

TESTIMONY
from the
Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities

Testifier's Name: Waynette Cabral

Position Title: Executive Administrator

Organization: Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities

Day, Date, and Time of Hearing: Thursday, January 28, 2010, 1:50 pm, Rm. 016

Measure Number: SB 2264 – RELATING TO QUEST HEALTH CARE PAYMENTS

Name of Committee(s): Senate Human Services (HMS) Committee

Number of copies the Committee is requesting: 1 copy to Committee Clerk

Room Number: 226

E-mailed to: HMSTestimony@Capitol.hawaii.gov

<mailto:HUSTestimony@Capitol.hawaii.gov>



STATE OF HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
919 ALA MOANA BOULEVARD, ROOM 113
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96814
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543
January 28, 2010

The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services
Twenty-Fifth Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Senator Chun Oakland and Members of the Committee:

SUBJECT: SB 2264– RELATING TO QUEST HEALTH CARE PAYMENTS

The position and views expressed in this testimony do not represent nor reflect the position and views of the Department of Health (DOH) or Department of Human Services (DHS).

The State Council on Developmental Disabilities (DD) **STRONGLY SUPPORTS SB 2264**. The purpose of this bill is to restore adult dental care under Quest.

Last year, the 2009 Legislature, through HB 200 HD1 SD1 CD1, restored the Adult Dental Program. The following statement was noted in Conference Committee Report No. 167, "With the help of federal ARRA funds, your Committee on Conference was able to appropriate \$2.6 million in FY 2010 and \$3.1 million in FY 2011 to restore the Adult Dental Program, which was cut by the Governor." The funds did not come to fruition.

A Memorandum to all Medicaid providers from Dr. Kenneth Fink, DHS Med-QUEST Division Administrator, dated June 26, 2009, informed providers that "Effective August 10, 2009, the adult (individuals age 21 and older) dental benefit will return to emergency dental services only, as was in effect prior to December 1, 2006. Covered adult dental emergencies are services to: Relieve dental pain; Eliminate infection; and Treat acute injuries to teeth and supporting structures."

In addition to the adult dental benefit, individuals with DD were receiving dental services through DOH, DD Division's Partnership in Community Living (PICL) program. PICL services were provided to individuals with DD who were under the following circumstances: pending determination of eligibility for Medicaid waiver services; or

were Medicaid eligible, but the Medicaid waiver program or other program does not cover the service or item (dental services); or ineligible for Medicaid or any other federally reimbursed services, but eligible to receive community services. PICL was one of numerous programs to be abolished in the Governor's 2009 legislative package. The Legislature restored \$700,000 from special funds (Tobacco Settlement Funds). However, DOH determined that use of those funds for PICL was not appropriate and the monies were not released. Consequently, the PICL program has been terminated.

The Council cannot emphasize enough the importance of comprehensive dental care services that include preventive, restorative, and emergency services for people with DD. We are all aware of how dental health, or the lack thereof, affects all aspects (emotional, psychological, and social) of our lives. Many individuals can share with you the experience of having a tooth extracted or acquiring serious health problems because necessary dental services were not available due to termination of the adult dental benefit coverage. People with DD have felt this effect to an even greater extent. Due to medical conditions related to their disability and the frequent prescription of medication, preventative and restorative dental care becomes an essential and cost effective service.

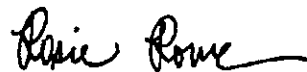
Dental care has been identified as one of the major health concerns, especially for individuals with DD. Compounding the challenges is the lack of dentists in several Neighbor Island areas and access to and resistance of dentists to serve Medicaid and QUEST clients. Clearly, it is vital to the health of participants of Medicaid and QUEST that dental care services other than emergency dental services become available.

Thank you for your interest and concern regarding the dental care needs of individuals with DD. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in **strong support of SB 2264**.

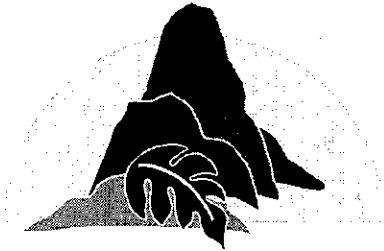
Sincerely,



Weynette K.Y. Cabral
Executive Administrator



Rosie Rowe
Chair



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Resource Center
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Na Hale O Waine'e
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Lahaina, HI 96761

M E M O

Date: January 27, 2010

To: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
Conference Room 016
Thursday, January 28, 2010, 1:50 p.m.

