

SB 2310

Measure Title: RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES.

Report Title: Kupuna Caucus; Medicaid; Adult Vision Services; DHS; Appropriation

Description: Appropriates funds to the department of human services to match federal funds allocated to the State for medicaid benefits dedicated to adult vision services.

Companion:

Package: Kupuna

Current Referral: HMS, WAM

Introducer(s): CHUN OAKLAND, GALUTERIA, IHARA, SHIMABUKURO, Espero



HPCA

HAWAII PRIMARY CARE ASSOCIATION

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

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2310
Relating to Human Services
Submitted by Robert Hirokawa, Chief Executive Officer
January 31, 2012 1:15 p.m., Room 016

The Hawai'i Primary Care Association supports Senate Bill 2310, Relating to Human Services, which will appropriate funds to the Department of Human Services so as to maximize federal matching funds available for adult vision services. The deterioration of adult vision often directly correlates diabetes, heart disease and other diseases with high mortality rates, as well as impacts the vitality of a healthy society. The maintenance of vision services is not simply a quality of life measure, it directly translates into securing gainful employment, maintaining familial obligations and bolstering communities in Hawaii.

We urge you to pass this bill out of committee and thank you for the opportunity to testify.

January 31, 2012

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

RE: Testimony in Support of SB 2310

Dear Senators Chun Oakland, Ihara and members of the Committees:

On behalf of the Hawaii Optometric Association thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 2310. Healthy eyes are important to an individual's overall health.

Early detection of an eye disease is detrimental to the patient's overall quality of life and health. Diseases such as glaucoma and diabetic eye complications can have devastating affects on individuals, including blindness. There are instances where an eye care provider is the first to diagnose diabetes in a patient.

The elimination of adult visions services may have an adverse financial impact on the health care system.

We urge your support in passage of SB 2310

Respectfully,

Charlotte Nekota
Executive Director
Hawaii Optometric Association



Anne M. Chipchase, MA, CVM
P.O. Box 3319
Honolulu, HI 96801

January 30, 2012

Aloha, Chair Chun-Oakland, Chair Ige, Vice-Chair Kidani, Vice-Chair Ihara, Senators:

Thank you for the opportunity to address you in support of SB2310. My name is Anne Chipchase and I am chairman of the board of Project Vision Hawaii. Project Vision Hawaii provides free retinal screening throughout our state, our mission being to stop preventable blindness. Unfortunately, I am unable to testify in person today, as I am on the Big Island.

If you would, look around this room; I'm willing to bet that roughly half of the people are wearing glasses or contacts. Consider if they didn't have access to vision care, which would preclude them from getting prescription eyewear. Many wouldn't be able to see well enough to read, drive or complete many of the simplest activities of daily living. How could they work? How could they do the things which allow them to be productive citizens? They couldn't. The planned elimination of vision services for able-bodied adults insured by MedQUEST will have far-reaching repercussions, adversely impacting everyone involved. The right to sight, whenever possible, must not become a bargaining chip in the State's budget process.

It is not a sensible bargaining chip in any case. In considering the important factors surrounding our State's economic health today, you need to balance immediate cuts against the long term increases those cuts will inevitably cause.

Cutting this benefit from this particular low-income group of people will further cripple recipients' ability to secure gainful employment. If an individual is unable to see, she will be less likely to get a job, pay her bills, and become a functional member of society. This will further exacerbate rather than alleviate the economic burden on the State.

Please reinstate this benefit.

Mahalo for your attention,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Anne".

Anne M. Chipchase, MA, CVM



January 29, 2012

Aloha, Chair Chun-Oakland, Chair Ige, Vice-Chair Kidani, Vice-Chair Ihara, Senators:

Thank you for the opportunity to address you in support of SB2310. I am Elizabeth Annie Hiller, Executive Director of Project Vision Hawaii. Project Vision Hawaii provides free retinal screenings throughout our state, our mission being to stop preventable blindness.

Allow me to tell you a story. Last Wednesday, January 25th, Project Vision Hawaii conducted a screening as part of the **WE ... a hui for health** wellness event co-sponsored by Senator Green and Representatives Mizuno and Yamane. The first person who walked into our mobile unit was an able-bodied adult awaiting acceptance into the MedQUEST program. His vision was 20/200 in both eyes, well over the parameters that define legally blind and he clearly needed classes. Without this benefit better vision would be difficult to achieve for him.

Budget cuts in the Department of Human Services have lead to a reduction plan, which would eliminate vision services for able-bodied adults insured by MedQUEST. The repercussions will adversely impact everyone involved ... the individuals insured by QUEST, eye care providers, local nonprofits that provide vision services, community health centers, and ultimately our State's budget.

While considering the important factors surrounding our State's economic health today, you need to balance immediate cuts against the long term increases those cuts will inevitably cause. Although some would term the ability to see as a quality of life issue, I humbly and passionately beg to differ.

Importantly, an individual's vision is a primary indicator of the presence of current disease. Many diseases such as glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, and cataracts affect vision at a gradual rate. Testing refraction now prevents the higher costs of treatment for more serious conditions later. Without QUEST coverage of vision services, disease will be found only after more dramatic vision change and therefore at a less correctable point.

Cutting this benefit from this particular low-income group of people will further cripple recipients' ability to secure gainful employment. If an individual is unable to see, she will be less likely to get a job, pay her bills, and become a functional member of society. This will further exacerbate the economic burden on the State.

Hawaii suffers a serious access to care problem affecting MedQUEST patients generally and vision services patients in particular. For instance, Lahaina has no providers accepting Medicaid vision services, so low-income recipients with few or no resources are forced to go to Wailuku. By eliminating this benefit, providers will be further dissuaded from accepting QUEST and access to care will be further reduced.



Last but not least, the impact of this cut will fall back on the community health centers and local nonprofits like Project Vision Hawaii. With already tight funding, we may get to a point of being simply unable to provide care.

Please put this benefit back. MedQUEST Division of the Department of Human Services can access matching funds from Federal Sources, making the State's \$600,000 into \$1,200,000.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Annie Hiller
Executive Director

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From: Patrick Linton [plinton@hamakua-health.org]
Sent: Monday, January 30, 2012 9:12 AM
To: HMS Testimony
Subject: SB2310

Aloha and Good Morning,

I would like to submit testimony by email in favor of SB 2310 related to restoring funding, matched by the federal government, for the provision of adult vision services in the State Medicaid Program. As the Executive Director of a Federally Qualified Community Health Center on the Island of Hawaii, we are particularly affected by the reduction of funding for these much needed services. Like other FQHC's, we target our services to the most vulnerable members of our communities, including those enrolled in Medicaid programs. These are residents who are often the least able to pay for these services themselves. Although we understand the need to reduce the costs of the Medicaid program due to budgetary constraints, so often the reductions in services are only short-term leading to even greater expenditures down the road. Early detection, prevention and treatment of vision problems is very important. Your serious consideration of Senate Bill 2310 to restore funding for vision services to eligible adults is much appreciated and needed.

Thanking you in advance,

Patrick Linton, CEO
Hamakua Health Center

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Wednesday, January 25, 2012 5:51 PM
To: HMS Testimony
Cc: robertscottwall@yahoo.com
Subject: Testimony for SB2310 on 1/31/2012 1:15:00 PM

Testimony for HMS 1/31/2012 1:15:00 PM SB2310

Conference room: 016
Testifier position: Support
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: Scott Wall
Organization: Individual
E-mail: robertscottwall@yahoo.com
Submitted on: 1/25/2012

Comments: