



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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**Testimony COMMENTING on H.B. 1977
RELATING TO DENTAL ASSISTANTS.**

REPRESENTATIVE RYAN I. YAMANE, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES, & HOMELESSNESS

Hearing Date: 2/3/2022

Room Number: Via Videoconference

1 **Fiscal Implications:** None

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

5 The Department agrees allowing dental assistants to provide limited, but 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 like virtual dental homes (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 The Department has concerns on the section (page 5, line 15-16) of this measure that requires the
13 licensed dentist to be “employed in a public setting” as a condition to providing general
14 supervision of the dental assistants and dental hygienists. This requirement restricts private
15 sector dentists (who are not employed in a public setting) from adopting and implementing
16 community-based oral health models to provide accessible dental services to the vulnerable and
17 underserved Hawaii residents. The implication of this language limits the overall capacity and
18 number of dentists permitted to provide dental services via the community-based oral health

1 models that require general supervision. It will take the combined effort of both private and
2 public health dentists to meet the oral health needs in our communities and to improve access to
3 dental care for Hawaii residents.

4 The current law (HRS Section 447-3(d)) for general supervision (dentist) of dental hygienists in
5 public health settings only requires the dental hygienist to be employed in a public health setting
6 but not the supervising dentist.

7 **Offered Amendments:** The DOH offers amendments to §448- (c) (5) on page 5, lines 10-16,
8 that removes the requirement for licensed dentists, dental hygienists, and dental assistants to be
9 “employed in a public setting” The offered amendments are bolded below:

10 (5) Assisting the licensed dental hygienist in the performance of the duties of the dental
11 hygienist as requested; provided that the assistance does not include procedures
12 listed in Hawaii Administrative Rules, sections 16-79—69.5 and 16-79—69.10;
13 provided that the dental assistant, licensed dental hygienist, and licensed dentist are
14 **[employed in a public setting.] providing dental services in a public health**
15 **setting.** *Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed and stricken. New statutory*
16 *material is underscored*

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

Testimony of the Board of Dentistry

**Before the
House Committee on Health, Human Services, and Homelessness
Thursday, February 3, 2022
9:00 a.m.
Via Videoconference**

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

Chair Yamane and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sandra Matsushima, and I am the Executive Officer of the Board of Dentistry (Board).

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

The Board will review and take a position on H.B. 1977, Relating to Dental Assistants, at its next meeting, currently scheduled for Monday, February 7, 2022. The Board will provide the Committee with updated information about its position following the meeting.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



Hawaii Dental Association

To: House Committee on Health, Human Services, and Homelessness
Time/Date: 9:00 a.m., February 3, 2022
Location: State Capitol Conference Room 329 via Video Conference
Re: HB 1977, Relating to Dental Assistants

Aloha Chair Yamane, Vice-Chair Tam, and members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Dental Association (HDA) is in support of HB 1977, 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 testify in support of HB 1977.



Hawai'i
Children's Action Network Speaks!
Building a unified voice for Hawai'i's children

To: Representative Yamane, Chair
Representative Tam, Vice Chair
House Committee on Health, Human Services, and Homelessness

Re: **HB 1977, relating to dental assistants**
9:00 AM, February 3, 2022

Chair Yamane, Vice Chair Tam, and committee members,

On behalf of HCAN Speaks!, thank you for the opportunity to support the intention of the bill and provide suggested amendments. 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 4 line 7: "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.

2. Page 4 lines 9 to 11: "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 duties."

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 duties."

3. Page 5 lines 15 to 16: "provided that the dental assistant , licensed dental hygienist, and licensed dentist are employed in a public setting."

To read as "provided that the dental assistant, licensed dental hygienist, and licensed dentist are providing dental services in a public health setting"

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



Testimony in Support of HB 1977

February 1, 2022

Dear Chair Yamane and Respected Members of the COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES, & HOMELESSNESS:

The Hawaii Dental Hygienists' Association (HDHA) **SUPPORTS HB 1977**. 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** 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.



**Testimony to Support HB1977, Relating to Dental Assistants
from Dr. Diane S.L. Paloma, President & CEO of Hawaii Dental Service**

House Committee on Health, Human Services & Homelessness
Rep. Ryan I. Yamane, Chair
Rep. Adrian K. Tam, Vice Chair

February 1, 2022

Aloha Chair Yamane, Vice Chair Tam and Committee Members:

Hawaii Dental Service (HDS), the state's leading dental benefits provider, strongly supports HB1977 (companion SB2280), which would enable dental assistants to work in public health settings (as defined in HRS 447-3) directly with a dental hygienist under the general supervision of a licensed dentist.

