

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
P. O. Box 3378  
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378  
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony COMMENTING on HB1772, HD1  
RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH**

REPRESENTATIVE ANGUS L.K. MCKELVEY, CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION AND COMMERCE  
Hearing Date: February 10, 2016 Room Number: 325

1 **Fiscal Implications:** HB1772, HD1 proposes adding a general fund appropriation for fiscal  
2 year 2016-2017 to the Department of Human Services budget to restore basic adult dental  
3 benefits to Medicaid and QUEST integration enrollees.

4 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health is providing comment on HB1772, HD1:  
5 Relating To Oral Health.

6 The U.S. Surgeon General 2000 report “Oral Health in America,” characterizes good oral  
7 health as a prerequisite for people’s general health and quality of life. Oral health affects people  
8 both physically and psychologically. It influences how they grow, enjoy life, look, speak, chew,  
9 taste food, and socialize. Poor oral health brings negative effects to both children and adults in  
10 all settings – home, school, work and social activities. Oral diseases, such as dental caries and  
11 periodontal (gum) disease are important public health issues because they are common and have  
12 high socioeconomic costs.

13 More recent research has shown poor oral health can be an indicator for chronic disease  
14 with possible links between periodontal disease and cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease,  
15 diabetes, and poor pregnancy outcomes. Fortunately, most oral diseases can be prevented.

16 The Department of Health 2015 “Hawaii Oral Health: Key Findings” report presents data  
17 indicating the need for basic preventive and treatment dental services for all Hawaii residents  
18 including adults. As described in the bill introduction, the 2012 data shows low-income adults

1 less likely to visit a dentist each year and are more likely to suffer from tooth loss than high  
2 income adults (Hawaii Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System).

3 Also concerning, 2009-2011 data shows less than half of pregnant women (41%) see a  
4 dentist although national health recommendations state dental visits are safe and important to  
5 prevent dental problems for mothers and their developing babies. Low-income pregnant women  
6 and those on Medicaid/QUEST health insurance have the lowest estimates for dental visits  
7 (Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System).

8 Nationally, several states have shown a lack of regular dental care drives up health care  
9 costs by examining emergency department data. Without access to preventive and treatment  
10 services, many residents seek care at hospital emergency departments for dental problems  
11 although dental services are not available there. In 2012, there were more than 3,000 emergency  
12 department (ED) visits by children and adults in Hawaii for preventable dental problems,  
13 representing more than \$8.5 million dollars in hospital charges. The average charge per ED visit  
14 was \$2,854.09. Since 2006, the number of preventable ED visits for dental problems increased  
15 by 67%, significantly higher than the national average.

16 Hawaii's oral health disease rates are exacerbated due to the state's limited access to  
17 community water fluoridation (CWF), the most effective and affordable preventive measure.  
18 Hawaii continues to have the lowest rate of CWF in the U.S.; 11% compared to 75% nationally.

19 The "Hawaii Oral Health: Key Findings" report identified eight strategies to improve oral  
20 health and includes expanding Medicaid dental services for adults beyond the limited benefits for  
21 emergency and palliative care. A copy of the report can be found at:  
22 [http://health.hawaii.gov/about/files/2013/06/Key\\_Findings\\_wC.pdf](http://health.hawaii.gov/about/files/2013/06/Key_Findings_wC.pdf)

23 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



STATE OF HAWAII  
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

February 10, 2016

TO: The Honorable Angus L.K. McKelvey, Chair  
House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce

FROM: Rachael Wong, DrPH, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 1772 HD1 - RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH**  
Hearing: Wednesday, February 10, 2016; 2:10 p.m.  
Conference Room 325, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the opportunity to testify on this bill and provides comments.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this bill is to appropriate funds to the DHS to restore basic adult dental benefits to Medicaid and QUEST Integration enrollees.

