



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

February 18, 2020

TO: The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Pankaj Bhanot, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 2459 SD1 – RELATING TO MEDICAID BENEFITS**

Hearing: February 19, 2020 10:00 a.m.  
Conference Room 211, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of this measure, offers comments, and requests clarification. We respectfully request that the passage does not replace or adversely impact the Governor's budget priorities.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the bill is to appropriate funds to DHS to restore diagnostic, preventive, and restorative adult dental benefits to adult Medicaid beneficiaries.

DHS appreciates and supports the restoration of a basic oral health benefit for adult Medicaid and QUEST Integration beneficiaries. The current limited benefit of emergency-only coverage does not support the goals of whole person care. Additionally, the inability of beneficiaries to access preventive oral health care can have a negative impact on a person's health, especially for individuals with chronic diseases, pregnant women, and the health of their newborns.

The bill appropriates \$7,000,000 general funds to restore diagnostic, preventive, and restorative dental benefits for adult beneficiaries. Over the last year, DHS Med-QUEST Division (MQD) has worked with the Health Policy Institute of the American Dental Association (HPI ADA) to update our cost estimates for the restoration of the adult dental

benefit. Additionally, MQD did a national scan on various alternative options to the full restoration of the benefit that could be considered and have lower costs. MQD identified three tiers of coverage options, ranging from a basic dental coverage to a comprehensive option. Although still under review, DHS provides the estimates for consideration.

- **Option 1. Limited dental benefit** focused only on prevention and oral disease control (dental procedures such as diagnostics (x-rays), cleanings, and fillings). Estimated total cost: \$8.5M (\$2.7M state funds; \$5.8M federal funds).
- **Option 2. Basic Dental benefit** focused on oral disease control and some restoration of chewing functions (diagnostics, cleanings, fillings, some root canals, some crowns, and some dentures). Estimated total cost: \$21M (\$6.6M state funds; \$14.6 federal fund).
- **Option 3. Comprehensive coverage** that includes most dental procedures with some limits. Estimated total cost: \$38M (\$12M state funds; \$26M federal funds).

The \$7M appropriation would be sufficient to cover Option 2. However, if a lower cost option would be more feasible, Option 1 is considerably less at \$2.7 million.

The national environmental scan also confirmed that some states offer different tiers of benefits to different sub-populations. The cost estimates provided by HPI ADA are further broken down by specific sub-populations of Age, Blind and Disabled eligibility groups and Pregnant Women. If further breakdown of the options by targeted population would be of interest, the estimates can be provided.

Additionally, HPI ADA provided estimated future medical cost savings that may occur under each option. Those were not included in the estimates above, as the savings would only accrue two to three years after the implementation of the adult dental benefit.

DHS requests clarification on the amendment inserted in SB 2459 SD1 that requires DHS to pursue all funding sources known to the State, including private grants, to restore diagnostic, preventive, and restorative dental benefits prior to expending any general revenues appropriated by the bill. DHS notes the federal government has specific rules and restrictions around non-state general fund sources that can be used as state funds. DHS would appreciate clarification on the intent of the amendment so that we will be able to

research its impact on the State's ability to collect federal matching dollars for dental coverage.

We respectfully request that any appropriation not supplant funding priorities identified in the Executive Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.



February 14, 2020

**Testimony in Support of SB 2459 SD1  
MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO RESTORE CERTAIN  
ADULT DENTAL BENEFITS TO MEDICAID ENROLLEES**

The Hawaii State Rural Health Association (HSRHA) respectfully submits written testimony in strong support of SB2459 SD1.

As a non-profit rural health association, our mission is to advocate for access to comprehensive healthcare that includes dental health, primary care and behavioral health, as an integral part of a person's overall health and wellness. Quite often, our neighbor island rural communities struggle to obtain equitable access to timely dental care.

Adults with dental disease often face challenges that impair their productivity and well-being. They suffer in pain and may have to take time off from work because they have a toothache or other serious oral health issues. Left untreated, tooth decay and gum disease are linked to serious health problems, including premature births in pregnant women and chronic conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and stroke.

The Hawaii State Rural Health Association's Board of Directors strongly supports this bill to restore adult dental benefits to Medicaid enrollees as a crucial first step to improve oral health amongst our most vulnerable populations. Improving access to dental care, in addition to investing in oral health prevention pays off in the long term. All residents in Hawaii should be able to receive culturally appropriate and timely healthcare where they reside.

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**Hawaii State Rural Health Association  
4442 Hardy Street, Suite 205  
Lihue, HI 96766**

email: [hsrhacoordinator@gmail.com](mailto:hsrhacoordinator@gmail.com)

website: [hawaiistateruralhealth.org](http://hawaiistateruralhealth.org)

Established in 1994, the Hawaii State Rural Health Association (HSRHA) is a 501(C) 3 non-profit organization dedicated to addressing rural health needs across our island state.

*~ Working Together To Promote Healthy Rural Communities ~*

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**STATE OF HAWAII**  
STATE COUNCIL  
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES  
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543

February 19, 2020

The Honorable Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
Thirtieth Legislature  
State Capitol  
State of Hawai'i  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Senator Dela Cruz and Members of the Committees:

SUBJECT: SB 2459 SD1 – Relating to Medicaid Benefits

The State Council on Developmental Disabilities (DD) **STRONGLY SUPPORTS SB 2459 SD1**. The bill makes an appropriation to restore certain adult dental benefits to Medicaid enrollees.

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 are aware of the three options Department of Human Services have outlined, we respectfully request that the Legislature considers, at the very least, option 2.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong support of SB 2459 SD1**

Sincerely,

Daintry Bartoldus  
Executive Administrator



1132 Bishop Street, #1920 | Honolulu, HI 96813  
1-866-295-7282 | Fax: 808-537-2288 | TTY: 1-877-434-7598  
aarp.org/hi | hiaarp@aarp.org | twitter: @AARPHawaii  
facebook.com/AARPHawaii

THE SENATE  
Committee on Ways and Means  
Wednesday, February 19, 2020  
10:00 a.m.  
Conference Room 211

To: Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair

Re: S.B. 2459 SD1 Relating to Medicaid Benefits

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Keali'i Lopez and I am the State Director for AARP Hawai'i. AARP is a membership organization of people age fifty and over, with nearly 145,000 members in Hawai'i. AARP advocates for issues that matter to Hawai'i families, including the high cost of long-term care; access to affordable, quality health care for all generations; and serving as a reliable information source on issues critical to people over the age of fifty.

S.B. 2459 SD1 appropriates funds to restore diagnostic, preventive, and restorative dental benefits to adult Medicaid enrollees, provided that the Department of Human Services shall obtain the maximum federal matching funds available for this expenditure.

AARP strongly supports S.B. 2459 SD1.

According to an issue paper on improving dental coverage for older adults, (Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, September 2019), nearly two-thirds of the Medicare population (37 million beneficiaries 65 years and older) have no dental coverage at all. This includes older adults of all incomes. Cost concerns and lack of dental coverage contribute to many older adults foregoing routine and other dental procedures. Inadequate dental care can exacerbate chronic medical conditions such as diabetes and heart conditions, and lead to preventable complications that sometimes result in costly emergency room visits. A recent study identified \$2.7 billion in dental-related hospital emergency department visits in the U.S. over a three-year period. (Center for Health Care Strategies, Inc.: Fact Sheet, September 2019) The study further states that low-income adults suffer a disproportionate share of dental disease. Adults who are disabled, homebound, or institutionalized have an even greater risk of dental diseases. Many of them would be Medicaid recipients.