Studies show oral bacteria and inflammation associated with severe gum disease plays a role in the development of heart disease and other conditions. Certain diseases, such as diabetes, which is prevalent in our islands, lowers the body's resistance to infection and this can lead to oral health problems. Oral health clearly affects our overall health.

However, access to quality oral health care has been an ongoing challenge in Hawaii. The pandemic has created more of a health divide in our state, especially in rural areas of the neighbor islands, where there are fewer dentists per capita. This disproportionately affects Hawaii's most vulnerable populations.

The HDS Foundation has supported a number of initiatives to address these disparities, including substantial investment in virtual dental homes, which allow dental hygienists to conduct dental screenings and perform other preventive procedures in a public setting, while under the general supervision of a licensed dentist who may be observing the procedure remotely. These public health settings have included schools, community centers, nursing homes, and other venues that are easily accessible for families.

Allowing dental assistants to work alongside dental hygienists in these public settings would greatly improve access to oral health care. It is a more efficient use of valuable human resources and will provide opportunities to reach more families who may avoid a dental visit altogether because of the inconvenience. In addition, this creates another employment venue for dental assistants and can help to expand the practices of Hawaii dentists, many of whom were affected by restrictions at the onset of the pandemic.

HB1977 provides another way we can care for the people of Hawaii.

Mahalo for your support.



Dr. Diane S.L. Paloma
President and CEO



HAWAI'I ORAL HEALTH COALITION

Date: February 3, 2022

To: The Honorable Representative Ryan I. Yamane, Chair Rep. Adrian K. Tam, Vice Chair
The Honorable Representative Adrian K. Tam, Vice Chair

Re: Support for HB1977, Relating to Dental Assistants

Hrg: Thursday, February 3, 2022, at 9am, Conference Room 329 and via Videoconference

The Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition¹, convened by the Hawai'i Public Health Institute is in **support of HB1977** 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 4 line 7: "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.

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.

2. Page 4 lines 9 to 11: "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 duties."

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 duties."

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.

3. Page 5 lines 15 to 16: "provided that the dental assistant, licensed dental hygienist, and licensed dentist are employed in a public setting."

Amended to read as "provided that the dental assistant, licensed dental hygienist, and licensed dentist are providing dental services in a public health setting"

Our current understanding of the law is that a licensed dentist may provide community dental services through a dental hygienist under general supervision, provided that they are employed, or assigned work, in a public health setting. To require a licensed dentist to be employed in a public health setting would limit the number of licensed dentists allowed to provide services in a public health setting as it would only allow licensed dentists that are employed at a community health center and would prevent private licensed dentists from providing dental services in public health settings. While the intent of this bill is to increase access by allowing additional workforce in public health settings, as written, this would potentially be an unintended hinderance to the original intent of the bill.

For these reasons, we respectfully ask you to pass HB1977 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: Committee on Health, Human Services, and Homelessness

Hearing Date/Time: Thursday, February 3, 2022 9:00 AM

Re: Testimony in Support of HB1977

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

Aloha Chair Yamane, Vice Chair, Tan, 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 4, line 7 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.

Additionally, Hui No Ke Ola Pono requests an amendment on page 5, line 15 as follows:

“provided that the dental assistant, licensed dental hygienist, and licensed dentist are ~~employed~~ providing services in a public setting.”

The current wording limits the use of the VDH model to Federally Qualified Health Centers and Community Clinics. The number of providers in these clinics are limited. This change will allow dentists working in private practice to also provide care utilizing the VDH model in the public health setting.

