

SB343

LATE

TESTIMONY



HPCA

HAWAII PRIMARY CARE ASSOCIATION

Senate Committee on Health

The Hon. Josh Green, Chair

The Hon. Rosalyn H. Baker, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Education

The Hon. Jill Tokuda, Chair

The Hon. Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection

The Hon. Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair

The Hon. Brickwood Galuteria, Vice Chair

Testimony on Senate Bill 343

Relating to Dental Health

Submitted by Robert Hirokawa, Chief Executive Officer

February 04, 2013, 1:00 PM, Room 229

The Hawai'i Primary Care Association, which represents community health centers in Hawai'i, supports the intent of Senate Bill 343 to increase children's access to dental care by creating a school based dental sealant program. Our testimony is limited to Sections 2, 4, and 5 of the bill, and we take no position on Section 3.

The mouth, teeth, and gums are as essential to health as any other part of the body. In Hawaii, the rate of tooth decay in children is twice as high as that of children living on the mainland. As a point of reference, over 94 percent of mainland six year olds are entirely free from cavities, while only 19 percent of six year olds in Hawaii are cavity-free. Later in life, health care 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. It makes sense to invest in pediatric dental health, and a dental sealant program is an effective tool for such an investment.

Hawaii's community health centers have long been providers of, and advocates for, pediatric dental health programs in high-need communities, including dental sealant programs. We fully support the implementation of a statewide school based dental sealant program and we recognize the need for program collaboration while operating with a limited amount of resources. For these reasons we believe a demonstration or pilot program is unnecessary. Instead, we recommend the Department of Health partner with an existing program(s) to expeditiously allow children to access and benefit from a dental sealant program. Community health centers serve the high-need communities and high-risk populations that the program in Senate Bill 343 is targeting. In addition to familiarity with the target population, approximately half of community health center patients are covered by Medicaid, and Hawaii's state

Medicaid benefit package covers pediatric dental services. This makes community health centers also familiar with federal payment mechanisms that would supplement the \$100,000 appropriated in Section 5 of this measure for, amongst other things, administering the dental sealant program, and would allow the program to reach a greater number of children.

We urge you to pass Senate Bill 343 with our proposed changes and thank you for the opportunity to testify.