Broadening the dental benefit to the adult Medicaid enrollee will greatly improve their overall health and reduce the risk for costly medical care and emergency room visits.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 2459 SD1.

AARP  
Real Possibilities



# ALOHACARE

February 19, 2020  
10:00 am  
Conference Room 211

To: The Honorable Sen. Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
The Honorable Sen. Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair  
Committee on Ways and Means

From: Paula Arcena, Executive Vice President, External Affair

Re: SB2459, SD1 Relating to Medicaid Benefits

AlohaCare is pleased to submit this testimony in **strong support** of SB2459, SD1 making an appropriate to restore certain adult dental benefits to Medicaid enrollees; requires maximization of federal matching funds and pursuit of all known funding sources prior to expending general revenue funds appropriated.

Without dental coverage, 180,000 adults in the Hawaii Medicaid program are not getting the benefit of early detection and treatment for better overall health. Instead, adults with Medicaid are covered for emergency dental coverage only. In 2012 alone, Hawaii Medicaid paid \$4.8 million for 1,691 adults for emergency room visits for preventable oral health problems, according to the Department of Health, Hawaii Oral Health: Key Findings report.

Children in Hawaii's Medicaid program currently have comprehensive dental coverage. Senior citizens who are Medicaid eligible have multiple options for dental coverage from Medicare Advantage plans. It's been over 10 years since adults in Hawaii's Medicaid program have had dental coverage.

Clinical studies show that without proper dental care pregnant mothers are at higher risk for having premature births and underweight babies. Bacteria in the mouth can get into the bloodstream and cause a heart infection called endocarditis. Some mental health medications cause dry mouth, putting people at risk for tooth and gum disease. Diabetes can make people more susceptible to serious gum disease, such as gingivitis or worse, periodontitis.

To encourage AlohaCare members to seek dental care, AlohaCare is voluntarily providing its members with basic dental coverage. Starting January 1, 2019, AlohaCare has covered basic dental services to adult members who rely on Medicaid as their primary health insurance. By absorbing the cost of an annual dental exam, biannual cleanings and fluoride treatment, two bitewing x-rays and one filling or non-emergency

1357 Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 1250, Honolulu, Hawaii 96814  
Call: 973-0712 • Toll-free: 1-877-973-0712 • Fax: 808-973-0726 • [www.AlohaCare.org](http://www.AlohaCare.org)



# ALOHACARE

extraction, we hope to help adults with Medicaid get into a dentist chair before they have a dental crisis.

AlohaCare is a non-profit health plan founded in 1994 by Hawai'i Community Health Centers (CHCs) to provide high-quality health care services to Hawai'i's medically underserved populations and to ensure that communities have a voice in how their needs are served. We are the only community governed health plan in the state of Hawaii. Currently, AlohaCare is the second largest QUEST Integration plan statewide. We partner with nearly 3,500 physicians, specialists and providers in the care of our members. We have over 260 employees who work on Oahu, the Big Island, Maui and Kauai.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.





## CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAI'I

### TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2459 SD1: Relating to Medicaid Benefits

TO: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair, Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair, and Members, Committee on Ways & Means

FROM: Rob Van Tassell, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawai'i

Hearing: **Wednesday, 2/19/20; 10:00 AM; CR 211**

Chair Dela Cruz, Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members, Committee on Ways & Means:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in support of SB 2459 SD1**, which makes an appropriation to the Department of Human Services to restore adult dental benefits to Medicaid enrollees. I am Rob Van Tassell, with Catholic Charities Hawai'i.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawai'i for over 70 years. CCH has programs serving elders, children, families, homeless and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy for the most vulnerable in Hawai'i. Access to dental care is an important social justice issue for CCH.

We support this bill since poor oral health can have a serious impact on peoples' overall health and their ability to live productive lives. We have found a number of kupuna who do not have access to primary dental care. Even with the knowledge that special programs like Kupuna Smiles provides, these seniors cannot afford to see a dentist. It is also of great concern for the homeless who already are at high risk of ill health due to their unstable living situations. Lack of dental care affects a wide range of Hawaii residents since access to regular oral health care varies greatly across the State. **Our rural and neighbor island residents and persons/families with lower incomes have disproportionate access issues.**

In 2009, Hawaii's adult dental benefits were removed. Data shows that this is having a significant impact on our residents. There were over 3,000 ER visits for acute oral health conditions in 2016, costing the state over \$17 million in direct costs. Compare this with 1,800 visits to the ER in 2006, with \$4 million in costs. Medicaid beneficiaries constitute over half (53%) of the dental emergencies seen, statewide, in emergency rooms.

Restoring adult dental benefits could cut costs by diverting an estimated 79% of ER dental visits to community settings, with a much lower cost. An emergency seen by a community dentist costs an estimated 48% of the cost of an ER treatment.

Good oral health is important since it can improve the beneficiaries' ability to obtain and maintain employment and engage with others.

We urge your support of this bill to enhance the dental and overall health of Hawaii's residents.

Please our Legislative Liaison, Betty Lou Larson, at [bettylou.larson@catholiccharitieshawaii.org](mailto:bettylou.larson@catholiccharitieshawaii.org) or (808) 373-0356, if you have any questions.



**SB-2459-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/17/2020 4:57:28 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2020 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Cheryl Vasconcellos	Testifying for Hana Health	Support	No

Comments:

Restoring basic, dental care for adults covered by Medicaid is critical to the overall health and wellness of this population. According to the Academy of General Dentistry, there is a relationship between gum (periodontal) disease and health complications such as stroke and heart disease. Women with gum disease also show higher incidences of pre-term, low birth-weight babies. Other research shows that more than 90% of all systemic diseases (diseases involving many organs or the whole body) have oral manifestations, including swollen gums, mouth ulcers, dry mouth and excessive gum problems. Routine dental care is as important to the overall health of the individual as is routine medical care.

Hana Health has been overwhelmed by the poor oral health conditions found among the adult population in Hana, particularly among Native Hawaiians who make up almost 50% of our patient base. The financial burden of caring for these patients has fallen squarely on community health centers and hospital emergency rooms.

Please support the reinstatement of adult dental services for our most vulnerable populations because it is the right thing to do and Hawaii has always been on the forefront of assuring health care access for all. Thank you.

**Written Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means**

**Hearing: February 19, 2020, 10:00 AM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 211**

By Hawaii – American Nurses Association (Hawaii-ANA)



**SB 2459, SD1 - RELATING TO MEDICAID BENEFITS**

Chair Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, and members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony **in strong support of restoring certain adult dental benefits to Medicaid enrollees.** This measure would require maximization of federal matching funds and pursuit of all known funding sources prior to expending general revenue funds appropriated.

Currently, approximately one hundred eighty thousand adult medicaid beneficiaries are not getting the benefit of early oral disease detection and treatment for better overall health. Lack of access to dental coverage and oral healthcare is a health and social justice issue that disproportionately affects the poor, children, the elderly, and racial and ethnic minority groups.

We are members of the American Nurses Association of Registered Nurses in Hawaii. As a profession, we advocate for the health of vulnerable populations in our community and for the nursing profession.

We respectfully request that SB2459, SD1 pass out of this committee. Thank you for your continued support for measures that address the healthcare needs of our most vulnerable populations in Hawaii.

