited by CODA. It offers the educational preparation required of dental hygienists to provide oral health care and education to the people of Hawaii, the continental U.S., and the Pacific-Asia region. The program also offers clinical services for community members at the UHM Dental Hygiene Clinic. Students majoring in dental hygiene can become licensed professionals who offer preventive, education, and therapeutic services for the control of oral diseases and the promotion of optimum oral health. Students receive education in basic dental hygiene, dental and oral pathology (disease), clinical dental hygiene, dental materials and more. Students gain competency in screenings to assess eligibility for preventive services, and applying dental materials such as dental sealants during the course of their education.

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. In addition, the Task Force will include a

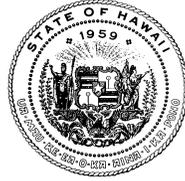
representative of the University of Hawai'i John A. Burns School of Medicine, to be appointed by the President of the Senate.

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

The NAWSON 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 Endowed Professor in School Health & Professor, is the Senior Practice Director and Dental Sealant Program Director for the Hawai'i Keiki: Healthy and Ready to Learn Program. Dr. Mattheus was a recipient of the Achievement Rewards for College Scientists (ARCS) Scholarship, Honolulu Chapter for her doctoral research study on the prevention of early childhood caries in primary care practice and has served as the Hawai'i State Oral Health Champion designated by Harvard University's Center for Integration of Primary Care and Oral Health (CIPCOH). We would like to recommend her as a candidate task force member.

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide supporting testimony related to this measure.



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

**Testimony in SUPPORT of H.B. 2744 H.D. 1
RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH**

REP. KYLE T. YAMASHITA, CHAIR
REP. LISA KITAGAWA, VICE CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Hearing Date: 02/28/2024

Room Number: CR 308

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The proposed measure appropriates funds out of the State's general
2 revenues for fiscal year 2024-2025 and 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) position to the Department
3 of Health (DOH) to administer and oversee a contract to hire a consultant to facilitate the work
4 of the oral health task force, including completing the task force's interim and final reports and
5 to lay the foundation for a robust public dental health program in the state. The Department defers
6 to the Governor's Executive Biennium Budget Request appropriation priorities.

7 **Department Testimony:** The DOH supports this measure to establish an oral health task force
8 to review information on the status of oral health in the state and make recommendations to
9 improve oral health infrastructure in Hawaii.

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

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

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

4 Based on the specialized topic and comprehensive membership of this task force, it may
5 be difficult to recruit members that currently work together on oral health issues as part of their
6 employment or associations if they will be prohibited from continuing these professional
7 interactions during their tenure on the task force based on Part I, Chapter 92, Hawaii Revised
8 Statutes. We recommend adoption of Office of Information Practices language to amend H.B.
9 2744 H.D. 1 for a limited exemption to Part I, Chapter 92, Hawaii Revised Statutes that allows
10 interactions/discussions among Oral Health Task Force members that need to talk together about
11 the same issues the task force will be dealing with in the course of their regular work.

12 The DOH appreciates the funds and establishment of a 1.0 permanent FTE position that
13 will increase the Department's capacity to conduct the necessary program activities to improve
14 the oral health of children, families, and other vulnerable populations statewide.

15 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

16 **Offered Amendments:**

17 ADD: SECTION 2. (g) Less than a quorum of task force members may discuss task force
18 business together outside a meeting provided that they report the matters discussed at the next
19 duly noticed meeting of the task force, and that no commitment to vote is made or sought. Such
20 discussions shall be a permitted interaction under Hawaii Revised Statutes §92-2.5.

OFFICE OF INFORMATION PRACTICES

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

To: House Committee on Finance

From: Cheryl Kakazu Park, Director

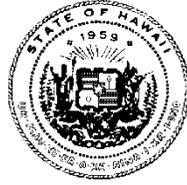
Date: February 28, 2024, 10:00 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Re: Testimony on H.B. No. 2744, H.D. 1
Relating to Oral Health

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this bill, which would create an Oral Health Task Force. The Office of Information Practices (OIP) testified on a previous version of this measure to express concern about the exemption of the Oral Health Task Force from the Sunshine Law, part I of chapter 92. The House Committee on Health & Homelessness removed that exemption from the H.D. 1 version of this bill and OIP has no further concerns regarding the bill.

