



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

**Testimony in SUPPORT of H.B. 1977 H.D. 1
RELATING TO DENTAL ASSISTANTS.**

REPRESENTATIVE AARON LING JOHANSON, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE

Hearing Date: 2/15/2022

Room Number: CR 329 Via
Videoconference

1 **Fiscal Implications:** None

2 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health supports H.B. 1977 H.D. 1, which allows
3 dental assistants to perform limited, but essential duties under the general supervision of a dentist
4 in public health settings.

5 The Department agrees with allowing dental assistants to provide limited, yet essential dental
6 auxiliary support for dental hygienists under the general supervision of a dentist in a public
7 health setting. This would contribute to the development and sustainability of community-based
8 oral health programs in our State such as the virtual dental home (teledentistry) and school-based
9 dental sealant programs. These programs help to reduce barriers and increase access to dental
10 services for the most vulnerable and underserved populations by providing services in the
11 communities where people live, learn, and socialize.

12 This measure will increase the overall capacity and number of dentists permitted to provide
13 dental services via the community-based oral health models that require general supervision. The
14 collaborative efforts of private sector and public health dentists will help meet the oral health
15 needs in our communities and to improve access to dental care for Hawaii residents.

16 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Testimony of the Board of Dentistry

**Before the
House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce
Tuesday, February 15, 2022
2:00 p.m.
Via Videoconference**

**On the following measure:
H.B.1977, H.D. 1, RELATING TO DENTAL ASSISTANTS**

Chair Johanson and Members of the Committee:

My name is Earl Hasegawa, and I am the Chairperson of the Board of Dentistry (Board). The Board is in support of this measure and offers comments.

The purpose of this bill is to allow dental assistants to perform limited duties under general supervision of a dentist in public health settings.

Although the Board supports the language as amended in the H.D. 1, it prefers the proposed language in S.B. 2280, S.D. 1, because this version incorporates the recommended amendments as proposed by the Department of Health and the Hawaii Oral Health Coalition to clarify the intent of this measure.

Passage of this bill will allow for increased access to dental care to the most vulnerable and underserved populations in the community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



Hawaii Dental Association

To: House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce
Time/Date: 2:00 p.m., February 15, 2022
Location: State Capitol Conference Room 329 via Video Conference
Re: HB 1977, HD 1 Relating to Dental Assistants

Aloha Chair Johanson, Vice-Chair Kitagawa, and members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Dental Association (HDA) is writing with comments on HB 1977, HD 1 Relating to Dental Assistants. This bill allows dental assistants to perform limited duties under general supervision of a dentist in public health settings.

HDA is committed to ensuring patient safety and promoting oral health for our community. Among many initiatives, we have been working collaboratively with stakeholder participants in the Hawaii Oral Health Coalition. At the request of advocates from the public health setting, HOHC crafted a preliminary version of this bill. We support and will continue to actively participate in the coalition's public policy efforts.

Oral health is essential for overall health and wellness. One cannot be healthy without a healthy mouth. It can show signs of nutritional deficiencies or general infection. Systemic diseases, those that affect the entire body, may first become apparent because of mouth lesions or other oral problems. This bill seeks to increase access to sufficient dental care, especially those in native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities. The high rate of tooth decay among Hawaii's children, which can lead to pain that interferes with daily activities, is of the highest degree of importance to the Hawaii Dental Association and its members. Untreated cavities also increase the risk of more serious infection in the mouth and body. We welcome an opportunity to engage in dialog on this measure and to serve as a resource to policy makers on oral health.

HDA is a statewide membership organization representing dentists practicing in Hawaii and licensed by the State of Hawaii's Board of Dentistry. HDA members are committed to protecting the oral health and well-being of the people of Hawaii, from keiki to kupuna and everyone in between.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on HB 1977, HD 1.