Contact information for Hawaii – American Nurses Association:

President: Katie Kemp, BAN, RN-BC  
Executive Director Dr. Linda Beechinor, APRN-Rx, FNP-BC  
phone (808) 779-3001  
500 Lunalilo Home Road, #27-E  
Honolulu Hawaii USA 96825

[president@hawaii-ana.org](mailto:president@hawaii-ana.org)  
[executivedirector@hawaii-ana.org](mailto:executivedirector@hawaii-ana.org)



Hawaii  
**Children's Action Network Speaks!**  
Building a unified voice for Hawaii's children

*Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.*

To: Senator Dela Cruz, Chair  
Senator Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Ways & Means

**LATE**

Re: SB 2459 SD1- adult dental benefits  
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 211  
10AM, 2/19/2020

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and committee members,

**On behalf of Hawaii Children's Action Network Speaks!, we are writing to support in STRONG support SB 2459 SD1, relating to adult dental benefits.**

Hawaii's children have some of the worst oral health outcomes in the country. Our third graders have the highest prevalence of tooth decay and 7 out of 10 third graders are impacted by tooth decay. We believe oral health is a family issue and that if parents have access to dental prevention services, their whole family will benefit. We know that dental health has a direct impact into overall health and therefore, should be a priority. Our most vulnerable families had this benefit previously and we believe it should be restored.

**For these reasons, HCAN Speaks! respectfully requests the Committee to support this measure.**

Thank you,

Kathleen Algire  
Director, Public Policy and Research

**Date:** February 18, 2020

**To:** The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz  
Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means

The Honorable Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran  
Vice Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means

**From:** Mark H. Yamakawa, President & CEO

**Re:** Strong Support for SB2459  
Making an Appropriation to Restore Certain Adult Dental Benefits to Medicaid  
Enrollees

As Hawaii's largest dental benefits provider, Hawaii Dental Service (HDS) strongly supports SB2459, which would appropriate funds to the Hawaii Department of Human Services to restore basic diagnostic, preventive, and restorative dental benefits for adult Medicaid enrollees.

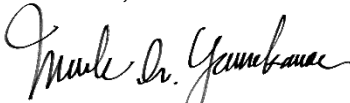
Oral health is an important component of an individual's overall physical, psychological, social, and economic health and wellbeing. Providing needed dental benefits for Hawaii's adult Medicaid population will not only provide access to quality preventive and restorative dental care, but also help to improve overall health. This ultimately will improve individual lives and lower healthcare costs for the state.

Good oral health is a foundation of good overall health. Due to drastic cuts to adult dental benefits since 2009, Hawaii has seen emergency room visits overutilized for unmet oral health needs, costing millions of dollars in unnecessary expenses. There were reported just over 3,000 emergency room visits for acute oral health conditions in 2016, totaling over \$17 million in direct costs, compared to 1,800 visits in 2006, with \$4 million in costs. For all dental emergency services that were provided in 2015-16 in Hawaii, 56% were disproportionately Med-QUEST recipients, who represent about 25% of the overall Hawaii population.

Having strong teeth and healthy gums allows us to eat for proper nutrition and enjoy speech and communication that are essential for work and socialization. A lack of access to oral health care results in productivity loss from absenteeism as well as underemployment or unemployment, causing adverse economic impacts for individuals and our community.

We respectfully urge the Committee to thoughtfully consider restoration of full adult dental benefits for adult Medicaid enrollees to improve quality of life in our state. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on this bill.

Mahalo,



Mark H. Yamakawa  
President and CEO

**SB-2459-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/14/2020 7:23:13 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2020 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Louis Erteschik	Testifying for Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Support	No

Comments:

# Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition

EQUITY - COMMUNITY - PONO - INTEGRITY

increasing access and equity in oral health care  
through collaborative partnerships, advocacy, and education

Date: February, 17, 2020

To: The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz  
Chair Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Re: Strong Support for SB2459 SD1 Making an Appropriation to Restore Certain Adult Dental Benefits to Medicaid Enrollees

Hrg: Wednesday, February 19, 2020 at 10:00 AM at Conference Room 211

The Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition is in **Strong Support of SB2459, SD1**, which makes an appropriation to restore certain adult dental benefits to Medicaid enrollees.

The Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition (HOHC) is community driven and led with fiscal sponsorship from the Hawaii Public Health Institute. Its members represent all Hawai'i islands and diverse sectors across the State. We are engaged citizens, community leaders, public policy advocates, outreach workers, administrators, data analysts, educators, program directors, nurses, doctors, dental hygienists, and dentists to name a few. The mission of the Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition is to improve the overall health and wellbeing of all Hawai'i residents by increasing access and equity in oral health care through collaborative partnerships, advocacy, and education.

SB2459 SD1 appropriates funds to the DHS to restore basic diagnostic, preventive, and restorative adult dental benefits to adult Medicaid enrollees. In a survey conducted by Ward Research for HIPHI<sup>1</sup>, 9 in 10 registered Hawaii voters (89%) agreed that preventative dental benefits should be included in adult Medicaid coverage.

Oral health in our state is a public health crisis, with Hawaii receiving a failing grade of "F" in three recent oral health report cards released by The Pew Center for the States. Unfortunately, drastic cuts in 2009 eliminated comprehensive benefits for Medicaid enrollees and reduced coverage to emergency only (extraction and pain management). Hawai'i has suffered the consequences:

- In FY 2017, for the 234,258 adults who had emergency-only dental coverage, only 17,889 (8%) of them received ANY dental services for the year.
- In 2016, there were more than 3,000 emergency room visits due to preventable dental problems, 67% more than in 2006. As a result, aggregate hospital charges for dental emergency visits were just over \$17,000,000 compared to \$4,000,000 in 2006. Over half of all dental ER visits were residents on Neighbor Islands and 66% were Medicaid beneficiaries.
- An estimated 79% of ER dental visits could be diverted to community settings, saving about 48% of the cost of each visit.

- Significant disparities exist State-wide with rural and low-income families experiencing higher ER utilization rates for dental issues. For example, overall population rates of ER utilization for oral health in 2016 were 82.2 per 10,000 in the Kau primary service care area compared to 5.0 per 10,000 in the Mililani primary care service area.

Oral health is a crucial part of overall physical, psychological, social, and economic wellbeing. Adults with poor oral health often struggle to manage chronic co-conditions such as diabetes. Researchers have linked poor oral health with cardiovascular disease, stroke and bacterial pneumonia. Pregnant women with poor oral health are at an increased risk of delivering preterm and/or low-birth-weight infants. Missing or broken teeth also create social barriers for adults to find and maintain gainful employment in our service-based economy.

The HOHC has been working collaboratively with MedQuest-DHS and the Health Policy Institute of the American Dental Association for the past 8 months to gain a more specific fiscal analysis for Legislative consideration about the costs versus cost-savings in reinstating preventive and restorative dental benefits for adults on Medicaid. The preliminary fiscal analysis, entitled, "*Estimating the Cost of Introducing Comprehensive Medicaid Adult Dental Benefits in Hawaii (Preliminary) Research Brief*", is now undergoing final edits by the Health Policy Institute (HPI)-American Dental Association (ADA). The HOHC believes that at least two of the three options of potential levels of dental coverage outlined in the brief will significantly improve dental care access for all adult Medicaid enrollees.