From: BJ Ott, CFO/Deputy Director
Community Clinic of Maui, Inc., DBA Mālama I Ke Ola Health Center

Re: Senate Bill 2264

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2264. The purpose of SB 2264 is to restore adult dental care under QUEST.

Historically, states have primarily targeted adult dental coverage when making Medicaid cuts. However, a 2005 Kaiser Family Foundation analysis of eliminating adult dental Medicaid coverage in Massachusetts found that the savings from benefit reductions were less than one percent of the state's share of total program spending, and it appeared that some costs were shifted to the state's uncompensated care pool.

The study further found that, due to increased costs, many enrollees' dental problems went untreated, exacerbating other chronic or disabling health conditions (a report published by the Surgeon General in 2000 noted the importance of dental examinations in detecting early signs of nutritional deficiencies and systemic disease, and the association between oral health and conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and adverse pregnancy outcomes). In addition, with providers' treatment plans compromised by the lack of coverage, the number of private dentists treating Medicaid patients in Massachusetts declined, further straining the limited capacity of the dental safety net.

CCM was able to implement its dental expansion by committing to the Bureau of Primary Health Care that it would serve only Medicaid and uninsured/underinsured patients to address the vast unmet need. The revenue shortfalls resulting from the reduction in adult dental benefits will likely force CCM to open its practice to the privately insured, which will in turn negatively impact the finances of private dentists who have already experienced declines in revenue from the Medicaid cuts.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in SUPPORT of SB 2264.



Hawai'i Primary Care Association

345 Queen Street | Suite 601 | Honolulu, HI 96813-4718 | Tel: 808.536.8442 | Fax: 808.524.0347
www.hawaiipca.net

Senate Committee on Human Services
The Hon. Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
The Hon. Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2264
Relating to QUEST Health Care Payments
Submitted by Beth Giesting, Chief Executive Officer
January 28, 2010 1:50 p.m. Agenda, Room 016

The Hawai'i Primary Care Association strongly supports this measure which appropriates funds to restore basic dental services for adults covered by Med-QUEST.

The mouth, teeth, and gums are as essential to health as any other part of the body. We should no more exclude the mouth from routine health care than the arms, liver, or ears. Accordingly, dental coverage limited to emergency-only services threatens the overall health of an individual: Recent research points to associations between chronic oral infections and diabetes, heart and lung disease, stroke, and low-birth-weight births—conditions that are more complicated and costly to treat than effective, timely oral health care. In addition, poor oral health and its impact on a person's appearance are linked to poorer prospects for getting and maintaining employment.

Adults covered by Med-QUEST are, by definition, low income and hence unable to pay out of pocket for the often substantial amount of dental care they need. Health centers, which should be the safety net for these underserved adults, are unable to meet the challenge because of the high cost of care and shortage of public support for this service. This financial conundrum severely hampers their ability to expand services to meet the needs of both Med-QUEST enrollees and the very large number of other low income people who have no dental insurance. Covering dental services through Med-QUEST is also a good investment because it earns a considerable federal match.

The Hawai'i Primary Care Association and its membership of community health centers, Native Hawaiian Health Systems, and other primary care organizations, providers and advocates, consider this measure among our highest priority legislative initiatives for 2010.

We all urge you to pass this measure and restore this essential health service. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of this very important bill.

chunOakland5 - Michael

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2010 8:56 AM
To: HMS Testimony
Cc: Docgore@msn.com
Subject: Testimony for SB2264 on 1/28/2010 1:50:00 PM

Testimony for HMS 1/28/2010 1:50:00 PM SB2264

Conference room: 016
Testifier position: support
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: Richard L Gore, DDS
Organization: Hoola Lahui Hawaii
Address:
Phone:
E-mail: Docgore@msn.com
Submitted on: 1/26/2010

Comments:

Please vote yes to provide adult Medicaid services. I work at the Kauai Community Health Center and the need is great for our community. Those patients have no where else to go for their dental needs than our clinic. This funding is well spent, promotes overall good health, and a greatly improved sense of self image for our patients. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Richard L Gore, DDS
Dental Director, Kapaaa Clinic
Kauai Community Health Center



KOKUA KALIHI VALLEY

Comprehensive Family Services

2239 North School Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96819

Phone (808) 791-9400 ♦ Fax (808) 848-0979

Senate Committee on Human Services

The Hon. Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair

The Hon. Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2264

Relating to QUEST Health Care Payments

Submitted by David Derauf, Executive Director

January 28, 2010 1:50 p.m. Agenda, Room 016

Kokua Kalihi Valley strongly supports this measure which appropriates funds to restore basic dental services for adults covered by Med-QUEST.