Testimony in Support of HB 1977, HD1

February 12, 2022

Dear Chair Johanson, Vice Chair Kitagawa and Respected Members of the
COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE:

The Hawaii Dental Hygienists' Association (HDHA) **SUPPORTS HB 1977, HD1**. The bill attempts to increase access to oral healthcare for Hawaii's underserved and high-risk population by utilizing the basic skills of dental assistants under the general supervision of a licensed dentist in public health settings. This provision could directly benefit Hawaii's keiki, allowing them to gain improved access to necessary oral health services currently being provided by dental hygienists within the community.

As prevention specialists, dental hygienists understand the importance of preventive dental care services and strive to provide high quality treatment in a variety of settings. Allowing dental hygienists working in public health settings to utilize dental assistants; both being under the general supervision of a licensed dentist, would significantly increase the efficiency and capacity of treatment provided to this population.

As the largest association representing Hawaii's licensed dental hygienists', HDHA **SUPPORTS HB 1977, HD1** to address the access to care issue by allowing dental assistants to work directly with licensed dental hygienists under general supervision in public health settings. We believe this could be a step in the right direction in helping the underserved to achieve better oral health outcomes within our state.

Thank you for your consideration.



To: Representative Johanson, Chair
Representative Kitagawa, Vice Chair
House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce

Re: **HB 1977 HD1, relating to dental assistants**
2:00 PM, February 15, 2022

Chair Johanson, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and committee members,

On behalf of HCAN Speaks!, thank you for the opportunity to support the intention of HB 1977 HD1 and provide a suggested amendment. As a member of the Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition, we support increasing access to oral care and understand that increasing capacity of licensed dental hygienist would assist providers working in public health settings. We suggest making the following changes to ensure the intent of the impact is met.

Page 2 line 1: "The supervising licensed dental hygienist is under the supervision of a licensed dentist."

To read as "The licensed dental hygienist is under the supervision of a licensed dentist.

Increasing the workforce in public health settings by allowing dental assistants to provide limited duties will expand care to vulnerable communities.

For these reasons, HCAN Speaks! respectfully requests the Committee to amend as suggested and support the measure.

Thank you,

Kathleen Algire
Director of Early Learning and Health Policy



HAWAI'I ORAL HEALTH COALITION

Date: February 15, 2022

To: The Honorable Representative Aaron Ling Johanson, Chair
The Honorable Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Re: Support for HB1977 H.D. 1, Relating to Dental Assistants

Hrg: Tuesday, February 15, 2022, at 2:00 pm, Conference Room 329 & via Videoconference

The Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition¹, convened by the Hawai'i Public Health Institute, is in **support of HB1977 H.D. 1**, which revises the Dental Practice Act to allow dental assistants to perform limited, essential duties in public health settings under general supervision of a dentist.

Oral health is essential to overall physical, psychological, social, and economic wellbeing. The oral health in our state is a public health crisis, with Hawaii having the highest prevalence of dental caries in children and adults nationally. Almost one quarter of Hawaii's children have untreated tooth decay. More than 60% of children in Hawai'i do not have protective dental sealants and about 71% Hawaii third graders are affected by tooth decay, which is substantially higher than the national average of 51%.²

Oral health disparities are more pronounced among uninsured and low-income families, intellectually and developmentally disabled residents, the elderly, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations and those on the Neighbor Islands. Hawai'i is one of only 16 states in which adults on Medicaid are not covered for diagnostic, preventive and restorative care.³ Additional unique factors that contribute to oral health disparities in Hawai'i are geographic isolation, lack of community water fluoridation, low percentage of dentists actively accepting Medicaid patients, ethnically diverse populations, and a lack of a dental school in the state.