We **strongly support** the restoration of these benefits.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Mahalo,



Anthony S. Kim, DMD  
Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition Chair

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<sup>i</sup> Findings from a Ward Research Study commissioned by the Hawaii Public Health Institute that summarizes findings from a phone survey among n=808 registered Hawaii voters (maximum sampling error of +/-3.3%) conducted between December 11, 2019-January 27, 2020. A copy of the results are available upon request.





## HIPHI Board

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MacKinnon LLP

Date: February 17, 2020

To: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair  
Members of the Ways and Means Committee

Re: Strong Support SB2459, SD1, Relating to Medicaid Benefits

Hrg: February 19, 2020 at 10:00 AM at Conference Room 211

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The Hawai'i Public Health Institute<sup>i</sup> is in **Strong support of SB2459, SD1**, which makes an appropriation to restore certain adult dental benefits to Medicaid enrollees.

SB2459, SD1, appropriates funds to the DHS to restore basic diagnostic, preventive, and restorative adult dental benefits to adult Medicaid enrollees. In a survey conducted by Ward Research for HIPHI<sup>ii</sup>, 9 in 10 registered Hawaii voters (89%) agreed that preventative dental benefits should be included in adult Medicaid coverage.

Oral health in our state is a public health crisis, with Hawaii receiving a failing grade of "F" in three recent oral health report cards released by The Pew Center for the States. Unfortunately, drastic cuts in 2009 eliminated comprehensive benefits for Medicaid enrollees and reduced coverage to emergency only (extraction and pain management). Hawai'i has suffered the consequences:

- In FY 2017, for the 234,258 adults who had emergency-only dental coverage, only 17,889 (8%) of them received ANY dental services for the year.
- In 2016, there were more than 3,000 emergency room visits due to preventable dental problems, 67% more than in 2006. As a result, aggregate hospital charges for dental emergency visits were just over \$17,000,000 compared to \$4,000,000 in 2006. Over half of all dental ER visits were residents on Neighbor Islands and 66% were Medicaid beneficiaries.

- An estimated 79% of ER dental visits could be diverted to community settings, saving about 48% of the cost of each visit.
- Significant disparities exist State-wide with rural and low-income families experiencing higher ER utilization rates for dental issues. For example, overall population rates of ER utilization for oral health in 2016 were 82.2 per 10,000 in the Kau primary service care area compared to 5.0 per 10,000 in the Mililani primary care service area.

Oral health is a crucial part of overall physical, psychological, social, and economic wellbeing. Adults with poor oral health often struggle to manage chronic co-conditions such as diabetes. Researchers have linked poor oral health with cardiovascular disease, stroke and bacterial pneumonia. Pregnant women with poor oral health are at an increased risk of delivering preterm and/or low-birth-weight infants. Missing or broken teeth also create social barriers for adults to find and maintain gainful employment in our service-based economy.

The Hawai'i Public Health Institute defers to the State Department of Human Services on the cost estimates to restore basic adult dental benefits to all adult Medicaid enrollees. The preliminary fiscal analysis by MedQuest-DHS and the Health Policy Institute of the American Dental Association, entitled, "*Estimating the Cost of Introducing Comprehensive Medicaid Adult Dental Benefits in Hawaii (Preliminary) Research Brief*" includes two potential dental coverage options that will significantly improve dental care access for all adult Medicaid enrollees. As a part of our commitment to improve oral health in Hawaii, we believe that basic coverage of dental services for adults is a critical factor in ensuring access to appropriate and timely oral health care.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We strongly support SB2459, SD1, and respectfully ask you to pass this measure as is out of committee.

Mahalo,



Nicole Nakashima, D.D.S., M.P.H.  
Oral Health and Policy Coordinator

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i The Hawai'i Public Health Institute is a hub for building healthy communities, providing issue-based advocacy, education, and technical assistance through partnerships with government, academia, foundations, business, and community-based organizations.

ii Findings from a Ward Research Study commissioned by the Hawaii Public Health Institute that summarizes findings from a phone survey among n=808 registered Hawaii voters (maximum sampling error of +/-3.3%) conducted between December 11, 2019-January 27, 2020. A copy of the results are available upon request.

**TO:** The Honorable Senator Russell E. Ruderman  
Chair Senate Committee on Human Services

The Honorable Senator Rosalyn H. Baker  
Chair Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health

**Hearing:** Wednesday, February 7 @ 10:00 am Room 211

**From:** David Shaku, L.E.A.D. Manager, Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center

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***Strong Support for SB 2459***

Dear Chairs Russel E. Ruderman & Rosalyn H. Baker, Vice Chairs Karl Rhoads & Stanley Chang, and members of the committees:

The Hawaii Health & Harm Reduction Center (HHHRC) strongly supports HB 2249 which allows for an appropriation to restore diagnostic, preventative, and restorative dental benefits to adult Medicaid enrollees.

Supporting oral health is not just a wise & humane investment for the State, but can be a vital lifeline for those people living in the margins. Researchers have linked poor oral health with cardiovascular disease, stroke, and bacterial pneumonia. Missing or broken teeth affect and foment stigma, creating social barriers for adults to participate in the community at large and often maintain—or even achieve—gainful employment in our service-based economy.

HHHRC's mission is to *reduce harm, promote health, create wellness and fight stigma in Hawaii and the Pacific*. We focus our efforts on those disproportionately affected by social determinants of health, including but not limited to: people living with and/or affected by HIV, hepatitis, substance use, and the transgender, LGBTQ and the Native Hawaiian communities. We foster health, wellness, and systemic change in Hawai'i and the Pacific through care services, advocacy, training, prevention, education, and capacity building. HHHRC works at the intersection of homelessness, substance use and mental health. By appropriating funds to all for more dental benefits to be covered by Medicaid, agencies like HHHRC will be able to better link people to oral health services they deserve.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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

February 18, 2020

COMMITTEE WAYS AND MEANS

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair

Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

**Testimony in Support of SB 2459, SD1**

MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO RESTORE ADULT DENTAL BENEFITS TO MEDICAID ENROLLEES.

Wednesday February 19, 2020, 10:00am, Conference Room 011

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.

Dental care is vital to the overall health of individuals. Nearly 50% of all adults aged 30 or older have some form of gum disease according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and adult cavities is on the rise. Around 90% of all adults have had a cavity and 1 in 4 adults have untreated cavities.

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

Since 2009 when this benefit was removed, we have witnessed increasing numbers of individuals who are in dire need of care including major decay and infection.

This is the single most important bill currently in the legislature to our patients. We strongly encourage the committee to pass this bill and restore benefits to those most in need.

Respectfully Requested,

David Peters  
Chief Executive Officer



95 Mahalani Street, Room 21, Wailuku, HI 96793  
Phone: 808-244-4647, Fax: 808-242-6676

Date: February 18, 2020

To: The Honorable Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Re: SB2459 Relating to Medicaid Benefits

Hrg: Wednesday, February 19, 2020 at 10:00 am at Capitol Conference Room 211

My name is Emi Eno Orikasa and I am the Oral Health Director at Hui No Ke Ola Pono, the Native Hawaiian Health Center on Maui. Hui No Ke Ola Pono focuses on health enhancement and disease prevention through programs on nutrition, health management and health care referrals for the community of Maui in a culturally caring manner.

Hui No Ke Ola Pono is in strong support of SB2459 which makes an appropriation to restore certain adult dental benefits to Medicaid enrollees.