The DHS appreciates and supports the restoration of a basic oral health benefit for adult Medicaid and QUEST Integration enrollees. We agree that currently oral health in the state is a public health crisis, and that the restoration of a basic adult dental benefit would help address that crisis. The current limited benefit of extractions to address emergencies does not support the goals of whole person care. Lack of access to preventive oral health care has a negative impact on a person's health, especially for individuals with chronic diseases such as coronary disease and diabetes, and for pregnant women and their newborns as a mother's oral health directly impacts her baby.

The DHS estimates that in order to fully fund the re-establishment of basic adult dental benefits- up to \$500 per person per benefit year and also provide medically needed dentures up to \$500 each for upper and lower dentures- the DHS would need an appropriation of \$4,799,926 in general funds.

This amount, \$4,799,926, is presently included in the Governor's Executive Supplemental Budget and the DHS respectfully requests that the Legislature support the funding priority for adult dental services that is included in the Executive Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
STATE COUNCIL  
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES  
919 ALA MOANA BOULEVARD, ROOM 113  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96814  
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543  
February 10, 2016

The Honorable Angus L.K. McKelvey, Chair  
House Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce  
Twenty-Eighth Legislature  
State Capitol  
State of Hawaii  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Representative McKelvey and Members of the Committee:

**SUBJECT: HB 1772 HD1 – Relating to Oral Health**

The State Council on Developmental Disabilities (DD) **SUPPORTS HB 1772 HD1**. The bill appropriates funds to the Department of Human Services to restore basic adult dental benefits to Medicaid and QUEST integration enrollees.

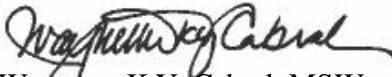
The Council is especially pleased with the proposed strategy on Page 3, lines 4-6, to expand Medicaid dental services for adults to include preventive and treatment services. This provision would directly benefit adults with DD in providing oral health services that includes preventive, restorative, and prosthetic services.

The Council cannot emphasize enough the importance of dental care services that include preventive, restorative, prosthetic, and emergency services for people with DD. We are all aware of how oral health, or the lack thereof, affects all aspects (emotional, psychological, and social) of our lives. Numerous individuals can share with you their experience of having a tooth or teeth extracted or acquiring serious health problems because necessary dental services were not available because of the termination of the Medicaid adult dental benefit coverage in 1996. Compounding the challenges is the limited number of dentists on the Neighbor Islands who are available and willing to serve Medicaid and QUEST integration enrollees

We applaud the Legislature's initiative in restoring basic adult dental benefits to Medicaid and QUEST integrated enrollees through HB 1772 HD1.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB 1772 HD1**.

Sincerely,

  
Waynette K.Y. Cabral, MSW  
Executive Administrator

  
Josephine C. Woll  
Chair

Hawaii State Legislature  
State House of Representatives  
Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce

Representative Angus L. K. McKelvey, Chair  
Representative Justin H. Woodson, Vice Chair  
Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce

Wednesday, February 10, 2016, 2:00 p.m. Room 325  
HB 1772 HD 1 Relating to Oral Health

Honorable Chair Angus L. K. McKelvey, Vice Chair Justin H. Woodson and  
members of the House Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce,

,

My name is Russel Yamashita and I am the legislative representative for the Hawaii Dental Association and its 960 member dentists. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of HB 1772 HD 1 Relating to Oral Health. The bill before you today would seek to restore dental services to adults on Medicaid. For decades, the HDA has supported the need for coverage for adults for dental services under Medicaid.

It has been nearly a decade since this service was available in the State and the HDA urges this committee to pass this important legislation to assist our most needy citizens.



**KOKUA KALIHI VALLEY COMPREHENSIVE FAMILY SERVICES**  
**2239 N. SCHOOL STREET ♦ HONOLULU, HAWAII 96819 ♦ TEL: 808-791-9400 ♦ FAX:**  
**808-848-0979 ♦ [www.kkv.net](http://www.kkv.net)**

House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce  
The Hon. Angus L.K. McKelvey, Chair  
The Hon. Justin H. Woodson, Vice-Chair

Testimony on House Bill 1772

Submitted by David Derauf MD MPH  
Kokua Kalihi Valley

February 10, 2016, 2:10 p.m., Room 225

Dear Members of the House Committee on Human Services,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of HB1772.

