



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

House Committee on Health

H.B. 1131, H.D. 1, RELATING TO SCHOOL ENTRANCE

Testimony of Loretta J. Fuddy, A.C.S.W., M.P.H.
Director of Health

February 22, 2013

1 **Department's Position:** The Department of Health appreciates the intent of H.B. 1131, H.D. 1 to
2 improve the oral health of children by requiring that students have a dental examination prior to entrance
3 to any school in the state. However, the Department has concerns regarding implementation, including
4 the potential impact on the dental service delivery system and potential barriers to school entrance.

5 **Fiscal Implications:** The Department would require resources to implement this measure. The
6 Department's public health dental program was eliminated as a result of the 2009 budget reductions and
7 there is currently no infrastructure to support full implementation.

8 **Purpose and Justification:** Tooth decay is the most common disease of childhood and can lead to
9 physical and psychological disabilities as well as significant diseases in adulthood. Tooth decay may
10 result in pain and other problems that affect learning in school-age children including lost school time
11 and ability to concentrate. Early and regular dental care is critical to the health and success of our
12 children. Yet, many of our most vulnerable children are not receiving basic dental care.

13 The Department believes the measure will help assure more children receive dental care and
14 arrive at school ready to learn but is concerned whether all children will be able to readily access dental
15 services to meet the entrance requirement. Many factors can affect access including lack of insurance,

1 high co-payments, limited availability of dental providers, transportation, cultural and language
2 competency, lack of clear information for beneficiaries about dental benefits, and lack of understanding
3 regarding the importance of oral health. Children with special health needs may also experience
4 difficulty finding dentists trained and willing to serve this population.

5 The Department is also uncertain what impact the dental examination requirement may have on
6 the existing service delivery system and whether providers can adequately accommodate the additional
7 demand especially in rural, neighbor island communities.

8 To ensure the measure does not create an unintended impediment to school entrance, the
9 Department is willing to work with the Department of Education, oral health providers and other
10 stakeholders to assess the potential impact of measure.

11 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.