Significant gaps exist in the oral health of Native Hawaiians, in part due to the lack of preventive and comprehensive dental benefits for adult Medicaid beneficiaries. Despite having a sliding-scale discount for dental services, many of our patients are still unable to afford even basic, preventive dental care. Thus, patients are delaying or avoiding preventive dental treatment, leading to more severe dental problems, and seeking care only when they have an emergency.

In 2016, there were more than 3,000 emergency room visits due to preventable dental problems, 67% more than in 2006. As a result, aggregate hospital charges for dental emergency visits were just over \$17, 000,000 compared to \$4.000.000 in 2006. Over half of all dental ER visits were residents on Neighbor Islands and 66% were Medicaid beneficiaries.

Oral health is a crucial part of overall physical, psychological, social, and economic wellbeing. Many of our adult patients are also afflicted with co-morbidities such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease, making preventive care essential in helping to managing these conditions. Pregnant women with poor oral health are at an increased risk of delivering preterm and/or low-birth-weight infants. Missing or broken teeth also create social barriers for adults to find and maintain gainful employment in our service-based economy.

As a part of our commitment to improve oral health in Hawaii, we believe that basic adult dental coverage, at minimum, is a critical factor in ensuring access to appropriate and timely oral health care.

We strongly support the restoration of these benefits.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

*“A Native Hawaiian Association to Strengthen and Perpetuate Life”*



## **KOKUA KALIHI VALLEY**

### **Comprehensive Family Services**

2229 North School Street Honolulu, Hawaii 96819

Phone (808) 791-9428 ♦ Fax (808) 848-0979

Date of Hearing: February 19, 2020

Bill #: SB 2459, SD 1

Committee: On Ways and Means

Aloha Chair Donovan Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Gilbert Keith-Agaran, and Committee Members

My name is Dr Jason Hiramoto and I am the Dental Director at Kokua Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Family Services, a Federally Qualified Health Center which provides services for the residents of Kalihi Valley. Our services range from Keiki to Kupuna, with active medical and dental services that are complemented by our strong community-based programs for youth, working-adults, and elderly.

I am writing in strong support of HB 2249. This bill proposes an appropriation for the expansion of adult dental benefits under Medicaid to reinstate a basic preventive and restorative dental benefit.

Hawaii's oral health services have not been given adequate attention and necessary resources to support oral health care in our state since Medicaid adult dental benefits were drastically cut in 2009. While children are provided comprehensive dental coverage under Medicaid as mandated by EPSDT, adults are not. This negatively impacts the overall health of individuals and of society in the following ways:

- Poor oral health during pregnancy can lead to poor health outcomes for the mother and baby. Moreover, bacteria that causes dental decay can easily be transmitted from mother to child through saliva. Thus, one way to prevent cavities in young children is to improve pregnant women's oral health.
- Pregnancy also may make women more prone to periodontal (gum) disease and cavities.
- Oral diseases and conditions are associated with age-related and age-prevalent systemic diseases, conditions and taking multiple medications for common chronic diseases.
- Tooth loss is associated with increased mortality.

- Gum diseases are associated with coronary heart disease and diabetes and poorly controlled diabetes increases the risk for periodontal diseases as well as other oral diseases and conditions.
- Links between nutritional status and oral health status have been reported. Diminished chewing ability limits food choices, poor food choices increase the risks for oral diseases, and sub-optimal nutrition poses a risk to general health and well-being.
- Oral diseases and conditions, if not prevented and appropriately managed, progress with time and lead to acute and chronic infections and eventual tooth loss compromising basic functions critical to overall health and well-being, and diminish quality of life.
- Many commonly prescribed medications have the side effect of reduced salivary flow which can lead to an increased risk of caries, soft tissue trauma, altered taste sensation, and difficulty swallowing.

The United States has moved away from its Healthy People 2020 Objective for those who reported a dental visit in the past 12 months. As of 2016 (the most recent update), those who were female, non-Hispanic white, aged 2-17 years, those with at least some college education, those with family incomes 400% of the poverty threshold or above, and persons with private health insurance had the highest rate of a dental visit in the past 12 months. The lack of comprehensive Medicaid dental coverage across the country certainly does not help this backwards trend.

As a result of the past decade of emergency-only adult Medicaid coverage for dental care, our emergency rooms have been over-utilized for unmet oral health needs to the tune of thousands of visits per year, costing millions of dollars. An estimated 79% of ER dental visits could be diverted to community settings, saving about 48% of the cost of each visit. (Example: treating a dental emergency might cost \$750 in an ER vs. \$390 in the community setting.) Since most emergency rooms cannot provide dental treatment, patients are typically prescribed painkillers or antibiotics and do not treat the underlying cause of the problem. National studies have shown that 39% of these patients return to the ER. Thus, when people cannot afford basic dental services, society is often called upon to pay for more costly, complicated or emergency, procedures.

It is understood that there is an inherent cost to expanding coverage to comprehensive dental care through Medicaid, however, it is important to note that the Federal government will match up to 50% of the state's investment. This effort to reinstate benefits does not need to be done solely on the back of the state.

As I finish, let me tell you two stories of patients at our health center who were impacted by severe limitations on Medicaid's adult dental benefit. The first patient is Mister S.

Mister S had a failing dentition with patchwork dentistry and numerous tooth extractions. Many of his teeth were loose. He had multiple chronic conditions, including diabetes. His breath smelled of bacteria, most likely from the periodontal disease that weakened the bone support for all his teeth and was undoubtedly complicated by his diabetes. His periodontal disease also most likely affected his ability to control his diabetes. He could not chew because his teeth were loose, and he could not smile and it prohibited from fully engaging in a community center for older adults. He needed dentures but could not afford them. We were stuck with only two options- maintain his failing dentition or extract his hopeless dentition with no plan for replacement. His situation has still not been resolved.

Another story involves a woman who lost her bridge that replaced four teeth, one of which was her front teeth. Because of her limited, emergency-only Medicaid coverage, those teeth had to be extracted because there were absolutely no resources for her to either have a new bridge made, or even the lesser desirable option - to have the teeth extracted and have a partial denture made to replace all four teeth. She opted to have the teeth extracted and has since not had her front teeth replaced because of financial resources.

These two stories highlight the effect of not having adequate dental coverage and the difficult situations people are placed in. The extremely high cost of living in Hawaii is enough of a burden on low-income individuals in this state. Access to basic preventive and restorative benefits that affect overall health and quality of life should not be another burden. I urge you to reinstate a basic preventive and restorative dental benefit.

Because ... "An ounce of PREVENTION is worth a pound of CURE." Benjamin Franklin

I leave you with this question to ponder: "If a patient presented at a physician's office with a mangled hand, would the doctor ask the patient which finger they would like to have saved?" Why are teeth any different? Someone should not have to choose between saving their tooth or having it pulled solely because of finances. How are teeth any less important than other vital organs of the human body?

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of this very important health bill.





949 Kamokila Boulevard, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Suite 350, Kapolei, HI 96707  
808.675.7300 | www.ohanahealthplan.com

February 19, 2020  
10:00 a.m.  
Conference Room 211

To: The Honorable Chair Donovan M. Dela Cruz  
The Honorable Vice Chair Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: 'Ohana Health Plan  
Rachel Wilkinson, Government Affairs Sr. Manager

Re: SB 2459 SD1, Relating to Medicaid Benefits; **In Support**

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'Ohana Health Plan offers our **support** of SB 2459 SD1, which makes an appropriation to restore certain adult dental benefits to Medicaid enrollees, requires maximization of federal matching funds, and pursuit of all known funding sources prior to expending general revenue funds appropriated.

