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WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

**Testimony COMMENTING on SB27
MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO RESTORE BASIC ADULTS DENTAL BENEFITS
TO MEDICAID ENROLLEES**

SENATOR JOSH GREEN, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

SENATOR ROSALYN H. BAKER, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, CONSUMER PROTECTION, AND HEALTH

Hearing Date: January 23, 2017

Room Number: 016

1 **Fiscal Implications:** SB27 proposes adding a general fund appropriation for fiscal years 2018
2 and 2019 to the Department of Human Services budget to restore basic adult dental benefits to
3 Medicaid enrollees.

4 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health is providing comment on SB 27 Making
5 An Appropriation To Restore Basic Adults Dental Benefits To Medicaid Enrollees. The
6 Department of Health respectfully defers to the Department of Human Services regarding SB27.

7 The Department of Health 2015 “Hawaii Oral Health: Key Findings” report presents data
8 indicating the need for basic preventive and treatment dental services for all Hawaii residents
9 including adults. As described in the bill introduction, the 2012 data shows low-income adults
10 less likely to visit a dentist each year and are more likely to suffer from tooth loss than high
11 income adults (Hawaii Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System).

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

17 Nationally, several states have shown a lack of regular dental care drives up health care
18 costs by examining emergency department data. Without access to preventive and treatment

1 services, many residents seek care at hospital emergency departments for dental problems
2 although dental services are not available there. In 2012, there were more than 3,000 emergency
3 department (ED) visits by children and adults in Hawaii for preventable dental problems,
4 representing more than \$8.5 million dollars in hospital charges by both state, federal and private
5 providers. The average charge per ED visit was \$2,854.09. Since 2006, the number of
6 preventable ED visits for dental problems increased by 67%, significantly higher than the
7 national average.

8 The “Hawaii Oral Health: Key Findings” report identified eight strategies to improve oral
9 health and includes expanding Medicaid dental services for adults beyond the limited benefits for
10 emergency and palliative care. A copy of the report can be found at:
11 http://health.hawaii.gov/about/files/2013/06/Key_Findings_wC.pdf

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

Sasha Inouye
MSW student
Honolulu, HI

January 23, 2017

To: The Honorable Josh Green, Chair: Senate Committee on Human Services
The Honorable Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair: Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer
Protection, and Health

From: Sasha Inouye, MSW student, University of Hawaii at Manoa

Subject: SB 27 – MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO RESTORE BASIC ADULT
DENTAL BENEFITS TO MEDICAID ENROLLEES.

Hearing: Monday, January 23, 2017; 2:50 PM
Conference Room 016, State Capitol

POSITION: As a Master of Social Work (MSW) student having completed my first social work internship at a community mental health center in Honolulu, I am in support of the intent of this measure. The proposed bill intends to improve the oral health in Hawaii, especially in underserved communities. Strategic planning includes the support and expansion of affordable preventative dental care services to low-income populations, and possibly increasing reimbursements for service providers for key procedures.

PURPOSE: Most clientele served at the community mental health clinic do qualify to receive supplemental security insurance (SSI); as well as Medicaid health benefits. Clients spend SSI benefits on basic necessities such as clothing, shoes, and rent. SSI benefits may also go toward a client's health needs such as paying for eyeglasses or other costs not covered or not covered in full by Medicaid benefits. Additionally, clients may be unable to work due to varied reasons. It is therefore common that the amount of SSI benefits clients receive put clients on a tight budget for basic necessities, this to include dental services.

Many of the clients I have worked with would benefit from increased access to dental

benefits. Dental health is an integral part of a person's whole health, interrelated to other body systems and functioning. Clients are in need of all types of dental services, some do not remember the last time they've visited a dentist; and clients express interest in seeing a dentist for services within their budget. Without adequate dental benefits, clients naturally pay in full for costly dental check-ups, cleanings, or procedures they desire and are in need of. Some agencies and private dentists in the community do provide services at reduced prices, sometimes on a sliding scale for clients who are in financial need. These more affordable services are appreciated; however, wait times and locations may cause difficulties in access.

With improved dental benefits for clientele who are enrollees in the Medicaid program, I believe that clients will benefit from the increased access to services. Clients may feel increased confidence in their journey toward their personal goals and dreams, as we continue to support them in meeting their basic needs through improved oral health care. Dental service providers being offered reimbursement via Medicaid as well as incentives for accepting a client with Medicaid insurance would ease access by compensating providers for their services and for adjustment to their practice to accept clientele; thus increasing the number of affordable provider options in a client's community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

TO: The Hon. Josh Green, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services

Hon. Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair
Senate Committee on commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health

FROM: Sheila Beckham, CEO
Waikiki Health

DATE: January 23, 2017, Room 016

RE: SB27 Relating to Oral Health

Waikiki Health strongly supports SB 27 which restores basic dental benefits to Medicaid patients.

The compelling correlation between oral health and chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, stroke, HIV, cancer, and gastrointestinal conditions is well known. Without the ability to receive dental health services, many of our patients have acquired oral infections, further exacerbating their chronic health problems.

The impact on nutritional status is profound: when there is a plethora of decayed, missing, and filled teeth, the ability to chew healthy foods is absent. Health status decreases dramatically. In addition Waikiki Health provides services to over 2000 homeless individuals. Poor oral health makes their chances of obtaining a job and finding housing extremely hard.

From 2006-2012, there was a 67% increase in emergency room visits for dental problems, or double the cost of funding preventive and restorative services.

It is imperative that we recognize that the body's systems are inter-related. In order to achieve quality of life and robust health, oral health should be restored and expanded.

We urge you to support SB27. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.