Oral health should not be a luxury that only those with wealth are entitled to. Instead the mouth, teeth, and gums are as essential to health as any other part of the body. If someone can't smile out of shame for rotten or missing teeth, what chance has that person to find work? If someone suffers from chronic dental pain or infection, how likely is he or she to be able to carry out their responsibilities? Recent research points to associations between chronic oral infections and diabetes, heart and lung disease, stroke, and low-birth-weight births. Hawaii residents have died because of lack of access to dental services, and far more have suffered needlessly day in and day out from chronic oral illness. What sense is it to have a system of insurance that allows a person such luxuries as an MRI for a painful knee but no proper preventive or therapeutic care for chronic oral infections residing next door to the brain?

Kokua Kalihi Valley has been committed to meeting the oral health needs of the residents of Kalihi Valley since 1972. Given the large number of low income residents in our community, with the highest concentration of public housing, along with a large and growing care home community that serves mostly low income adults, our capacity to meet this community's oral health needs are strained to capacity! We are currently planning to greatly expand that capacity, but the lack of State adult dental Medicaid severely threatens our ability to do so.

Kokua Kalihi Valley considers this measure its highest priority legislative initiative for 2010.

We all urge you to pass this measure and restore this essential health service. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of this very important bill.

1/26/2010

Honorable Senators
Re: SB2264

Please consider supporting SB2264 for the health and well-being of our island citizens. While I understand the current state of the economy, I cannot help but feel extremely sympathetic to adults on Medicaid support that cannot functionally chew or smile.

Long established studies have shown that edentulism (toothlessness) is linked to poor diet by means of the inability to chew healthy foods. In our practice in Waimanalo, this is absolutely true. When discussing dietary choices with patients, those that have no functioning teeth are always discussing the difficulty of eating vegetables and some whole grains. Protein is relegated to processed and fast foods for ease of eating. This is really a shame, being that Waimanalo is one of our state's top regions for quality vegetable farming.

Before Medicaid benefits were cut, I wish you could have seen the smiles on the faces of individuals receiving dentures after years of not having teeth. We are a new community health dental clinic here in Waimanalo and there has been much inquiry by Medicaid patients regarding their ability to have dentures made. Unfortunately, we had to turn hundreds of patients away this past quarter, when Medicaid adult dental benefits were cut in August of 2009.

Please reconsider your definition of a healthy society and include the dental coverage of adults under the Medicaid program. A large number of these adults are seniors who deserve our best in their time of need.

Mahalo for your consideration in SUPPORT of SB2264

Anthony S. Kim, DMD

Dental Director
Waimanalo Health Center
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Mahalo for your consideration in SUPPORT of SB2264

Anthony S. Kim, DMD

Dental Director
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(Comprehensive Family Services)
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Fax

Senate Sergeant-At-Arms Office

To: _____ From: Sam Johnson DHS

Fax: 586-6659 Pages: 2

Phone: _____ Date: 1/27/10

Re: _____ CC: _____

Urgent For Review Please Comment Please Reply Please Recycle

• Comments:

Please forward to the
Committee On Human Services

Notice Of Hearing

Date: Thursday, January 28, 2010

Time: 1:50 pm

Place: Conference Room 016

State Capitol

415 South Beretania Street

Regarding SB 2264

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150 55th Street
Brooklyn, NY 11220-2574
Telephone: 718.630.7000

January 27, 2010

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE
BILL 2264 RELATING TO QUEST HEALTH
CARE PAYMENTS

This letter is written in strong support of SB 2264 to restore basic adult dental services covered by Med-Quest.

Lutheran Medical Center(LMC), thru its affiliation with local community health centers, has developed a working model in delivering dental services that has proven to be successful. Starting with one dental resident in 2002 at the Kokua Kalibi Valley Health Center, in 2010, we will position twelve(12) AEGD general dentistry residents in five health centers on three islands. Six months ago, thru a grant from HRSA, LMC expanded its pediatric dental residency site to Hawaii with four pediatric residents. In July of 2010, four new PGY-1 dental residents will augment four PGY -2 residents in their two year residency program.