Poor oral health is one of the most important issues facing our state, particularly with the Medicaid population. While oral health can often be overlooked, there is a clear relationship between preventative dental care and the deterrence of serious medical conditions.

Since January 2019, 'Ohana Health Plan has offered—at no cost to our members—basic dental coverage, providing adults who have QUEST Integration coverage with an annual exam, fluoride treatment, a cleaning every six months, one set of bitewing x-rays per year, and either a non-emergent tooth extraction or filling. By absorbing these costs, 'Ohana Health Plan has invested in the health and overall well-being of our members. We believe maintaining a healthy community means doing the right thing by providing quality dental care to those who need it the most.

According to the Hawaii Department of Health's 2012 *Hawaii Oral Health: Key Findings* report, there were more than 3,000 emergency room visits in Hawaii for preventable dental problems, resulting in \$8.5 million in hospital charges. Studies have shown links between gum disease and higher risks of heart attack, stroke, diabetes and rheumatoid arthritis. Oral health diseases have also been shown to cause low-birth rates and pre-term births for pregnant women.

The state's investment to restore diagnostic, preventive and restorative dental benefits to adult Medicaid enrollees would be relatively small in comparison to the downstream cost savings to the entire healthcare system.

We strongly urge the passage of SB 2459 SD1. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this measure.



Pono Hawai'i Initiative

Josh Frost - President • Patrick Shea - Treasurer • Kristin Hamada  
Nelson Ho • Summer Starr

Tuesday, February 18, 2020

Relating to Medicaid Benefits  
Testifying in Support

Aloha Chair and members of the committee,

The Pono Hawai'i Initiative (PHI) **supports SB2459 SD1 Relating to Medicaid Benefits**, which makes an appropriation to restore certain adult dental benefits to Medicaid enrollees.

Dental benefits are necessary for a wide range of reasons (physical, emotional and economical). Having dental benefits can help reduce emergency room visits, reduce complications for diabetics and pregnant women. Poor oral health has been clinically proven to have adverse impacts on an array of acute and chronic health conditions leading to poor health outcomes and a lower quality of life.

Having access to dental coverage means more dental visits and a greater chance of preventing dental issues before they start. Currently comprehensive dental coverage is mandatory for children enrolled in Medicaid but benefits for adults is optional. Dental benefits should be apart of basic care received under Medicaid.

For all these reasons, we urge you to move this bill forward.

Mahalo for the opportunity,  
Gary Hooser  
Executive Director  
Pono Hawai'i Initiative



## THE QUEEN'S HEALTH SYSTEMS

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To: The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
The Honorable Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair  
Members, Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce

From: Rowena Buffett Timms, Executive Vice President & Chief Administrative Officer, The Queen's Health Systems

Colette Masunaga, Manager, Government Relations & External Affairs, The Queen's Health Systems

Date: February 17, 2020

Hrg: Senate Committee on Ways and Means Decision Making; Wednesday, February 19, 2020 at 10:00 A.M. in room 211

Re: **Support for SB2459 SD1, Relating to Medicaid Benefits**

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The Queen's Health Systems (Queen's) is a not-for-profit corporation that provides expanded health care capabilities to the people of Hawai'i and the Pacific Basin. Since the founding of the first Queen's hospital in 1859 by Queen Emma and King Kamehameha IV, it has been our mission to provide quality health care services in perpetuity for Native Hawaiians and all of the people of Hawai'i. Over the years, the organization has grown to four hospitals, 66 health care centers and labs, and more than 1,600 physicians statewide. As the preeminent health care system in Hawai'i, Queen's strives to provide superior patient care that is constantly advancing through education and research.

Queen's appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB2459 SD1, relating to Medicaid benefits. The proposed bill would appropriate funds restore certain adult dental benefits to Medicaid enrollees, maximizes federal matching funds, and requires the Department of Human Services to pursue other funding sources. 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.

The Dental Clinic served over 5,000 patients in FY2017 and nearly 6,000 in FY2018. Since FY2014, on average half of all patients served at the Dental Clinic are under Medicaid, uninsured or self-pay.

Queen's is committed to providing quality care to Native Hawaiians and all the people of Hawaii, regardless of their ability to pay, and we support restoring adult dental benefits to Medicaid enrollees. Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue.

*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.*

**LATE**

**Bill:** SB2459,SD1, Relating to Medicaid  
**Hearing Date & Time:** Weds, February 19, 2020, 10am  
**Committees:** Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Relating to Medicaid Benefits

Submitted by Dr. Steven Pine, DDS., Dental Director  
February 3, 2020

I, Dr. Steven Pine, DDS, currently work as the Dental Director at West Hawaii Community Health Center, (WHCHC) and I strongly support **Senate Bill 2459**, SD1 which appropriates funds for the restoration of basic adult dental benefits to Medicaid patients.

At WHCHC we believe that oral health indicates much more than simply healthy teeth, as the mouth can be both a cause and a window to individual and population health and well-being. Oral health is critical to general health and well-being as the mouth is the gateway to the rest of the body, providing clues about overall health. It is sometimes the first place where signs and symptoms of other diseases are noticed. Causes of poor oral health are complex and access to dental care for adults is crucial for overall health and well-being. However, adults in West Hawaii are less likely to see a dentist than adults on average for the state. 35.6% of West Hawaii adults have had no dental care compared to the state rate of 29%. Moreover, the rate of oral health emergency room visits in West Hawaii is 58.9 per 100,000, significantly greater than the rate of 16.8 per 100,000 statewide. (State of Hawaii Primary Care Needs Assessment Data Book, 2016)

WHCHC provides care to the most under-served people in our community who have the most complicated health needs. Individuals with a range of chronic conditions are more susceptible to oral disease. Oral disease can also exacerbate chronic disease symptoms.

In 2019 WHCHC provided 2,023 adult dental visits. Of these visits 232 were emergency visits for low-income adults; 918 visits were provided to adults with low-income who qualified for the sliding fee payment program - these dental patients live at 100% of the federal poverty level and qualified for paying only a minimal payment on the sliding fee

discount program. In 2019 the WHCHC Adult Dental program expenditures totaled \$1,286,982 - program revenue totaled \$576,230 - equating to a \$710,751 financial loss for the adult dental program. This is an unsustainable business model. Because our mission is to provide dental care to those with low-income, and other high-risk populations, the only way this adult dental program can become viable is Medicaid funding adult dental treatments.

Research shows that adults who receive Medicaid frequently go without comprehensive oral treatment due to high treatment costs which must be paid for out-of-pocket (Hawaii Oral Health: Key Findings, 2015). A recent CDC report shows that the cost of treatment or lack of insurance was the main reason 42% of adults, 18-64 years of age, went without a dental visit for an oral health problem in the past 6 months. Consistent with national statistics that demonstrate disparity in dental care for the low-income vs high income adults, a recent survey on Hawaii Oral Health noted there are substantial dental health disparities in Hawaii. Adults with low income are more likely to have dental problems and less likely to see a dentist each year. Only 52% of low-income adults saw a dentist during the past year compared to 82% of high-income adults. In addition, adults with low-income (<\$15,000/year) are more likely to have lost a permanent tooth because of dental problems compared to adults with high-income (>\$70,000/year). These differences may be partially explained by low income adults having lack of access to receiving dental care (Hawaii Oral Health: Key Findings, 2015).