OIP is aware that the Department of Health plans to request an amendment that would provide a special permitted interaction under the Sunshine Law for less than a quorum of Oral Health Task Force to talk together outside a meeting provided they report the discussion at the next noticed meeting. OIP does not object to the proposed amendment.

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

TRISTA SPEER
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 26, 2024

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

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: [HB 2744 HD1](#) - RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH.

Hearing: February 28, 2024, 10:00 a.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 the Oral Health Task Force to review information and data on the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve the State's oral health infrastructure and appropriates funds to help facilitate the work of the oral health task force. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

The Committee on Health and Homelessness amended this measure by:

- (1) Amending the composition of the Oral Health Task Force;
- (2) Deleting language that would make the Oral Health Task Force exempt from the State's Sunshine Laws;
- (3) Changing the appropriations to unspecified amounts;
- (4) Changing the effective date to July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion; and
- (5) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

February 26, 2024

Page 2

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on 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, 2024

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: HB2744 HD1 RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities is in **SUPPORT OF HB2744 HD1**, which establishes an oral health task force to review the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve the State's oral health infrastructure. Requires reports to the Legislature. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

Within our population of individuals with developmental disabilities, oral health is a critical issue that requires urgent attention. Many of our members rely on Medicaid as their primary source of healthcare coverage, and the recent reinstatement of Medicaid dental coverage has been a significant step forward. However, a persistent challenge faced by our community is the difficulty in finding dental providers willing to accept Medicaid and provide care to individuals with developmental disabilities.

Despite the reinstatement of dental coverage, our state's current dental infrastructure is insufficient to meet the needs of our community, particularly now that Medicaid covers dental services. We continue to struggle with a shortage of dentists willing to treat patients with Medicaid coverage in Hawaii.

HB2744 HD1, with its establishment of an oral health task force, represents a promising opportunity to address the systemic problems facing Hawaii's dental system. By bringing together stakeholders from both the private and public sectors of dentistry, this task force can work collaboratively to develop solutions that improve access to dental care for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB2744 HD1**.

Sincerely,

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator



February 26, 2024

Testimony in Support of HB2744 HD1, Relating to Oral Health

Hawaii Dental Hygienists' Association

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

The Hawaii Dental Hygienists' Association (HDHA) strongly SUPPORTS HB 2744 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 lending our SUPPORT to HB 2744 HD1. We humbly ask your committee to show your support for the creation of an Oral Health Task Force.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

HB-2744-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/26/2024 3:42:19 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/28/2024 10:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

The Legislature took a significant step when it restored adult dental Medicaid benefits. Yet, much more needs to be done and this Task Force would be an effective way to begin to coordinate the effort.

February 26, 2024

Testimony in Support of HB 2744 HD1, Relating to Oral Health

House Committee on Finance
Wednesday, February 28, 2024
10:00 am
Conference Room 308

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

Hawaii Dental Service (HDS) **strongly supports HB 2744, HD1, Relating to Oral Health**, because we recognize that improving the oral health of our community is everyone's kuleana, a shared responsibility. A task force would be valuable to identify Hawai'i's current oral health challenges and collaboratively explore solutions together to address the gaps.

HDS and the HDS Foundation strive to address these gaps by providing resources for nonprofit programs that improve access to oral health care, support oral health education, and help to prevent oral health disease. We also provide scholarships for both dentists and dental hygienists to ensure Hawai'i residents can provide culturally sensitive dental care in their respective communities. However, we recognize improving oral health must be a kākou effort — everyone must bring their perspectives and best thinking forward to improve the overall health and well-being of Hawai'i residents, from keiki to kūpuna.

Representatives from both HDS and the HDS Foundation are honored to be included on the list of proposed members to participate in the state's oral health task force. We look forward to sharing our mana'o with the Department of Health's Family Health Services Division and others on the task force and learning from others on how to best move our state forward.

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

Thank you for your support of this important bill.

