

HMSA



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February 1, 2013

The Honorable Josh Green, M.D., Chair
The Honorable Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair
Senate Committees on Health and Commerce and Consumer Protection

Re: SB 1240 – Relating to Pediatric Dental Health Coverage

Dear Chair Green, Chair Baker and Members of the Committees:

The Hawaii Medical Service Association (HMSA) appreciates the opportunity to testify on SB 1240 which require all health plans sold in the Hawaii Health Connector to include pediatric dental benefits. HMSA supports this Bill.

The Center for Disease Control found that childhood tooth decay, despite being preventable, remains the most common chronic disease among American children. In light of this, the US Surgeon General called for increased attention to oral health as a core component of overall health and for the need to reduce oral health disparities.

Better oral health outcomes can be achieved at lower cost if dentally-necessary care is initiated early in childhood, and the Affordable Care Act (ACA) provides an unprecedented opportunity to address the oral health needs of our keiki. The single most significant step toward achieving this is the inclusion of a mandated pediatric dental benefit as part of the essential benefits package. The potential benefit of this mandate includes:

- better overall health at lower cost;
- greater health equity;
- enhanced capacity for millions of children to grow, eat, play, and learn;
- improved general health throughout the lifespan; and
- potential reductions in premature births.

In mandating that pediatric services include oral health care, Congress fully recognized that a child's overall health was not at the exclusion of the child's oral health. We now need to ensure that the ACA is implemented in a way that maximizes the opportunity to realize improved oral health for our keiki.

Unfortunately, recent federal guidance on the ACA provides a challenge to achieving that goal. While pediatric dental benefits are required to be offered in the health exchange, there is not mandate to purchase those benefits through the exchange. Those regulations, however, conversely mandate pediatric dental benefits to be embedded in a health plans sold outside of the exchange. This creates an inequity between plans offered within the exchange and plans offered outside of the exchange.

SB 1240 ensures that all health plans offered both within and outside of the Hawaii Health Connector will include exactly the same set of essential health benefits.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer our support for SB 1240.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JD", written over a white background.

Jennifer Diesman
Vice President, Government Relations