*The state of Hawaii has one of the highest cost of living rates in the U.S. - for those living in poverty it becomes a choice between paying for dental treatments out-of-pocket, or, paying for food and housing.*

Emerging evidence shows an association between periodontal infection and adverse pregnancy outcomes, such as premature delivery and low birth weight. Studies also show that controlling oral diseases improves a woman's quality of life and has the potential to reduce the transmission of oral bacteria from mothers to children. Most pregnant women in Hawaii DO NOT see a dentist during their pregnancy. Only 41% of pregnant women in Hawaii reported seeing a dentist during their pregnancy in 2009-2011. Pregnant women who live in Hawaii County,

who are between the ages of 20-29 years, who have less than a high school education, who are low-income, and who receive Medicaid/QUEST health insurance, are particular group with the lowest estimates of seeing a dentist during pregnancy.

By passing this bill you will improve oral health outcomes for the most disadvantaged adults in our community. Providing adult dental services for those living in poverty will serve the public in the following ways:

- Reduce costs associated with emergency department visits for preventable oral health problems.
- Improve pregnancy outcomes for low- income women.
- Improve self-esteem, employability, decrease absenteeism, and improve mental health of disadvantaged adults.
- Improve chronic health condition for underserved and disadvantaged adults.
- Improve access to dental services for adults living in poverty.

For these reasons I strongly support **SB 2459**. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



**LATE**

February 19, 2020

**SB2459**

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS (WAM)

Senator Donovan Dela Cruz WAM Chair, Senator Gilbert Keith-Agaran WAM Vice Chair, and Committee members,

I am submitting this letter in support of SB2459 on behalf of Easterseals Hawaii and the families we serve. Easterseals Hawaii provides Home and Community Based Service (HCBS) Programs to 250 adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in nine locations statewide. Our Mission is to ensure that all people with disabilities or special needs and their families have equal opportunities to live, learn, work and play in their communities. Most adults that participate in the Home and Community Based Services program receive their health services through the Med-Quest program and would benefit from the restoration of dental services.

Oral health is a crucial part of a person's physical, psychological, social and economic health and wellbeing. Missing or broken teeth create social and economic barriers for adults to make friends and find and maintain gainful employment in our service-based economy.

Due to the lack of oral care, our emergency rooms have been over utilized for unmet oral health needs. Of the 3,000 ER visits for acute dental emergencies in 2016, 56% were people with disabilities. Coverage of routine and preventive oral health would reduce ER visits and the cost of this more expensive care.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter of support for SB2459.

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

**Jim Kelleher**  
Chief Population Health Officer  
**The Catalight Foundation**

Chief Executive Officer  
**Easterseals Northern California**

Chief Executive Officer  
**Easterseals Hawaii**





**HAWAII APPLESEED**  
CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

**LATE**

Testimony of the Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law & Economic Justice  
In Support of SB 2459 SD1 – Relating to Medicaid Benefits  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
Thursday, February 20, 2020, 10:00 AM, in conference room 211

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Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT of SB 2459, SD1**, which would appropriate funds to restore certain adult dental benefits to medicaid enrollees.

We echo the legislature's finding that, "Lack of access to dental coverage and oral healthcare is a health and social justice issue that disproportionately affects the poor, children, the elderly, and racial and ethnic minority groups... Individuals enrolled in medicaid have an increased likelihood of disparities in health care outcomes based on income. The prevalence of dental disease and tooth loss is disproportionately high among low-income populations. Insufficient coverage or access to care often further disadvantages medicaid recipients, driving poor health outcomes and higher costs."

An investment of \$7 million, as proposed in this bill, to restore diagnostic, preventive, and restorative dental benefits to adult Medicaid enrollees will likely more than pay for itself by reducing costs due to emergency room visits for dental problems, health and birth complications due to poor oral health, and other acute and chronic health conditions that are linked to oral disease.

We appreciate your consideration of this testimony and urge you to pass this bill.

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*The Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice is committed to a more socially just Hawai'i, where everyone has genuine opportunities to achieve economic security and fulfill their potential. We change systems that perpetuate inequality and injustice through policy development, advocacy, and coalition building.*

**SB-2459-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/17/2020 1:32:47 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2020 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Rynette Keen	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am submitting a testimony in support of SB2459 SD1. It is imperative that our state provides assistance to the underserved and underprivileged members of our community. As such, I strongly recommend that you each vote in favor of this bill for all the known reasons stated in the bill itself and because it is the right thing to do for the people of our islands. Thank you for your time and consideration and your yes vote.

Mahalo Nui,

Rynette K. Keen

**SB-2459-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/15/2020 4:54:31 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2020 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Jerris Hedges	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Ways & Means Chair, Co-Chair and committee members,

I wish to note my support for SB 2459 SD1. This bill makes an appropriation to restore adult dental benefits to medicaid enrollees. The bill requires maximization of federal matching funds and pursuit of all known funding sources prior to expending general revenue funds appropriated for this purpose.

Much of our Hawaii residents' physical and mental health is closely tied to their oral health. Poor oral health compromises our overall immune function, reduces our ability to maintain optimal nutrition, and contributes to recurrent infections.

The long-term health benefit for Hawaii that will be provided by this bill is significant. Given federal leveraging of the state investment, the return on investment is great.

Respectfully,

Jerris R. Hedges, MD

Dean, John A. Burns School of Medicine

**Bill:** SB2459,SD1, Relating to Medicaid

**Hearing Date &Time:** Weds, February 19, 2020, 10AM

**Committees:** Senate Committee on Ways and Means

**Testifier:** Nancy Partika, RN, MPH

Aloha Senator DelaCruz, Senator Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

My name is Nancy Partika, and I am a member of the Hawaii Oral Health Coalition, having worked to identify and address oral health disparities in Hawaii for the past 4 years.

Hawaii has visibly struggled for decades with oral health disparities and problems accessing care for its most needy. The 2009 abolishment of adult dental benefits under Medicaid and the problems that resulted from adults receiving nothing other than emergency-only care since then has spiraled, while the State continues to pay out millions per year in acute oral health emergency room care and for other health-related services statewide that does not provide adequate oral health care or support to our at-risk populations such as those on Medicaid.

According to a 2017-18 DOH study, 66% of all ER visits made statewide were Medicaid and/or Medicare recipients, and the costs in 2016 for these 3,000 total visits cost a staggering \$17 million dollars. Fiscally, it seems logical that these millions of dollars that could be potentially saved via fewer ER visits and instead wisely utilize a portion of those dollars to pay upfront for preventative and restorative dental care benefits for Medicaid recipients.

Poor oral health is already proven to be linked to an array of acute and chronic health conditions, including: heart disease, diabetes, stroke, depression, low birth weight and premature birth. Researchers have mapped linkages from chronic dental pain to end-stage renal disease, liver transplants, opioid-related emergency department visits, and opioid-related crime. These co-conditions are made worse by having poor oral health, and the care of the oral health of chronically ill or pregnant can be another significant potential area for return on investment. We are now recognizing that not intervening in oral health conditions early and preventively will cost much more later on in unintended direct and indirect costs.

Currently there are 34 states offering adult Medicaid recipients preventive and restorative adult oral health benefits. Many options exist as to how Hawaii could address the need for greater oral health benefits by expanding services covered that are preventive and restorative, rather than reimbursing for emergency-only care.