There are community-based care delivery programs across the state that are making an attempt to address the overwhelming disparities in oral health, such as school-based dental sealant programs and virtual dental home initiatives, or teledentistry. However, the limited oral health workforce allowed in public health settings has hindered the sustainability and viability of these community-based programs. While the Hawai'i Dental Practice Act allows dental hygienists to practice under general supervision of dentist in a public health setting, no dental auxiliary support can be provided by dental assistants because direct supervision is required. This affects the efficiency and production of the dental hygienists when practicing in a public health setting leading to fewer dental services provided to vulnerable communities. Currently, 17 states allow some tasks to be performed by dental assistants under indirect or general supervision and eight states allow performance of some tasks under indirect or general supervision and do not require licensure, registration, or representation on the Board of Dentistry.⁴

As Hawai'i continues to see poor oral health outcomes among our vulnerable populations, we must continue to enhance our approach to increase access to care and improve delivery of services in our communities. The 2015 Hawai'i Oral Health Key Findings report, by the State Department of Health,

provides several recommendations⁵ for consideration and to address oral health disparities and outcomes, including:

- Develop effective, evidence-based community and school-based dental disease prevention programs for all age groups, particularly those who are experiencing oral health disparities.
- Continue to support and expand affordable and accessible preventive dental care services to Hawaii's low-income population.
- Develop strategies to reduce barriers to finding and receiving preventive dental care services for children enrolled in the Medicaid program.
- Explore innovative, evidenced-based strategies to expand access to underserved, high-risk populations, including tele-dentistry.

Each of these recommendations require adequate workforce in order to provide effective oral health care. Allowing dental assistants to perform limited, essential duties in public health settings under the general supervision of a dentist is a meaningful and supported approach to addressing the oral health disparities in Hawai'i.

We **support the intent** of this measure. In order for it to serve its intended purpose we suggest the following revisions:

1. Page 2 line 1: "The supervising licensed dental hygienist is under the supervision of a licensed dentist."
 - **Amended to read as "The licensed dental hygienist is under the supervision of a licensed dentist.**
2. Page 2 lines 3 to 7: "A dental assistant working under the general supervision of a licensed dentist and the direct supervision of a licensed dental hygienist who is under the supervision of a licensed dentist may perform the following supportive dental procedures:"
 - **Amended to read as "A dental assistant working under the general supervision of a licensed dentist and the direction of a licensed dental hygienist who is under the supervision of a licensed dentist may perform the following supportive dental procedures:"**

It is our understanding that dental hygienists may direct the work of dental assistants, but currently do not carry supervisory responsibility over the dental assistant. The intent of this bill is to allow dental assistants to support dental hygienists in public health settings as both are under the general supervision of a dentist.

For the aforementioned reasons, we respectfully ask you to pass HB1977 H.D. 1 with the proposed amendments. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,



Patrick Donnelly
Statewide Oral Health Coalition Manager
Hawai'i Public Health Institute

¹ 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. 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.

² Hawaii State Department of Health. Hawaii Smiles 2015. August 2016.

³ Medicaid Adult Dental Benefits Coverage by State. Center for Health Care Strategies, Inc. September 2019.

⁴ The Dental Assistant Workforce in the United States 2015. Oral Health Workforce Research Center. October 2015.

⁵ Hawai'i Oral Health: Key Findings, Hawai'i Department of Health. August 2015.



To: The Honorable Aaron Ling Johanson, Chair
The Honorable Lisa Kitagawa, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce

From: Peggy Mierzwa, Community & Government Relations, AlohaCare

Date: Tuesday, February 15, 2022

RE: **HB1977 HD1 Relating to Dental Assistants**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to support **HB1977 HD1** Relating to Dental Assistants. This measure would allow dental assistants to operate under the supervision of a dentist in public health settings.

Founded in 1994 by Hawai'i's community health centers, AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan serving over 80,000 Medicaid and dual-eligible health plan members on all islands. We are the only health plan in Hawai'i that exclusively serves Medicaid beneficiaries. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for access to quality health care for all. We believe that health is about supporting whole-person care.

In Hawai'i, there are still disparities to overcome in order for all residents to receive oral health care. In particular, children and adults who rely on Medicaid health insurance are not receiving the oral health care they need. According to "Hawaii Oral Health: Key Findings" vulnerable Hawai'i residents are not receiving preventative oral care, instead treatments are reactive such as tooth extractions and fillings.

