
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO MEDICAID BENEFITS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that oral disease is a
2 significant health problem for many Hawaii residents, affecting
3 their overall health and well-being. Native Hawaiians and
4 Pacific Islanders were disproportionately represented in
5 emergency room visits for dental-related diagnoses. In 2009,
6 the State terminated all preventive and restorative dental care
7 services for adult medicaid recipients and reduced coverage to
8 emergency-only care, which is limited to pain relief, injuries,
9 trauma, and tooth removal and extraction. The lack of
10 preventive and restorative dentistry services for adult medicaid
11 beneficiaries increases potential health care complications for
12 persons with co-existing chronic diseases, such as diabetes and
13 heart disease. Poor oral health, combined with co-existing
14 conditions like these, have been shown to lead to increased
15 disability and death.

16 Since 2010, Hawaii has received a failing grade of "F" in
17 three oral health report cards published by the Pew Center on



1 the States due to multiple policy and systems issues in the
2 State that have left the oral health of Hawaii's families and
3 children worse than the rest of the nation.

4 The legislature further finds that in Hawaii, a
5 disproportionate number of adult medicaid enrollees ages
6 twenty-one to forty-four years use the emergency room for
7 emergency dental services. While adult medicaid beneficiaries
8 represent about twenty-five per cent of Hawaii's population,
9 they represent forty-seven per cent of all dental services
10 provided by emergency rooms. Between 2016 and 2020, medicaid
11 enrollees made an average of two thousand seven hundred
12 emergency room visits per year for acute oral health conditions,
13 totaling \$21,700,000 in charges for outpatient emergency room
14 services only.

15 Recent analysis suggests that investing in preventive
16 dental benefits for medicaid-enrolled adults will, in the long
17 term, lead to reductions in medical costs paid by medicaid. A
18 February 2020 research brief authored by the American Dental
19 Association's Health Policy Institute and the Hawaii department
20 of human services' med-QUEST division estimates the cost of



1 reinstating coverage in Hawaii and identifies three possible
2 options:

3 (1) Option 1 (\$7,800,000 per year or \$3.32 per enrollee)
4 covers a basic package of diagnostic, preventive, and
5 restorative services;

6 (2) Option 2 (\$19,900,000 per year or \$8.45 per enrollee)
7 includes the basic package, plus core prosthodontic
8 services; and

9 (3) Option 3 (\$36,200,000 per year or \$15.37 per enrollee)
10 further expands prosthodontic services.

11 All three options cover periodontal services. The research
12 brief estimates potential medical care cost savings of
13 \$1,900,000 to \$5,300,000 per year, which is attributable to a
14 reduction in emergency department visits for dental conditions
15 and reduced medical care costs among medicaid beneficiaries with
16 diabetes and coronary artery disease, as well as pregnant women.

17 It has been twelve years since the State removed all but
18 emergency medicaid adult dental benefits. The legislature
19 additionally finds that it is in the best interest of the State
20 and its residents to expand access to care by restoring dental
21 benefits to adult medicaid enrollees.



1 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to appropriate
2 funds to reinstate the basic package of diagnostic, preventive,
3 and restorative dental benefits set forth in Option 1 above, for
4 adult medicaid enrollees.

5 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
6 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much
7 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2022-2023 to
8 reinstate the basic package of diagnostic, preventive, and
9 restorative dental benefits to adult medicaid enrollees.

10 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
11 human services for the purposes of this Act.

12 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on December 31,
13 2050.



Report Title:

Adult Dental Benefits; Medicaid; Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates funds to reinstate the basic package of diagnostic, preventive, and restorative dental benefits to adult medicaid enrollees. Effective 12/31/2050. (SD2)

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