By adding a comprehensive or limited dental services benefit, Hawaii's adults on Medicaid are expected to experience fewer oral health-related ER visits, with improvements to their chronic disease risks and overall health status. Broader Medicaid dental benefits for adults would not only support individual health and well-being among Hawaii's most vulnerable adults, but could also improve the employment status and socio-economic strength of our communities.

MedQuest-DHS now has preliminary fiscal analysis figures extrapolated from 2018 Hawaii Medicaid data that provide reliable estimates of the costs of implementing improved dental care coverage for adults, as well as potential cost-savings. This report, entitled, "*Estimating the Cost of Introducing Comprehensive Medicaid Adult Dental Benefits in Hawaii (Preliminary) Research Brief*", is now undergoing final edits by the Health Policy Institute (HPI)-American Dental Association, Feb.2020. At least 2 of the 3 options of possible levels of dental coverage will cost-effectively and significantly increase and enhance Medicaid adult dental care access in Hawaii.

Your pro-active attention to this issue is respectfully requested—Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

**TESTIMONY FOR SENATE BILL 2459, SD1  
RELATING TO MEDICAID BENEFITS**

**Date of Hearing:**

February 19, 2020

**Committee:**

Committee on Ways and Means

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair

Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

**February 15, 2020**

Dear Committee Chair, Vice Chair, and Members:

My name is Andrew Tseu, I am a dentist that works at a Community Health Center. I am submitting testimony as a Hawaii resident.

I am in strong support of SB 2459, SD1. This bill proposes an appropriation for the expansion of adult dental benefits under Medicaid to include reinstate basic preventive and restoration benefits.

Hawaii's oral health services has not been given adequate attention and resources necessary to support good oral health care in our state since Medicaid adult dental benefits were drastically cut in 2009.

Oral health is a crucial part of a person's physical, psychological, social and economic health and well-being. In fact, pain due to oral disease in children results in thousands of hours of missed school every year; while adults with poor oral health often struggle to manage chronic co-conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. Missing or broken teeth also create social barriers for adults to find and maintain gainful employment in our service-based economy.

As a result of our past decade of minimal coverage for dental care, our emergency room have been overutilized for unmet oral health needs to the tune of thousands of visits per year, costing millions of dollars.

As a part of our commitment to improve oral health in Hawaii, we believe that basic coverage of dental services for adults is a critical factor in ensuring access to appropriate and timely oral health care.

Please feel free to contact me at (808) 781-3613 to discuss my testimony further.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of this very important health bill.

Best regards,



Andrew Tseu, D.D.S., J.D.

Date: February 17, 2020

To: The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
The Honorable Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair  
Members of the Senate Committee on Way and Means

Re: **Strong Support for SB2459 SD1**, Relating to Medicaid Benefits

Hrg: February 19, 2020 at 10:00 AM in Capitol Room 211

Aloha Senate Committees on Ways and Means

As an community member, educator and healthcare professional, I am writing in **strong support of SB2459 SD1**, which makes an appropriation to restore certain adult dental benefits to Medicaid enrollees; requires maximization of federal matching funds and pursuit of all known funding sources prior to expending general revenue funds appropriated.

Oral health is crucial to a person's physical, psychological, social and economic health and wellbeing. Poor oral health makes it much more difficult and expensive to effectively manage chronic health conditions, including diabetes and heart disease. Missing or broken teeth create social barriers for adults to find and maintain gainful employment in our service-based economy.

Hawai'i's Medicaid adult dental benefits were drastically cut in 2009. Since then, rather than accessing less expensive, *preventative* oral health care, adults covered under Medicaid have had to seek *emergency* care for serious oral health problems in our overburdened hospital emergency rooms.

Emergency room care is far more expensive, and addresses oral health problems only after they have a significant negative health and quality-of-life impact, than preventative oral health care.

Each year the State of Hawaii spends millions more on emergency dental treatment for adults with serious oral health conditions than it would cost to provide preventative dental care to all adults covered under Medicaid. While costing less, preventive dental care would also reduce needless pain and suffering among adult Medicaid enrollees by preventing oral health problems before they become serious and debilitating.

By not providing preventative adult dental care, Hawai'i also misses out on matching federal funds available to offset the cost of preventative oral health care for adult Medicaid recipients.

**SB2459 SD1** offers a common sense approach to ensuring appropriate and timely oral health care for adults covered by Medicaid, reducing pain and suffering among some of our most vulnerable community members, saving the State of Hawai'i and taxpayers money and reducing the burden on our over-stretched hospital emergency departments.

I **strongly support SB2459 SD1** and respectfully ask you to pass this bill out of committee.

Many thanks for your consideration,

Forrest Batz, PharmD  
Kea'au, HI



**Testimony in Support of RE: SB2459 SD1**

February 17, 2020

Dear Chair Dela Cruz and Respected Members of the Committee on Ways and Means

The Hawaii Dental Hygienists' Association (HDHA) strongly **SUPPORTS SB2459 SD1**. The bill appropriates funds to the Department of Human Services to restore basic adult dental benefits to Medicaid and QUEST enrollees. We congratulate you on your initiative to expand Medicaid dental services for adults to include preventive, diagnostic and restorative treatment services. This provision would directly benefit seniors, as well as adults with developmental and physical disabilities in providing necessary oral health services.

HDHA cannot emphasize enough the importance of dental care services that include preventive, restorative, prosthetic, and emergency services for all residents of Hawaii. We are keenly aware of how oral health, or the lack thereof, can affect all aspects (physical, emotional, psychological, and social) of our lives. It is also common knowledge that oral health has a direct correlation to over-all health. The mouth is connected to and shares a circulatory system with the rest of the body. Ignoring or limiting oral care services places Hawaii residents at risk for increased health problems.

As the largest association representing Hawaii's licensed dental hygienists', HDHA strongly **SUPPORTS SB2459 SD1** to address the unnecessary effects of dental disease among Hawaii's people, as well as the phenomenal expense of dental care in emergency room settings. We hope Hawaii's expanding workforce of Dental Hygienists' can and will be utilized to the fullest to treat this underserved population once this measure is passed.

Thank you for your consideration.



**SB-2459-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2020 8:21:54 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2020 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Jester Galiza	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

**LATE**

**SB-2459-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2020 7:35:03 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2020 10:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

**LATE**

**SB-2459-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2020 11:58:24 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2020 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Cyd L. Hoffeld	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, and Committee members,

My name is Cyd L. Hoffeld and I **strongly support SB 2459**. I am the health promotions manager for a large network of community health centers on Hawai'i Island. The majority of our health centers provide dental services for community members many of whom live in low socioeconomic communities and would greatly benefit from the appropriation to restore adult dental benefits to medicaid enrollees.

As a healthcare professional, I have seen the deep impact that full access to dental care has on a persons whole body, mind, and spirit. When our patients have the option to access check-ups for teeth cleaning and preventative dental care every six months instead of only having the choice to extract their teeth it can make all the difference for physical and emotional wellbeing and overall health.

For those of us who are fortunate enough to have jobs that provide medical and dental coverage as part of our employment package, we are blessed. We need to extend that blessing and compassion because everyone deserves the dignity of having healthy teeth to eat, speak, obtain a job or retain employment and to feel confident enough to smile.

Please **strongly support SB 2459**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **strong support** of this bill.