While both programs have not asked the Legislature for financial assistance, restoration of adult Medicaid funding will encourage eligible adult patients to seek needed care and at the same time, help the community health centers meet the challenge of the high cost of care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Samuel Ishimura", is written over the typed name.

Samuel Ishimura, DDS, FACP
Assistant Director of Education
Regional Coordinator, Hawaii Region
AEGD and Pediatric Dental Residencies
Lutheran Medical Center

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808-775-1090
Mo & Th: 8:00A - 5:00P

Fax: 808-323-9444
TDD: 808-323-2889

Federal ID
99-0108896

January 26, 2010

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
Senator Suzanne Chun-Oakland, Chair
Senator Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair
Thursday, January 28, 2010
TIME: 1:50 pm
Conference Room 016
State Capitol

Testimony in favor of SB 2067 RELATING TO MEDICAID ELIGIBILITY.
And
Testimony in favor of SB 2264 RELATING TO QUEST HEALTH CARE
PAYMENTS.

Good Morning Senators Chun-Oakland and Ihara. My name is Gretchen Lawson, I am the President/CEO of the Arc of Kona a private, charitable not-for profit organization on the big island supporting persons with disability. Most of this population relies on Medicaid for their medical needs and the population, in general, has difficulty understanding system requirements. By passing SB 2067, the legislature will provide a much needed improvement by assuming eligibility continues even if the under lying paperwork is not completed on time. Changes in a person's eligibility for Medicaid are very rare and it burdens the entire system when a person is dropped from the rolls and has to be reinstated. Thank you for approving this bill to pass from your committee with a positive recommendation.

I am also testifying on behalf of SB 2264 Restores adult dental care under QUEST.

Dental Health is extremely important for overall health of individual's. This measure that would requires the department of human services to restore this benefit would improve the entire system by potentially eliminating more costly emergency procedures attributed to poor dental health.

Thank you for your attention to these matters.

Sincerely,



Gretchen Lawson
President/CEO



carf
Commission on Accreditation
of Rehabilitation Facilities

The
ARC of Kona

www.arcofkona.org

"Expanding the Possibilities"
"Ho'o Nui Ka Hiki"

January 27, 2010

To: **Senate Committee on Human Services**

Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Les Ihara, Vice Chair

Senator Josh Green, Member
Senator Fred Hemmings, Member

RE: **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2264:
RELATING TO QUEST HEALTHCARE PAYMENTS**
Hearing: January 28, 2010 @ 1:50 p.m. in Room 016

Submitted by: Richard P. Bettini, MPH, MS, Chief Executive Officer
Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center
Contact – 697-3457 or wcchc@wcchc.com

The Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center strongly supports SB 2264 which appropriates funds to restore basic dental services for adults covered by Med-QUEST.

The mouth, teeth, and gums are as essential to health as any other part of the body. We should no more exclude the mouth from routine health care than the arms, liver, or ears. Accordingly, dental coverage limited to emergency-only services threatens the overall health of an individual: Recent research points to associations between chronic oral infections and diabetes, heart and lung disease, stroke, and low-birth-weight births—conditions that are more complicated and costly to treat than effective, timely oral health care. In addition, poor oral health and its impact on a person's appearance are linked to poorer prospects for getting and maintaining employment.

Adults covered by Med-QUEST are, by definition, low income and hence unable to pay out of pocket for the often substantial amount of dental care they need. The Health Center serves 6,000 adults under the Med-QUEST program. We are the safety net for these underserved adults but cannot meet the challenge because of the high cost of care and shortage of public support for this service. This financial conundrum severely hampers our ability to expand services to meet the needs of both Med-QUEST enrollees and the very large number of other low income people who have no dental insurance. Covering dental services through Med-QUEST is a good investment because it earns a considerable federal match.

The Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center considers this measure extremely important to the health of our community and to our ability to remain financially able to continue to provide much-needed dental care to the underserved.

We urge you to pass this measure and restore this essential health service. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of this very important bill.