Sincerely,



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



HAWAI'I ORAL HEALTH COALITION

Date: February 26, 2024

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

Re: Support for HB 2744 HD1, Relating to Oral Health

Hrg: February 28, at 10:00 AM - Conference Room 308 & via Videoconference

The Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition, a program of the Hawai'i Public Health Instituteⁱ, is in strong **support of HB 2744 HD 1**, which establishes an oral health task force to review information on the status of oral health in the state and makes recommendations to improve or health infrastructure in Hawai'i, and appropriates funds to the Department of Health for two positions to facilitate the work of the oral health taskforce.

We respectfully request amendments to include language reflected in prior testimony from the Office of Information Practices relating to limited exemption to the Sunshine Law allowing less than a quorum of task force members to discuss potential task force business together during the course of their normal work, provided that they report the matters discussed outside of a noticed meeting at the immediately following noticed meeting of the task force, and that during their communication outside of a noticed meeting there is no commitment to vote is made or sought. This amendment is important because oral health resources and personnel are limited, and it is likely that some discussions may overlap given the nature of task force participants' work. We aim to ensure individuals are able to communicate freely to provide the best support to communities as possible without fear of violating the sunshine laws.

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 improving access 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.

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 2021ⁱⁱ, 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.

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

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

Additionally, dedicated staffing under the Department of Health to facilitate and advance the work of an oral health task force will lay the foundation for ongoing assessment of oral health trends and

systems, and the development of effective approaches to improving oral health outcomes for all Hawai'i residents.

The State has begun to reinvest in the oral health of its most vulnerable residents. HB 2744 HD1 is an effective approach to supporting the success and sustainability of this investment. Most importantly, this measure will promote a strong foundation for improved and inclusive oral health outcomes.

For these reasons, we respectfully ask you to pass HB 2744 HD1, with amended language expressed above. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,



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

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

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

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



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

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

Hearing: Wednesday, February 28, 2024, 10:00 AM, Conference Room 308

RE: **HB2744, HD1 Relating to Oral Health**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of HB2744, HD1**. This measure establishes an Oral Health Task Force to review information and data on the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve the State's oral health infrastructure.

Founded in 1994 by Hawai'i's community health centers, AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan serving over 84,000 Medicaid and dual-eligible health plan members on all islands. Approximately 40 percent of our members are keiki. We are Hawai'i's only health plan exclusively dedicated to serving Medicaid and Medicaid-Medicare dually-eligible beneficiaries. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for access to quality, whole-person care for all.

Oral health is an essential aspect of a person's overall health and quality of life. Good oral health is important for 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 Med-QUEST 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 understand our State's needs, current resources and infrastructure, and identify next steps for improving oral health outcomes for our residents. We must continue to invest in a healthier Hawai'i, and this measure is step in the right direction.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB2744, HD1**.

February 28, 2024

To: Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the House Committee on Finance (FIN)

From: Hawaii Association of Health Plans Public Policy Committee

Date/Location: February 28, 2024; 10:00 a.m./Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

Re: Testimony in support of HB 2744 HD1– Relating to Oral Health

The Hawaii Association of Health Plans (HAHP) respectfully supports HB 2744 HD1. HAHP is a statewide partnership that unifies Hawaii’s health plans to improve the health of Hawaii’s communities together. A majority of Hawaii residents receive their health coverage through a plan associated with one of our organizations.

HAHP strongly supports efforts to improve the oral health infrastructure in our state. While we defer to the other organizations that are more directly involved in the dental industry to determine the appropriate members of an oral health task force, we all agree that a task force would have a positive impact on the oral health of Hawaii residents and the overall health and well-being of our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2744 HD1.

Sincerely,

HAHP Public Policy Committee

cc: HAHP Board Members

To: House Committee on Finance
RE: HB2744 HD1 in support
Hawaii State Capitol, Conference Room 308
February 28, 2024; 10:00 am

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

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT of House Bill 2744 HD1** relating to Oral Health.

HB2744 HD1 would fill a need in our oral health community by establishing an oral health task force to review information on the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve our health infrastructure in Hawai'i and appropriates funds to the Department of Health for one position to facilitate the work of the oral health taskforce.

We respectfully request amendments to include language reflected in prior testimony from the Office of Information Practices relating to the limited exemption to the Sunshine Law allowing less than a quorum of task force members to discuss potential task force business together during their everyday work, provided that they report the matters discussed outside of a noticed meeting at the immediately following noticed meeting of the task force and that during their communication outside of a noticed meeting, there is no commitment to vote made or sought. Given the likely overlap in discussions between oral health stakeholders and providers in various meetings, this amendment would allow more freedom to communicate without fear of violating the sunshine laws.