Frankly, it is inconceivable to me that just because through historical accident the mouth was separated from the body, we should tolerate a system in which someone can get emergency care for a paper cut but not be able seek care for serious conditions in one of the most important organs in the body, the mouth! The scientific evidence is clear that the mouth as an organ is critical to our health and well-being. We now know that it affects our hearts, our kidneys, and the ability of pregnant women to have healthy babies. We also know that untreated oral conditions can be the source of pain, disability and loss of employment. Moreover, they can and do lead to both acute and chronic health conditions requiring expensive treatments in the Emergency room and hospital.

One such patient of mine is a 50 year old woman with chronic mental illness. She had severe oral infections with chronic pain and an inability to chew and swallow properly. Her weight dropped month by month. She made frequent Emergency room visits. Eventually all of her teeth were removed and she required expensive nutritional supplements. This need not have been the case. Adult Dental Medicaid would have allowed her conditions to be treated expeditiously and compassionately!

It is long past the time for Hawaii to do the right thing and restore adult dental services to Medicaid recipients.

Thank you for your support for the many thousands of Medicaid recipients whose health will benefit from this bill.

David D Derauf MD MPH

Providing Medical & Dental Services, Health Education, Family Planning, Perinatal, WIC and Social  
Services to  
Kalihi Valley residents since 1972. Neighbors being neighborly to neighbors.



February 9, 2016

**TO:** COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE  
Rep. Angus L.K. McKelvey, Chair  
Rep. Justin H. Woodson, Vice Chair

**FROM:** Richard P. Bettini, President and CEO  
Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center / 697-3457 or [wcchc@wcchc.com](mailto:wcchc@wcchc.com)

**RE: Support for HB1772 HD1: Relating to Oral Health**

The Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center strongly supports HB 1772 HD1: Relating to Oral Health to appropriate funds to the Department of Human Services to restore basic adult dental benefits to Medicaid and QUEST integration enrollees.

This funding support is sorely overdue to address the 44% of the adult population on the Waianae Coast that has not had a dental visit for many years, which is the highest percentage in the state.

It is critical to restore adult dental benefits to address dental health needs and its relationship to other health conditions.

Please consider the importance of this funding to the health and well-being of our adult Medicaid and QUEST integration enrollees.





**HO'OLA LĀHUI HAWAI'I**  
*P.O. Box 3990; Līhu'e, Hawai'i*  
*Phone: 808.240.0100 Fax: 808.246.9551*

February 5, 2016

**COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE**

Rep. Angus L.K. McKelvey, Chair  
Rep. Justin H. Woodson, Vice Chair

**Testimony in Support of HB 1772, HD1**  
**Relating to Oral Health**  
**Wednesday, February 10, 2016, 2:10 P.M., Room 325**

Ho`ola Lahui Hawaii the only Federally Qualified Health Center and Native Hawaiian Health Care System on Kauai is strongly **SUPPORTING** this bill to restore adult dental benefits for those on Medicaid.

We are encouraged that there are dental funds in this bill to restore to the adult dental benefit. It is very important that oral health be at the forefront of health care as many dental problems lead to more serious health deficits and basic dental is not just for cosmetic effect.

It is vital to support the dental benefit restoration to Medicaid for those who are most in need. Prevention will save millions in restorative care services in the long term.

Respectfully Requested,

David Peters  
Chief Executive Officer



## THE QUEEN'S HEALTH SYSTEMS

To: The Honorable Representative Angus L.K. McKelvey, Chair,  
The Honorable Representative Justin H. Woodson, Vice Chair  
Members, House of Representatives Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce

From: Paula Yoshioka, Senior Vice President, The Queen's Health Systems

Date: February 5, 2016

Hrg: House of Representatives Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce;  
Wednesday, February 10, 2016 at 2:10 PM in Room 325

Re: **Support for HB 1772, HD 1, Relating to Oral Health**

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The Queen's Health Systems (Queen's) would like to express support for the intent of HB 1772, HD 1, relating to oral health.