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

Serving the Native Hawaiians on Maui for 25 years

HB-1977

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 5:11:45 PM

Testimony for HHH on 2/3/2022 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Michele C Tui	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

As a Dental Hygienist and member of ADHA, HDHA and employee of West Hawaii Community Health center I strongly support HB1977. For 3 YRS I was part of the pilot program; Teledentistry, in West Hawaii. I know we made a great impact with the younger keiki working with Head Start, the WIC program and Tutu and Me. The problem was that we couldn't fully utilize the trained Dental Assistant in aiding me with the normal duties that we receive in the dental office due to the current wording in the law. My hope is that we can one day soon be able to utilize Teledentistry for the community again and be able to have the support of a qualified Dental Assistant. Please support this bill,

Respectfully,

Michele C. Tu'i RDH

HB-1977

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 11:07:57 AM

Testimony for HHH on 2/3/2022 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Hillary Vidinhar	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Rep. Ryan Yamane, Vice Chair Rep. Adrian Tan, and the HHH committee,

My name is Hillary, I am a Dental Hygienist. I worked off site at both Hale Makua Nursing Home and Kula Hospital Long Term Care Facilities on the island of Maui. Tele- Dentistry has made a huge difference in a small population of special needs clients, who would not be able to receive services without us going to them. Many of the clients we work with are elderly with debilitating health conditions. The Dental Assisting bill would greatly help hygienists to provide the utmost care and a safer environment for both client and provider. When going to these sites, I often find myself struggling to do many "simple" procedures without assistance. An example of this is taking radiographs (X-Rays); given the population we work with, the client may or not be cooperative. I often have to position and hold the x-ray sensor and/or holder in their mouth with one hand, while trying to carry, and position the 6lb hand held x-ray unit with the other. While doing this many times the patient is moving their head, yelling, or trying to move my hand while trying to get a good picture in one take, often times it turns into needing to take multiple x-rays to get a diagnostic image. I beleive having an assistant would provide less radiation exposure to the patient and provider. Another thing I find difficult, was needing to dental chart on my own. At one of the sites, the computer is far from the patient chair; in order for me to chart, I need to go back and forth from chair to computer or write everything down and input the information later. This type of charting is inefficient, also trying to go back and forth with the tight spaces we work (typically squeezing between the patient wheelchair and dental equipment), which causes a hazard for tripping and/or falling. Having an assistant available to help chart at the time of service and treatment, would not only save time, but would make it safer for both client and provider.

Assistance with help to suction would provide greater patient comfort and less chance of aspiration. Many times these clients have gross (excess) debris from food, plaque, and tartar, on occasion they may have fillings or crowns that are loose or may become loose during the cleaning. I find myself needing to choose between using the mouth mirror or holding the high volume suction in order to clear the debris. This makes it difficult to clean and clear debris safely and effectively, I do not think a Hygienist should have to choose between using a mouth mirror to properly see or hold a suction to prevent choking, both are equally important to quality care. Having an assistant ot hold the suction would immensely reduce potential injury to the client or prevent choking hazards. It also cuts down on time, stopping what UI am doin to clear and suction. Lastly having an assistance to help clean and reset the operatory, would allow me to input my notes and help to prepare for the next patient.

I am an advocate for this bill, because having an assistant, would allow us to see more clients and provide optimal care in the safest way possible to the people in the community who need us the most.

Thank you for your time!

Hillary, RDH

HB-1977

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 2:28:06 PM

Testimony for HHH on 2/3/2022 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Jennifer Logigian	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am in support of HB1977. This bill would simply allow dental assistants to continue to perform their normal duties under general supervision of a dentist but in a public health setting. Dental assistants provide a vital role in community health and in allowing improved access to dental care for our high risk and underserved patients. Limiting dental assistants' ability to practice as they have been trained – and as is well within the scope of their duties – only serves to restrict the time and resources available to provide care for our community. The passage of this bill would improve workflow and could allow for more patients to be seen and triaged. The law as it is currently written creates a massive and unnecessary impediment to the delivery of necessary dental services and provides absolutely no benefit to the patient or the greater Hawaii community.

Date of hearing: 2.1.2022

Bill #: HB1977

Committee on Health, Human Services and Homelessness

Representative Ryan I., Yamane, Chair,

Representative Adrian K. Tam, Vice Chair and Committee members,

My name is Anne Hvizdak. I am writing in **support of** HB1977 to support the ability of dental assistants to work under general supervision in public health settings. I am pleased this committee is considering this legislation that is so important to the public health initiatives that are being planned statewide. I am a retired dental hygienist that conducted community dental health projects like this in Wisconsin for 10 years with the Wisconsin Seal a Smile program. Seal A Smile was one of the first programs funded from the Centers for Disease Control that studied the use of dental health providers. Best practices guidelines recommend having dental assistants as part of public health programs to optimize the work involved. Having a dental assistant to collaboratively work with to provide services was imperative to deliver optimal services and made us more time efficient. Our team treated over 1000 students annually with screening, referral, fluoride, and sealant services in 16 schools. I could not have imagined doing this work without a dedicated dental assistant.

