

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



KEITH T. HAYASHI
SUPERINTENDENT

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 02/09/2024
Time: 03:05 PM
Location: CR 229 & Videoconference
Committee: Senate Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB 2476 RELATING TO DENTAL HYGIENISTS.

Purpose of Bill: Authorizes licensed dental hygienists to perform preventative dental sealant screenings and apply dental sealants on individuals, under certain conditions, in a Department of Education school-based oral health program.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports SB 2476, which permits licensed dental hygienists to perform preventive dental sealant screenings and apply preventive dental sealants in conjunction with a licensed dentist in a school-based dental program.

During the 2022-23 school year, students in Department schools statewide sought care in the health room 833 times due to an oral/dental concern, with an average visit time of 12 minutes. Children with poor oral health lose valuable class time due to pain and appointments for treatment, negatively impacting their overall health and well-being.

Taking proactive steps to strengthen school-based oral health and sealant programs will support the prevention of tooth decay amongst Hawaii's children, helping to ensure they are healthy and ready to learn.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 2476.

Testimony of the Board of Dentistry

**Before the
Senate Committee on Education
Friday, February 9, 2024
3:05 p.m.
Conference Room 229 and Videoconference**

**On the following measure:
S.B. 2476, RELATING TO DENTAL HYGIENISTS**

Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sheena Choy, and I am the Executive Officer of the Board of Dentistry (Board). The Board supports this bill.

The purpose of this bill is to authorize licensed dental hygienists to perform preventative dental sealant screenings and apply dental sealants on individuals, under certain conditions, in a Department of Education school-based oral health program.

The Board supports the bill's intent to strengthen school-based oral health programs, which will support the prevention of tooth decay amongst Hawaii's youth. The Board emphasizes the importance of dental examinations, and notes that the proposed amendments will still require licensed dental hygienists to refer individuals not currently under the care of a dentist and who are seen in a public health setting to a dental facility for further dental care, pursuant to Hawaii Revised Statutes chapter 447-3(d).

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Education
Friday, February 09, 2024 at 3:05 p.m.

by

Clementina D. Ceria-Ulep, Dean
Nancy Atmospera-Walch School of Nursing

and

Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 2476 – RELATING TO DENTAL HYGIENISTS

Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on **SB 2476 in support**.

This measure authorizes dental hygienists who are under the direct supervision of a licensed dentist to perform preventive dental sealant screenings and apply dental sealants on certain individuals in a school-based oral health program.

The dental hygiene program at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Nancy Atmospera-Walch School of Nursing (UHM NAWSON) is the only baccalaureate level program in the state and is accredited by CODA. It offers the educational preparation required of dental hygienists to provide oral health care and education to the people of Hawaii, the continental U.S., and the Pacific-Asia region. Students majoring in dental hygiene can become licensed professionals who offer preventive, education, and therapeutic services for the control of oral diseases and the promotion of optimum oral health. Students receive education in basic dental hygiene, dental and oral pathology (disease), clinical dental hygiene, dental materials and more. Students gain competency in screenings to assess eligibility for preventive services, and applying dental materials such as dental sealants during the course of their education. Dental Hygienists hold the competencies and qualifications to complete, comprehensively and safely, the duties and responsibilities described in this measure.

Further, the UHM NAWSON partners with the Department of Education on the Hawai'i Keiki: Healthy and Ready to Learn program. This nationally recognized program infuses school nurses and health technicians throughout DOE public schools, as well as coordinating dental health services including screenings and preventive sealant clinics throughout the state. The Hawai'i Keiki program maintains on contract a dentist for consultation throughout all dental hygienist screening and preventive service events.

This bill clarifies that preventive dental sealant screenings and application of preventive dental sealants are within the scope of work for a dental hygienist when a dentist is available for consultation. This bill would improve access to care by enabling real-time consultations rather than in-person oversight, thus facilitating oral health preventive programs to have greater scalability and reach. It is with pride that Hawai'i Keiki contributes to not only physical health improvement for the children of Hawai'i, but also oral health improvement. Improved functioning of our dental sealant activities by way of this bill will have tremendous outcomes for the children of Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide supporting testimony related to this measure.

