

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

March 12, 2023

TO: The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

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

Hearing: March 13, 2023, 1:00 p.m.
Conference Room 225 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

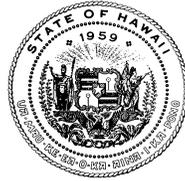
DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the bill and defers to the Department of Health on implementation and resource needs.

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.



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**

SENATOR JOY A. SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Hearing Date: 03/13/23

Room Number: CR 225

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 DOH appreciates the funds and establishment of 2.0 permanent FTE positions that
8 will increase the Department’s capacity to conduct the necessary program activities to improve
9 the oral health of children, families, and other vulnerable populations statewide.

10 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

11 **Offered Amendments:**

12 Change Section 2 (e), Page 8 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 pursuant to section 321-63, Hawaii Revised Statutes.”

18 Change Section 4, Pages 8 and 9 to read:

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

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



Testimony in Support of HB617 HD1, Relating to Oral Health

March 13, 2023

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

March 13, 2023

1:00 pm

Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members:

Hawaii Dental Service (HDS) strongly supports HB617 HD1, 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 HD1 and for making oral health a priority in our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Diane Paloma".

Dr. Diane Paloma
President and CEO

HB-617-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2023 7:17:30 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/13/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Louis Erteschik	Testifying for 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.



HAWAI'I ORAL HEALTH COALITION

Date: March 10, 2023

To: The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Senator Henry J. C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: Support for HB617 HD1, Relating to Oral Health

Hrg: March 13, 2023, at 1:00pm - Conference Room 225 & 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>



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: Senator San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Aquino, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: HB617 HD1, relating to oral health
1:00 p.m., Mar. 13, 2023

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino 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 HD1, 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

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

Monday, March 13, 2023, 1:00 PM, Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

RE: HB 617 HD 1 – RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH

Position: IN SUPPORT

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

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.

HB-617-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2023 1:43:44 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/13/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joseph Kohn MD	Testifying for We Are One, Inc. - www.WeAreOne.cc - WAO	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strongly Support **HB617 HD1**

People before Profit

www.WeAreOne.cc



To: Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice-Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

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

Hearing: Monday, March 13, 2023 1:00 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



Testimony in Support of HB 617 HD1

House Committee on Health and Human Services

March 12, 2023, 1:00PM

Relating to Oral Health

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and respected members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

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 for the creation of an Oral Health Task Force. Mahalo for your consideration.

Hawaii Dental Hygienists' Association

2023 Regulations and Practice Committee



THE QUEEN'S HEALTH SYSTEM

To: The Honorable Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Henry Aquino, Vice Chair
Members, Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

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

Date: March 13, 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.

HB-617-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2023 1:10:06 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/13/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alan B Burdick	Testifying for Kupuna Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Kupuna Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai`i **strongly supports this bill.** We are very concerned that the Dept of Human Services is not providing adequate outreach and education to Hawaii's adult Medicaid recipients that the LAW HAS CHANGED and that they are now ELIGIBLE for preventative dental services. These people have suffered for a decade during which they only received emergency treatment - too late to save rotted teeth and avoid long-term damage to their oral health and physical appearances.

There is no excuse for this. It reflects bureaucratic laziness.

It is issues like this that must be seriously examined and remedies pursued.

Thank you.

Alan B. Burdick, Chair

Kupuna Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai`i.



Hawaii Dental Association

To: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Time/Date: 1:00 p.m., March 13, 2023
Location: State Capitol via Video Conference and Room 225
Re: HB 617, HD1, Relating to Oral Health

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice-Chair Aquino, 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 naming *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.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Monday, March 13, 2023 at 1:00 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 San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services, 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 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 to be a member of the task force.

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
March 13, 2023

The Honorable Senator San Buenaventura, Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
The Thirty-Second Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Senator San Buenaventura 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

HB-617-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2023 12:27:01 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/13/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Desiree Abreu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Representatives Amato, Cochran, Hashimoto, Poepoe and Woodson.