Hawaii is fortunate to be promoting school-based sealant programs, expanding the work that could utilize tele dentistry and other community dental health opportunities. Passing this bill will assist those activities to become more successful. I hope that this committee will advance this bill for a vote and support the measure.

Mahalo for your consideration:

Anne Hvizdak, BSDH, CDHC

669 Aewa St.

Eleele, HI 96705

Hvizdak11@gmail.com

HB-1977

Submitted on: 2/2/2022 11:23:44 AM

Testimony for HHH on 2/3/2022 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
andrew tseu	Department of Health	Comments	Yes

Comments:

Available for comments.



ALOHACARE

To: The Honorable Representative Yamane, Chair
The Honorable Representative Tam, Vice-Chair
Committee on Health, Human Services & Homelessness

From: Peggy Mierzwa, Government Affairs, AlohaCare

HRG: Thursday, February 3, 2022, 9:00AM

RE: **HB1977 Relating to Dental Assistants**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to support **HB1977** 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 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 helps to address these limitations by allowing dental assistants to perform limited, essential duties in public health settings.

We suggest eliminating the term "supervising licensed dental hygienist" (pg. 4 line 7) and "direct supervision of a licensed dental hygienist" (pg. 4 lines 9-11), and instead simply using "under the supervision of a licensed dentist" to eliminate confusion of the supervising professional.



We also suggest replacing the term “are employed” (pg. 5 lines 15-16) with “are providing dental services in a public health setting”. Dentists providing services in public health setting are not employed by them, but are participating in community-based programs. As written, the bill would apply only to dentists employed by community health centers and exclude other dentists who provide equally valuable services.

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

HB-1977

Submitted on: 2/2/2022 12:16:23 PM

Testimony for HHH on 2/3/2022 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Robin Geldert Cheek	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Hawaii State Legislature,

I have been a licensed RDH in the state of Hawaii, graduating from University of Hawaii Manoa's dental hygiene program and subsequently licensed in California as an RDH and RDHAP. My involvement in working for wonderful dentists on Maui and the Big island in private practice led me to obtain California licenses to further my career in the last 30 years. I returned home in 2016 to the Big Island to work for West Hawaii Community Health Center to promote community dental care and provide underinsured and uninsured keiki's and adults preventive dental services ranging from prophylaxis to Scaling and Root Planing, sealants, periomaintenance appts, x-rays, school dental fairs, and Tele Dentistry etc. In this time, I returned to obtain my BS in "Professional Development and Advanced Patient Care" from Grand Canyon University's College of Nursing. Knowing that I have support from our dental assistant team is foundational to the work I am licensed (hense the degrees)to perform. Without the help from our 'dental' angels who are critical to our dental team which includes the General Dentist's and Pediatric Dentist's schedule, our hands would be tied, literally if this bill does not pass. Because dentistry is a stressful business, it is even more demanding at the community level on the providers who are committed to supporting and expanding accessible preventive dental care services for all who come through our 'ohana's' door, young or old. The legislature states it this way, "...dental assistants are prohibited from providing auxiliary support except under direct supervision. This undermines the efficiency of dental hygienists in public health settings and limits the reach and sustainability of community dental programs." For the advancement of dental care for our population in Hawaii, especially rural Hawaii please pass bill H.B. NO. 1977 " to allow dental assistant to perform limited, essential duties under the general supervision of a dentist in public health setting". This bill will greatly affect our workflow at West Hawaii Community Health Center to meet the needs of our dental community on the Big Island.

Sincerely,

Robin Geldert- Cheek RDH, RDHAP, CSDH, BS.

Leanne Higa
(808)280-2590
higalea@hawaii.edu

Representative Ryan Yamane
Vice Chair Representative Adrian Tan
HHH Committee Members
Hawaii State Capital

Dear Representative and HHH Committee Members,

Aloha, and greetings to you. I am a practicing dental hygienist and dental hygiene educator from the island of Maui. Periodically, I have worked for the Hui No Ke Ola Pono as the virtual dental home (VDH) hygienist. I supported the legislation allowing for general supervision in the dental hygiene profession by recognizing the need for direct care to all in our community. The intent of this letter is to support the dental assisting bill allowing dental assistants to work under general supervision in the public health setting.