The Queen's Medical Center, Dental Clinic is home to Hawaii's only accredited hospital-based General Practice Residency Program and provides comprehensive dental services to meet the needs of our community. Queen's is committed to providing quality care to Native Hawaiians and all the people of Hawaii regardless of ability to pay. For fiscal year 2015, 46% of the patients served at the Dental Clinic were Medicaid eligible. Queen's supports the legislative intent of restoring basic adult dental benefits to Medicaid enrollees.

We urge you to support HB 1772, HD 1. Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

*The mission of The Queen's Health Systems is to fulfill the intent of Queen Emma and King Kamehameha IV to provide in perpetuity quality health care services to improve the well-being of Native Hawaiians and all of the people of Hawai'i.*



**HPCA**

HAWAII PRIMARY CARE ASSOCIATION

**House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce**

The Hon. Angus L.K. McKelvey, Chair

The Hon. Justin H. Woodson, Vice-Chair

**Testimony on House Bill 1772, HD1**

**Relating to Oral Health**

**Submitted by Robert Hirokawa, CEO**

**February 10, 2016, 2:10 pm, Room 325**

The Hawaii Primary Care Association (HPCA), which represents the federally qualified community health centers in Hawaii, strongly supports House Bill 1772 HD1, which appropriates funds for the restoration of basic adult dental benefits to Medicaid patients.

In 2015, the Department of Health released a report entitled Hawaii Oral Health: Key Findings. In it, it was revealed that Hawaii has an enormous shortfall in the area of dental benefits, citing that:

- From 2009-2011, only 41% of pregnant women, 29% of pregnant low-income women, and 27% of women in Medicaid or QUEST visited a dentist during their pregnancy.
- In 2012, 52% of low-income adults saw a dentist as compared to 82% of higher income adults.
- In that same year, 51% of low-income adults lost teeth due to dental disease, while only 32% of high-income adults did.
- From 2006 to 2012, there was a 67% increase in emergency room visits for dental problems, accounting for a \$4.5M increase, bringing total expenditures for such visits alone to \$8.5M.

Further, the Department outlined a number of measures that could greatly improve the oral health of Hawaii's residents. Foremost among them was the continued support and expansion of preventive dental care to low-income populations, best achieved through the restoration of adult dental services in Medicaid.

This issue is of special importance to the HPCA, as all fourteen community health centers provide dental services. In the time frame from 2007 – 2014, the number of patients receiving dental care increased over 100%, rising from nearly 20,000 patients to over 42,000. As 57% of patients at community health centers are enrolled in either Medicaid or CHIP programs, this bill will provide much needed funding for services to the most needy in the state.

Additionally, the HPCA is a staunch believer in the social determinants of health, those economic and social conditions that influence an individual and a community's health status. This bill will provide additional benefits to both individuals and the community as a whole by making it easier for individuals to obtain employment, reduce absenteeism to school or work, and improve social standing.

For these reasons we strongly support House Bill 1772 HD1 and thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Representative Angus L.K. McKelvey, Chair  
COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE

HB 1772 HD1  
Relating to Oral Health

Date: Wednesday, February 10, 2016  
Time: 2:10pm  
Place: Conference Room 325  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street

As a graduate student of the Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and resident of the State of Hawaii, I strongly support the House Bill 1772 HD1, which appropriates funds for the restoration of basic adult dental benefits to Medicaid patients.

Per the 2015 Department of Health Hawaii Oral Health: Key Findings report, more Hawaii residents are seeking emergency dental care services from emergency rooms. In 2012, more than 3,000 Emergency Room visits occurred for preventative dental problems costing more than \$8.5 million. Medicaid patients made up over half of these visits. Furthermore, 51% of low-income individuals ended up losing teeth due to a dental disease.

