

SCR156

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



CHIYOME LEINAALA FUKINO, M.D.
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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In reply, please refer to:
File:

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

SCR 156, REQUESTING THE DIRECTOR OF HEALTH TO ENDORSE
XYLITOL FOR ITS PREVENTIVE AND THERAPEUTIC HEALTH AND ORAL
HEALTH BENEFITS

Testimony of Chiyome Leinaala Fukino, M.D.
Director of Health

March 17, 2010

1 **Department's Position:** The Department opposes this request.

2 **Fiscal Implications:** None

3 **Purpose and Justification:** The proposal requests that the Director of Health endorse xylitol, a
4 sugarless sweetener used in the manufacture of candies, drinks and foods as a sugar substitute, for its
5 disease prevention and therapeutic benefits. While it's known that sugar substitutes in general can be
6 effective at reducing the risk of tooth decay-related disease in communities and that avoiding processed
7 sugars is also associated with reducing the risk of other chronic diseases, including diabetes and obesity,
8 it would be inappropriate for the Director of Health to endorse any specific compound.

9 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this request.



Hawaii State Legislature
Senate Committee on Health
Date of Hearing: March 17, 2010 Time of Hearing: 2:45
Conference Room # 016
Testimony in Support of SCR 156

To: The Honorable Chair, Senator David Ige; Vice-Chair, Senator Josh Green, M.D.; and Members of the Committee:

My name is Diane Brucato-Thomas, the Immediate Past-President of the Hawaii Dental Hygienists' Association (HDHA). This testimony is in support of SCR 156, which requests the Director of Health to endorse xylitol for its preventive and therapeutic health and oral health benefits, on behalf of HDHA.

Xylitol is a natural sugar found in plants, fruits, vegetables, and is made in the human body. Considered ***“the good sugar”***, xylitol is not metabolized in the same way as common table sugar and is known to interfere with the ability of bacteria to stick to each other and to mucous membranes. Its low glycemic index makes xylitol helpful for adults and children with diabetes and obesity, as well.

In addition to the obvious cavity preventing benefits from offering xylitol candy or gum to children, TWO other simple uses of xylitol really stand out:

- 1) Mothers love to kiss their children. That is how cariogenic bacteria infect a child's mouth. A study of 5 year olds in Finland, where xylitol is widely used as a sweetener, showed that the children whose moms chewed xylitol gum when their babies were 3 to 24 months old, ***later in life, had 70 percent fewer cavities.***
- 2) Dental hygienists have worked for years to maintain the health of their patients' teeth, only to have them eventually enter a nursing home where their oral health is neglected. Years of educating caregivers at nursing homes on how to provide daily oral hygiene care for their elder residents repeatedly failed, because caregivers lack the necessary time. However, a recent study reported that caregivers at one nursing home were simply told not to change the oral hygiene care they had been providing, ***except*** that they were to provide the residents with five doses of xylitol each day. This was offered as candy or mouth spray. Compliance was excellent. Plaque scores were recorded at the beginning of the study and again after only three weeks. At the end of the study, not only were plaque scores significantly improved; the caregivers reported that ***the residents' breath*** had improved to the extent that they were no longer repelled and found themselves getting closer to the residents. They were able to provide a great deal more affection, and the well-being of residents was markedly enhanced!

Our message is “Strive for five!” The use of five doses per day of xylitol, with its long standing history of safety and efficacy for prevention of oral and systemic infection, can effectively change the bacterial environment in the mouth to benefit



health and wellness. Imagine the ease of preventing the traumatic painful amputation of tooth structure (dental fillings) for this and generations to come; saving the state money, and eliminating missed school and work days for dental work. Imagine the cost savings of reducing the risk of pneumonia in hospitals and nursing homes! The list goes on... Xylitol truly is "the good sugar".

The Hawaii Dental Hygienists' Association respectfully requests that the Senate Committee on Health consider passing the proposed Senate Concurrent Resolution #156.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Diane Brucato-Thomas, RDH, EF, BS, FAADH
Immediate Past President, Hawaii Dental Hygienists' Association
President-Elect, American Academy of Dental Hygiene
American Dental Hygienists' Association/Hu-Friedy, Master Clinician Award 2008