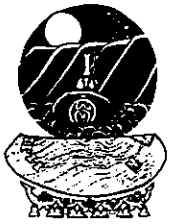
chunOakland5 - Michael

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2010 8:56 AM
To: HMS Testimony
Cc: ngaleai001@hotmail.com
Subject: Testimony for SB2264 on 1/28/2010 1:50:00 PM

Testimony for HMS 1/28/2010 1:50:00 PM SB2264

Conference room: 016
Testifier position: support
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: Noe Galeai
Organization: Waimanalo Health Center
Address: 41-284 Huli Street Waimanalo, HI
Phone: 808-782-2471
E-mail: ngaleai001@hotmail.com
Submitted on: 1/26/2010

Comments:



Waimānalo Health Center
Ola Hāloa
The Sustaining of Life

1/26/2010

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Christina Kealoha Lee, MD
Medical Director

Honorable Senators:
Re: SB2264

Please consider supporting SB2264 for the health and well-being of our island citizens. While I understand the current state of the economy, I cannot help but feel extremely sympathetic to adults on Medicaid support that cannot functionally chew or smile.

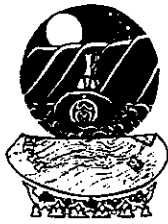
Long established studies have shown that edentulism (toothlessness) is linked to poor diet by means of the inability to chew healthy foods. In our practice in Waimanalo, this is absolutely true. When discussing dietary choices with patients, those that have no functioning teeth are always discussing the difficulty of eating vegetables and some whole grains. Protein is relegated to processed and fast foods for ease of eating. This is really a shame, being that Waimanalo is one of our state's top regions for quality vegetable farming.

Before Medicaid benefits were cut, I wish you could have seen the smiles on the faces of individuals receiving dentures after years of not having teeth. We are a new community health dental clinic here in Waimanalo and there has been much inquiry by Medicaid patients regarding their ability to have dentures made. Unfortunately, we had to turn hundreds of patients away this past quarter, when Medicaid adult dental benefits were cut in August of 2009.

Please reconsider your definition of a healthy society and include the dental coverage of adults under the Medicaid program. A large number of these adults are seniors who deserve our best in their time of need.

Mahalo for your consideration in SUPPORT of SB2264

Christina K. Lee, MD
Medical Director
Family Medicine
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41-1347 Kalanianaʻole Hwy.
Waimanalo, HI 96795



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Waimānalo Health Center
Ola Hāloa
The Sustaining of Life

Senate Committee on Human Services

The Hon. Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
The Hon. Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2264
Relating to QUEST Health Care Payments**

January 28, 2010 1:50 p.m. Agenda, Room 016
Submitted by May Akamine, RN, MS, Executive Director

Waimānalo Health Center strongly supports this bill which appropriates funds to restore basic dental services for adults covered by Med-QUEST.

Oral health is critical to overall health. Currently, dental coverage is limited to emergencies only which threaten a person's health: Research shows correlations between chronic oral infections and diabetes, heart and lung disease, stroke, etc. – conditions that have more complications and are more expensive to treat than effective, timely oral health care. In addition, poor oral health affects a person's appearance which negatively impacts job prospects which not only affects self-esteem, but has reverberating effects on personal as well as societal levels. Furthermore, toothlessness is linked to a poor diet because of the inability to chew healthy foods such as vegetables.

School of Medicine Professor Dr. Harrigan conducted a survey at Waimānalo Health Center, "Oral Health Disparities and Periodontal Disease in Asian and Pacific Island Populations", *Ethnic Disease*, May 2006, which showed that our patients had less number of teeth, deeper tooth pocket depth, higher extent of attachment loss, greater extent of bleeding sites, and more decayed coronal surfaces when compared to a national survey sample. This study concluded "... if the pilot study sample adequately represents the Waimānalo population, the community's oral health status is quite poor." This study is aligned with other findings from our State Department of Health which show that Native Hawaiian adults have a high rate of tooth loss and extensive periodontal disease and caries, yet have the lowest dental care utilization when compared with other ethnic groups in Hawaii.

Because Waimānalo, a largely Native Hawaiian community, needed affordable oral health services, we opened our *Waimānalo Smiles!* Dental Clinic in April 2009. Before QUEST benefits were cut in August 2009, we lived up to our *Waimanalo Smiles!* name. There were many smiles on the faces of people who received dentures after many years of not having teeth. Now, our adult patients, including our kupuna, do not return for services because they cannot afford to pay for dental care. Plus, it makes a lot of economic sense to restore dental benefits for our adult patients on QUEST. If upfront, primary dental care is provided to our people, we will save on the costly Emergency Room and hospitalizations that will, inevitably, be utilized when primary and preventive dental care is not sought. I am proud of the high quality and compassionate care that WHC provides all our patients.