Oral health is an imperative, but often overlooked aspect of an individual's overall physical health. In my experience as a Social Work Student, low-income individuals needing dental care do not have access to adequate dental coverage or services perpetuating health disparities amongst this population.

This is why I strongly support House Bill 1772 HD1. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Melissa Willke

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
Sent: Tuesday, February 09, 2016 8:18 AM  
To: CPCtestimony  
Cc: cleee@waimanalohealth.org  
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB1772 on Feb 10, 2016 14:10PM

**HB1772**

Submitted on: 2/9/2016

Testimony for CPC on Feb 10, 2016 14:10PM in Conference Room 325

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Christina Lee	Individual	Support	No

Comments: I strongly support this bill. As Chief Medical Office at an FQHC with dental services, I have noticed a rise in ER visits due to preventable dental issues. If we are trying to decrease health care costs, supporting oral health is a good way to do this. The mouth is not a separate organ in the body. It is ludicrous to neglect an entire part of the body, thinking that it will not affect overall health of the individual. I have personally seen the ravages of poor dental care on overall health. I implore you to restore Adult Dental Benefits in our Medicaid population. Mahalo for your time and consideration. Sincerely, Christina K. Lee, MD

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**LATE**

TO: Representative Angus McKelvey, Chair  
Representative Justin Woodson, Vice-Chair  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

FR: Mary Oneha, APRN, PhD  
Chief Executive Officer, Waimānalo Health Center

Date: Wednesday, February 10, 2016  
2:10pm, Conference Room 325

RE: Support for HB 1772 HD1 Relating to Oral Health

The Waimānalo Health Center strongly supports HB 1772 HD1, to appropriate funds to restore basic adult dental benefits to Medicaid and QUEST integration enrollees. From 7/1/2014 through 6/30/2015, there were 1,470 uninsured visits to Waimanalo Health Center Dental Clinic and the number of dental emergencies continues to increase each year.

The severity of cases vary within our population and the age groups typically show different disease manifestation (caries vs. periodontal) all with potentially devastating outcomes. Younger adults typically present with early signs of periodontal disease and more obvious, active signs of untreated tooth decay. Early preventable tooth loss is common in our young adult population. As the population goes into their forties and later, periodontal disease becomes more prevalent and devastating.

Should the adult population have the luck to survive the onslaught of decay and periodontal disease into their golden years; we see an uptick in caries again as medications and age take a toll on saliva flow. Now, exposed root surfaces and teeth that have been previously filled or crowned are subject to decay that destroys what's left of their dentition. Periodontal disease always remains a threat without proper dental care.

**There are many instances of adults negatively affected by lack of regular dental care, instances resulting in bone loss, teeth loss, periodontal disease, and poor nutrition.** The availability of resources (basic adult dental benefits) to assist these patients would have more positively impacted their outcomes. **The investment for basic adult services can have a dramatic effect on patient health and future costs. For too long, we have not set an acceptable baseline for adult dental health. The time is now to restore adult dental benefits at a level for positive health outcomes.** The Waimānalo Health Center urges your support of HB 1772 HD1. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



**LATE**

February 9, 2016

TESTIMONY: Written only

To: Representative Angus L. K. McKelvey, Chair  
Representative Justin H. Woodson, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Consumer  
Protection and Commerce

From: **Hawaii Public Health Association**

Subject: **SUPPORT – HB 1772 RELATING TO Oral Health**

Hearing: February 10, 2016 at 2:10pm in State Capitol, Room 325

The Hawaii Public Health Association (HPHA) is an association of over 600 community members, public health professionals, and organizations statewide dedicated to improving public health. HPHA also serves as a voice for public health professionals and as a repository for information about public health in the Pacific.

HPHA **supports the passage of HB 1772** which appropriates funds to the Department of Human Services to restore basic adult dental benefits to Medicaid and QUEST integration enrollees.