Oral health is essential to Hawai'i's residents' overall physical, psychological, social, and economic well-being. Yet, our residents suffer from poor oral health, as reported in the Department of Health's [Hawaii Smiles 2015](#):

- 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.

We must invest time and resources into further examining Hawai'i's oral health landscape to understand better the full scope of oral health needs, resources, and infrastructure, and to identify evidence-based best practices that 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 strategies that address the critical needs of our communities.

The State has begun to reinvest in the oral health of its most vulnerable residents. HB2744 HD1 is an effective approach to supporting the success and sustainability of this investment—Mahalo for supporting this bill.

Me ka ha'aha'a,
Mai Hall, M.Ed.
Children's Health Coordinator



Hawaii Dental Association

Committees: House Finance Committee

Time/Date: 10:00 a.m., February 28, 2024

Location: State Capitol Conference Room 308 and via Videoconference

Re: HB 2744, HD1 Relating to Oral Health

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

The Hawaii Dental Association (HDA) is a professional association comprised of approximately 950-member dentists. **We are writing to comment on HB 2744, 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 the State's oral health infrastructure. It requires reports to the Legislature.

We support the intent of this bill and appreciate that HDA has been designated to name a representative to the task force that would be established by this measure. 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 are strongly interested in assisting the legislature in exploring the supports necessary to effectively implement the state's Medicaid program and improve overall health. We have consistently advocated for the voice and the vision of the spectrum of dental service providers across the state to be included.

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

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on HB 2744, HD1.



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

Wednesday, February 28, 2024, 10:00 AM, Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

RE: HB 2744 – RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH
Position: SUPPORT

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

Papa Ola Lokahi testifies in **SUPPORT** of HB 2744, 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. Papa Ola Lokahi supports efforts to assess, evaluate, and update our health infrastructure to deliver essential health care services. The proposed structural collaboration between community voices, administrative agencies, and health professionals provides the opportunity for recommendations to be developed with a wide range of stakeholder perspectives.

To the best of our knowledge, the proposed role of task force members does not conflict with any Papa Ola Lokahi federal mandates, our mission, or other administrative agreements. We stand able to serve on this task force as delineated in the bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to **SUPPORT** HB 2744.

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.

2.28.2024

To: Committee on Finance

Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair, Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair and
Committee Members:

Support of Bill HB2744 HD1: Relating to Oral Health/Oral Health Task Force

I am writing in **support of HB2744 HD1** which provides funds for the establishment of a Hawaii Oral Health Task Force. I am a registered dental hygienist, a member of the Hawaii Oral Health Coalition (HOHC), the Kauai Chapter of the HOHC and the Hawaii Dental Hygienists' Association. 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

[Redacted signature block]

HB-2744-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/27/2024 6:35:54 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/28/2024 10:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Committee on Finance,

I am writing to support HB2744 HD1.

This bill establishes an oral health task force to review the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve the State's oral health infrastructure.

The State of Hawaii Department of Health lacks a robust, fully funded, state wide oral health program. As a result, our most vulnerable populations are experiencing poorer health outcomes.

The Hawaii Health Matters - Oral Health Tracker

(<https://www.hawaiihealthmatters.org/indicators/index/dashboard?alias=OralHealth>) shows that Head Start keiki are receiving less oral health exams and treatments. The percent of Head Start keiki who received a dental exam decreased from 91.4% in 2017 to 52.3% in 2021. The percent of Head Start keiki who receive oral health treatment decreased from 83.7% in 2019 to 70.2% in 2021.

We need an oral health task force to regularly report to the legislature on state wide initiatives to address these negative oral health trends. Hopefully this task force will have the ability to appropriate funds for these strategic initiatives to increase overall access to dental care.

Please support HB2744 HD1. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this bill. Thank you for your time.

Mahalo,

Caroline Kunitake

HB-2744-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/27/2024 9:22:12 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/28/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leimomi Khan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support this legislation that recognizes the shortage of dentists. Take action now to please assure that dentists are covered by the provisions of HB1675, HD1, Relating to GE Tax to exempt medical services provided by licensed physicians from the GE Tax.