The virtual dental home utilizes technology and innovation to bring dental care to underserved populations. I teach community dental hygiene health education, to bring awareness to the problem of lack of access to dental care. The patients who are served by this teledentistry virtual dental home project need personalized care in a setting convenient to them. Dental assistants facilitate this program by working in tandem with the dentist and dental hygienist to bring care directly to the patients.

This bill will allow dental assistants to help with the infection control and patient care in these alternate care settings. The dental assistant role is vital to providing safe and effective care. This person is responsible to assist during the assessment process which includes preparing and sanitizing the treatment areas, setting up instruments, radiography, extraoral photos, and intraoral photos. Because of the nature of the targeted patient population who are seen in the public health setting, the assistant also is a tremendous help in keeping the mouth clear of liquid and debris as the hygienist works. They also are trained to pass instruments for optimal treatment efficiency. In addition, they are able to clean, sanitize, and breakdown the treatment area. This keeps the patients and the dental hygienist safe from injury and cross contamination.

During my time as a VDH hygienist, I have experienced times when the help of the dental assistant would have been instrumental in allowing me to do my job. The patients who are served by VDH are varied in age and are the most medically, emotionally, and socially complicated that I have ever worked on. Having a dental assistant suctioning to keep an airway open in a patient with swallowing disorders is absolutely necessary when providing care. During care to keiki, the dental assistant helps to take radiographs while I hold the sensor and the child's mouth still and also passes things like fluoride to me while I try to apply it to wiggly keiki. As you can see, this bill would allow the VDH project to continue and to grow because more procedures can be performed and more patients will be able to receive care.

Mahaho!
Leanne Higa, RDH, BS, MEd

Testimony on House Bill 1977

Relating to Dental Assistants

Submitted by Dr. Steven Pine, DDS., Dental Director

February 1, 2022

I, Dr. Steven Pine, DDS, currently work as the Dental Director at West Hawaii Community Health Center, (WHCHC) and I support Senate Bill 2280, which allows dental assistants to perform limited duties under the general supervision of a dentist in a public health setting.

In 2017 West Hawaii Community Health Center became the first virtual dental home (VDH) pilot site in the state of Hawai'i. The VDH is a community-based delivery of care system that uses telehealth connected dental teams to bring services to the communities where the underserved and vulnerable populations reside. It has proved to be a safe, effective, and cost-efficient delivery system for providing oral health care to the most vulnerable populations.

At West Hawaii Community Health Center's VDH, a hygienist and dental assistant will provide oral health education, case management, and dental preventive procedures at a community site. Radiographs (x-rays) and intraoral photos taken during the visit will be sent to a dentist at the dental office to review.

Nearly one in four third graders have untreated tooth decay. Programs and outreach efforts like the VDH help meet the overwhelming lack of access to sufficient dental care born increasingly by children. The dentist can remotely diagnose and treatment plan the needs of the patient. The dentist can then authorize the hygienists to provide the preventative care at the community site or, if needed, have the patient referred to our dental office to complete more complex care.

Under the current laws the dental assistant operating under the general supervision of a dentist would be unable to perform basic functions in assisting the hygienist. These functions include preparing procedural trays, taking radiographs, and recording vital signs. All allowable

duties are done daily by the same assistant when providing them under direct supervision.

Restricting the basic functions of the well-trained dental assistant acts as a hinderance to providing efficient care to patients and increases the difficulty to the hygienist in providing that care. We owe it to our island's keiki to do everything we can to increase safe, high quality access to care.

I would request in consideration of this bill an update to some of its language.

- On page 4, line 7, the term "supervising licensed dental hygienist" is utilized. Per the HAR supervision is defined as it applies to a dentist but not a hygienist. I would suggest removing "supervising" to align with the current Hawaii Dental Practice Act
- On page 4, lines 9 to 11 discuss the dental assistant working under the direct supervision of a licensed dental hygienist. The current Hawaii Dental Practice Act does not mention dental hygienists supervising dental assistants. I would suggest it is the dentist that is supervising the dental assistant under general supervision. This would better align with the current Hawaii Dental Practice Act. Otherwise supervision will need to be defined as it applies to a hygienist.
- On page 5, lines 15 to 16 note that the licensed dentists are employed in a public setting. I would suggest clarification around the definition of how the term "employed" is used.

For these reasons I strongly support **HB1977** and would request consideration in addressing the language noted above. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.