Hawaii has one of the worst rates of oral health for children and adults alike in the U.S. The August 2015 DOH report, *“Hawaii Oral Health: Key Findings”*, reported that there are significant oral health disparities in Hawaii’s low-income residents, versus higher income residents, who are less likely to seek dental care, report more loss of teeth, over-use emergency room visits for oral health emergencies, and have lower overall dental health status. Good oral health is essential for optimal overall health, and poor dental health has been linked to higher rates of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and sepsis as well as premature infants of pregnant women.

There are also significant oral health disparities in Hawaii related to education, health insurance, and geographic location status. Children whose parents are on Medicaid are covered for preventive and treatment services, but their parents may not seek or access dental services, if the adult family members are not covered. Adults on Medicaid who are shown to be at greater risk and are more in need of oral health services are currently receiving emergency-only dental services, which are more invasive, painful and risky, more costly, and are a lower standard of care for oral health than our general population is receiving.

The DOH report specifically recommends as a key strategy based on these findings that, Medicaid services be expanded for ALL adults in Hawaii beyond the current coverage for emergencies only, to include preventative and treatment services. We ask that you provide the

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[www.hawaiipublichealth.org](http://www.hawaiipublichealth.org) [hawaiipublichealth@gmail.com](mailto:hawaiipublichealth@gmail.com)



policy support and resources to ensure appropriate standards of dental care for our adult Medicaid population.

Respectfully submitted,

Hoce Kalkas, MPH  
HPHA Legislative and Government Relations Committee Chair



**LATE**



February 10, 2016

Rep. Angus McKelvey, Chair  
Rep. Justin Woodson, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce

Re: HB No. 1772, HD1 Oral Health; Dental Benefits; Medicaid and QUEST Integration Enrollees;  
Appropriation

DentaQuest appreciates the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill No. 1772, HD1 (HB 1772, HD1), to appropriate funding for basic adult dental coverage in the state's Medicaid and QUEST programs. DentaQuest strongly supports this legislation and its goal to promote oral health for all in Hawaii. This bill will help to dramatically improve access to care and reduce health disparities.

DentaQuest had the honor of serving the children of Hawaii as a subcontractor for the Medicaid QUEST dental program between 2012 and 2015. We continue to build partnerships with the Hawaii health and advocacy community by working with Hawaii nonprofits like Helping Hands Hawaii and Aloha Medical Mission. Like DentaQuest, these organizations work to improve health outcomes and to build stronger communities.

DentaQuest is the second largest dental benefits company and the largest Medicaid and CHIP dental benefits administrator in the country. Nationwide, we work with seven state agencies, partner with 100 health plans, and offer plans on ten health insurance exchanges to provide dental benefits to more than 24 million beneficiaries. Along with the DentaQuest Foundation, DentaQuest Institute, and DentaQuest Care Group, our organization is committed to improving the oral health of all.

As HB 1772, HD1 notes, Hawaii struggles to ensure optimal oral health for low-income Hawaii residents. Based on 2014 HEDIS measures, which are one of the most widely used set of health care performance measurement in the U.S. – Hawaii ranked 33<sup>rd</sup> for the percentage of Medicaid-eligible children receiving preventive dental care. The state's Department of Health noted that in 2012, only 52 percent of low-income individuals saw a dentist compared to 82 percent for higher-income individuals. These inequities are not unique to Hawaii. Poor access to dental care is a systemic issue facing our nation.

Dental caries—a preventable condition—is the most common chronic disease among children. Adults do not fare much better: according to a National Institute of Health (NIH) study, 92 percent of adults 20-64 years of age have had dental caries at one point and 5 percent of adults have no teeth left at all. If left unchecked, preventable dental disease can lead to increased health care spending – through complex procedures, expensive pain medications or emergency department treatments. Funding Medicaid adult dental benefits is critical to improve the health of Hawaii's most vulnerable.