We all urge you to pass this bill and restore essential oral health services. Mahalo nui loa for your kokua and support of our kupuna and other adults of our community. They deserve full QUEST benefits. Aloha!

chunOakland5 - Michael

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Wednesday, January 27, 2010 6:47 AM
To: HMS Testimony
Cc: makamine@waimanalohc.org
Subject: Testimony for SB2264 on 1/28/2010 1:50:00 PM

Testimony for HMS 1/28/2010 1:50:00 PM SB2264

Conference room: 016
Testifier position: support
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: May Akamine
Organization: Waimanalo Health Center
Address: 41-1347 Kalaniana'ole Hwy Waimanalo, Hawaii 96795
Phone: 954-7107
E-mail: makamine@waimanalohc.org
Submitted on: 1/27/2010

Comments:

chunOakland5 - Michael

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Wednesday, January 27, 2010 9:22 AM
To: HMS Testimony
Cc: vtomooka@waimanalohc.org
Subject: Testimony for SB2264 on 1/28/2010 1:50:00 PM

Testimony for HMS 1/28/2010 1:50:00 PM SB2264

Conference room: 016
Testifier position: support
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: Veronica Tomooka
Organization: Waimanalo Health Center
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Submitted on: 1/27/2010

Comments:

chunOakland5 - Michael

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2010 12:35 PM
To: HMS Testimony
Cc: jfischer@hawaii.edu
Subject: Testimony for SB2264 on 1/28/2010 1:50:00 PM

Testimony for HMS 1/28/2010 1:50:00 PM SB2264

Conference room: 016
Testifier position: support
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: Dr. Joel Fischer
Organization: Individual
Address:
Phone:
E-mail: jfischer@hawaii.edu
Submitted on: 1/26/2010

Comments:
PLEASE PASS THIS BILL!!

We have accumulated a huge amount of evidence that the failure to provide dental services affects low income people's ability to find jobs and has an impact on their entire lives. Not many employers would hire someone who has huge gaps in their teeth that were caused by the lack of anything but emergency dental services.

We know there can be long-term health effects from poor dental care, including an increase in heart attacks!

This is a situation that is so clear: We pay a little NOW, or a LOT later.

Thank you.

joel

January 26, 2010

Senate Committee on Human Services

The Hon. Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair

The Hon. Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2264
Relating to QUEST Health Care Payments
January 28, 2010 - 1:50 p.m. Agenda, Room 016**

Please support Senate Bill 2264 which appropriates funds to restore basic dental services for adults covered by Med-Quest.

Working in the communities with large numbers of Med-Quest recipients, I understand that it's of utmost importance to include dental care in the Med-Quest benefits. Healthy teeth and gums are essential to the overall health and well-being of our community. Here are some reasons to support this measure:

- ❖ More and more research has shown the direct effects of poor oral health including gingivitis and periodontal disease with diabetes, heart disease and pre-term low birth weight babies.
- ❖ Providing preventive oral health services to the needy is cost-efficient as minor tooth aches can lead to costly emergency dental care visits.
- ❖ Many of the state's Med-Quest recipients already suffer from chronic diseases and are the most challenging of patients in terms of compliance and health care outcomes. Many need the extra reinforcement and reminders, which dental care professionals provide, to improve their overall health.
- ❖ For our keiki who are covered by Med-Quest, the importance of proper oral hygiene won't be taught at home since parents who aren't privileged to quality oral health services are not aware of the benefits of healthy teeth and gums.
- ❖ Dentures improve more than just the smiles of our kupuna. Dentures improve the chewing abilities for our elders and help to boost their overall nutritional intake. Foods such as nuts and fresh fruits and vegetables can be consumed by a denture wearer and improve their health and well-being.
- ❖ The hundreds of studies on the relationship of oral health and self-esteem and success tell us what we already know. The condition of the mouth reflects the health of our bodies as a whole, including our perception of ourselves.

I strongly urge you to pass this measure and restore this essential health service to our needy. Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in support of this very important bill.

Sincerely,

Pi'ilani Kai
3142 Hayden Street
Honolulu, HI 96815