Hawai'i has been making great strides in addressing disparities in oral care through community –based care delivered in public settings statewide. These programs include school-based dental sealant programs and virtual dental home initiatives or teledentistry. Even with these great successes, Hawai'i residents, especially on neighbor islands and the rural areas of Oahu, face challenges because of the limits placed on providers in public health settings.

HB1977 HD1 helps to address these limitations by allowing dental assistants to perform limited, essential duties in public health settings.

We suggest pg. 2 line 1 to read: "The ~~supervising~~ licensed dental hygienist is under the supervision of a licensed dentist; and page 2 lines 3-7 to read: "A dental assistant working under the general supervision of a licensed dentist and the direction ~~[direct supervision]~~ of a licensed dental hygienist who is under the supervision of a licensed dentist may perform the following supportive dental procedures" to eliminate confusion of the supervising professional.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support of HB1977 HD1**.

1357 Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 1250, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814
Call: 973-0712 • Toll-free: 1-877-973-0712 • Fax: 808-973-0726 • www.AlohaCare.org



To: Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce

Hearing Date/Time: Tuesday, February 15, 2022 2:00 PM

Re: Testimony in Support of HB1977

From: Emi Eno Orikasa, DDS, Oral Health Director, Hui No Ke Ola Pono

Aloha Chair Johanson, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and members of the Committee,

Hui No Ke Ola Pono supports, with amendments, HB1977 that would allow dental assisting in public health settings under general supervision. Allowing dental assistants to perform limited supportive dental procedures under general supervision would improve access to dental services throughout the state, especially among those that would otherwise not seek or receive dental care.

Hui No Ke Ola Pono has an established Virtual Dental Home (VDH) program that has provided on-site preventive services to Headstart, Early Headstart, WIC, and 2 long-term care facilities on Maui. Most of the VDH patients cannot or will not seek dental care outside of this program. Working with young children or those limited to a wheelchair presents many clinical, behavioral, and ergonomic challenges to a dental hygienist. A dental assistant not only alleviates these challenges but also greatly improves the efficiency of the program. Without a dental assistant, the VDH program is not sustainable.

Hui No Ke Ola Pono requests an amendment on page 2, line 1 as follows:

“The ~~supervising~~ directing licensed dental hygienist is under the supervision of a licensed dentist. (c) A dental assistant working under the general supervision of a licensed dentist and the direction ~~supervision~~ of a licensed dental hygienist who is under the supervision of a licensed dentist may perform the following supportive dental procedures:”

Keeping the term “supervising” may have unintended consequences, as the current rules do not permit supervision for dental hygienists. Dental hygienist supervision is also redundant, as the dental assistant is already under the supervision of the dentist.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

Serving the Native Hawaiians on Maui for 25 years



February 2, 2022

Rep. Aaron Ling Johanson, Chair

Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Members of the House of Representatives Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce

Written Testimony for HB 1977 HD1

Dear Senators Johanson and Kitagawa Members of the Committee,

I am submitting this letter as written testimony for the February 15 hearing on HB 1977 HD1.

I am currently a Professor and Associate Dean for Research and Community Engagement at the College of Dental Medicine at California Northstate University in California. A major focus of my career has been the work I have been doing in many states for many years with systems to improve access to oral health services. For more than two decades I have been consulting with and working with the Hawaii Department of Health and numerous oral health provider groups and community groups in Hawaii. I have been supporting their efforts to improve oral health for underserved groups in Hawaii who face many challenges receiving oral health services and maintaining good oral health.

I have reviewed HB 1977 HD1, and I believe that this legislation, as now written, will be helpful in improving access to oral health services in Hawaii. Thank you for your support of this important direction.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Paul Glassman'.

Paul Glassman DDS, MA, MBA

Professor and Associate Dean for Research and Community Engagement

California Northstate University, College of Dental Medicine

Paul.Glassman@cnsu.edu

HB-1977-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2022 12:59:04 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/15/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Wendy Gibson-Viviani	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Please support HB1977. With the proper training, Dental Assistants can safely expand their scope of practice.

Thank you,

Wendy Gibson-Viviani, RN/BSN