DentaQuest submits testimony today in support of HB 1772, HD1 for a number of reasons:

(1) *Medicaid adult dental coverage can lead to increased access to care for adults and their children.* According to a Delta Dental Oral Health Report in 2010, individuals with dental coverage are 42 percent more likely to have a dental checkup within a year than individuals without coverage. Similarly, research from Oral Health Colorado shows that when adults have coverage, their children are more likely to receive care too. Medicaid adult dental benefits are a critical piece to ensuring that individuals and their children receive appropriate dental care.

(2) *Reducing or eliminating Medicaid adult dental benefits has led to significant increases in dental emergency department visits and associated costs in some states.*

Several states have shown increases in emergency department costs when Medicaid adult dental benefits are cut. California eliminated Medicaid dental benefits for adults in 2009. Over the course of the next few years, emergency room visits for oral health problems increased by 1,800 per year, leading to \$1.3 million in increased emergency room expenditures. Oregon's emergency room costs for oral health services doubled when the state cut Medicaid dental benefits, while Maryland saw a 12 percent spike in costs.

When people seek care for oral health issues in the emergency department, providers typically treat patients' pain—offering temporary relief when preventive and restorative care is needed to stop decay and eliminate disease. Medicaid adult dental benefits will not simply increase access to care, but can decrease costs and improve the quality of care as well.

(3) *Ensuring low-income adults have access to comprehensive dental coverage can improve employability, decrease work days lost due to dental-related illnesses, and help to reduce health disparities.*

The lack of dental care for Medicaid populations can create further economic barriers. Oral health is linked to employability and lost work days from untreated conditions, both of which are incredible obstacles for low-income families. Among adults, 164 million work hours are lost each year due to dental-related illnesses.

Oral health conditions already affect lower socioeconomic populations and racial minorities at disproportionate levels. The Hawaii State Department of Health's 2015 report, *Hawaii Oral Health Key Findings*, showed that if a child's family is beneath the federal poverty level (FPL), they are twice as likely to have had a dental problem in the past six months compared to children in families four times above the FPL. Low-income adults in Hawaii (<\$15,000) are also more likely to have permanent tooth loss compared to high-income adults (>\$75,000)—51 percent vs. 32 percent.

(4) *Oral health care can enable better holistic treatment of patients with chronic conditions.*

According to a 2014 study by the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, treatment of gum disease can lead to better health management—as evidenced by lower healthcare costs and fewer hospitalizations—among people with common health conditions, such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Oral health treatments have the potential to improve the overall health of these populations and reduce costs related to their chronic conditions. As we move towards a more integrated health care system, oral health cannot be left behind.

With these important issues in mind, we strongly urge the Hawaii legislature to support funding for Medicaid and QUEST adult dental benefits. If there are any questions, we are always available as a resource.

Sincerely,

Lawless Barrientos  
Director, Government Relations

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
Sent: Tuesday, February 09, 2016 4:23 PM  
To: CPCtestimony  
Cc: yookom@gmail.com  
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB1772 on Feb 10, 2016 14:10PM



**HB1772**

Submitted on: 2/9/2016

Testimony for CPC on Feb 10, 2016 14:10PM in Conference Room 325

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Deborah dela Cruz	Individual	Support	No

Comments: I support HB 1772 to restore basic adult dental benefits for those on Medicaid. Dental care is an integral part of good health though it is often viewed as not being an absolute necessity. The effects of dental disease affect a person's performance as much as a problem in other parts of the body. Preventive dentistry and catching problems early will reduce medical emergencies and expensive dental procedures. Adults will be able to continue the preventive care they receive as children. Hawaii has dismal dental statistics nationally, and Lanai, where I'm from, has dismal stats in our state. Being at the bottom of the bottom, I see the need for this funding. Many people here will have their teeth pulled, rather than fixed, to save money. They don't recognize the problems this creates down the road. Passing this Bill will give them the choice of having restoration. Thank you for your consideration.

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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