My name is Desiree Kawasaki Abreu, born and raised in the Upcountry area. I am a Special Educator and a LEND Trainee for the [Maternal and Child Health \(MCH\) Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities \(LEND\)](#) program which is part of the [University of Hawaii's John A. Burns School of Medicine](#). I am writing in support of [House Bill 617, Relating to Oral Health](#). As a resident of Maui, a neighbor island, I agree that funds need to be appropriated to establish an Oral Health Task Force that will review the status of oral health in Hawaii and make recommendations to improve the oral health infrastructure in our State. As you are aware, there are only five small dental clinics that serve people who are intellectually or developmentally disabled and all five are located in Honolulu on the island of Oahu. This means that the State does not operate any of these needed clinics on the neighbor islands, including Maui. As an educator for over 27 years, I have had direct experience with neighbor islands being treated as "outer" islands, not receiving the benefits that are afforded to Oahu. I am a passionate advocate for people with disabilities. I strongly believe that all of Hawaii's people deserve access to the dental services that they need, including those who live on Maui, Molokai and Lanai. Just yesterday, I and a group of LEND Trainees that included a dental resident, interviewed a young adult with a developmental disability who has rheumatic heart disease. He lives on a neighbor island and has not seen a dentist for years because he did not have dental coverage. Research shows that the health of your teeth directly correlates with the health of your heart. Furthermore, those with a history of rheumatic heart disease frequently require antibiotics before any dental procedure. Shouldn't this young man have access to dental care even if he lives on a neighbor island? Thank you for introducing [House Bill 617](#). Funds do need to be appropriated to establish an Oral Health Task Force that will review the status of oral health in Hawaii and make recommendations to improve the oral health infrastructure across our State, for every island. My hope is that this Task Force will look closely at how to expand oral health services to the neighbor islands and that people with disabilities may have access to necessary oral health services that will support their overall health and wellness.

Mahalo nui loa, Des

Date: March 13, 2023

Committee: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Bill #HB617, HD1, RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH

Testifier: Nancy S. Partika, RN, MPH

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice-Chair Aquino 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 favorable consideration of HB 617,HD1.

HB-617-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2023 7:52:22 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/13/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leanne E Higa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Date: March 10, 2023

**To: The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura,
Chair House Committee on Health and Human Services**

**The Honorable Senator Henry J.C. Aquino,
Vice Chair Committee on Health and Human Services**

Re: Strong Support for HB617 Establishing and Oral Health Task Force

Hearing: Monday, March 13, 2023

1:00 PM

Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

State Capitol 415 South Beretania Street

I am in Strong 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 Hawaii.

HB617 appropriates funds to establish an oral health task force. Oral health in our state is a public health crisis, with Hawaii receiving a failing grade of “F” in three recent oral health report cards released by The Pew Center for the States. We, as a state, need to work together to reverse this by passing this bill.

Many people in Hawaii have a deficit in the basic human need of a sound and functional dentition and that is an enormous problem. Oral health is a crucial part of overall physical, psychological, social, and economic well being. Adults with poor oral health often struggle to manage chronic co-conditions such as diabetes. Researchers have linked poor oral health with cardiovascular disease, stroke and bacterial pneumonia. Pregnant women with poor oral health are at an increased risk of delivering preterm and/or low-birth-weight infants. Missing or broken teeth also create social barriers for adults to find and maintain gainful employment in our service-based economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 617.

Mahalo,

Leanne Higa, RDH, BS, MEd

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

Date of Hearing/Time:

March 13, 2023, 1:00 pm

Committee:

Committee on Health and Human Services.

Testifier:

Andrew Tseu, DDS, JD

March 11, 2023

Dear Chair Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Henry J.C. Aquino, 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

HB-617-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2023 10:07:39 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/13/2023 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

In support of HD1. Thank you.