LATE



HAWAII ORAL HEALTH COALITION

Date: February 9, 2024

To: The Honorable Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair
The Honorable Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Education

Re: Support for SB 2476, Relating to Dental Hygienists

Hrg: February 9, at 3:05pm - Conference Room 229 & via Videoconference

The Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition, a program of the Hawai'i Public Health Institute ⁱ, is in **strong support of SB 2476**, which allows dental hygienists to apply a dental sealant under general supervision of a licensed dentist in school-based oral health programs, without requiring a child to be an existing patient of record, receive a comprehensive dental examination, or receive a comprehensive treatment plan prior to receiving the dental sealant.

The mission of the Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition (HOHC) is to improve the overall health and well-being of all Hawai'i residents by improving access and equity in oral health care through collaborative partnerships, advocacy, and education. HOHC is a community-driven organization comprised of members representing organizations and individuals from diverse sectors across Hawai'i.

Oral health is essential to the overall physical, psychological, social, and economic well-being of Hawai'i's residents. Yet, our residents suffer from poor oral health ⁱⁱ:

- Hawai'i has among the highest prevalence of dental decay in children and adults compared to other states.
- Low-income families, intellectually and developmentally disabled residents, kūpuna, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations, and neighbor island residents are disproportionately impacted by poor oral health.
- Lack of an in-state dental school, geographic isolation, lack of community water fluoridation, and societal inequities are significant contributors to our poor oral health status.

Children in Hawai'i have the highest rate of tooth decay in the nation. This bill would increase access to oral healthcare through school-based programs that provide dental sealants. According to the Hawai'i Smiles 2015 report, more than 60% of Hawai'i children do not have protective sealants and recommend prevention programs such as school-based oral health programs ⁱⁱⁱ. Further, the Hawai'i Department of Human Services, Med-QUEST Division, reported that only 10.7% of children with Medicaid aged 6-14 years have protective sealants in 2019 ^{iv}.

Children in Hawai'i have the highest prevalence of tooth decay among third graders in the United States. More than 70% of Hawai'i third graders are affected by tooth decay, compared to the national average of 52%ⁱⁱ. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and American Dental Association promote sealants as the most effective preventative strategy in tooth decay.

School-based sealant programs are efficient and cost effective, as each tooth sealed saves more than \$11 in dental treatment costs making them an ideal solution to closing oral health care gaps throughout the state^{v,vi}. School sealant programs can reach children who are most at risk for developing cavities, including low-income children and children in rural areas^{vii}. These programs are designed to reach children from low-income families who are less likely to seek out oral healthcare, and are at higher risk for other tooth decay problems.

This proposed measure is a zero-cost approach that will improve the efficiency and impact of existing school-based sealant efforts and support expansion of school-based oral health programs in our vulnerable communities. For these reasons, we respectfully ask you to pass SB 2476. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,



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

ⁱ Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI) 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 Family Health Services Division, Hawai'i Department of Health. 2015. *Hawaii Oral Health: Key Findings*. https://health.hawaii.gov/about/files/2013/06/Key_Findings_wC.pdf

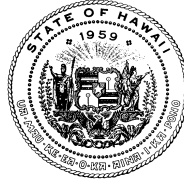
ⁱⁱⁱ Family Health Services Division, Hawai'i Department of Health. 2015. *Hawaii Smiles 2015 The Oral Health of Hawaii's Children*. <https://health.hawaii.gov/about/files/2013/06/Hawaii-Smiles-Report.pdf>

^{iv} MedQUEST Division, Hawai'i State Department of Human Services. (2019). *CMS 416 Reports*. Retrieved from: <https://www.hawaiihealthmatters.org/indicators/index/dashboard?alias=OralHealth>

^v Griffin, S., Naavaal, S., Scherrer, C., Griffin, P. M., Harris, K., & Chattopadhyay, S. (2016). School-Based Dental Sealant Programs Prevent Cavities And Are Cost-Effective. *Health affairs (Project Hope)*, 35(12), 2233–2240. <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2016.0839>

^{vi} Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016, October 18). *Vital Signs: Dental Sealant Use and Untreated Tooth Decay Among U.S. School-Aged Children*. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6541e1.htm?s_cid=mm6541e1_w

^{vii} Community Preventive Services Task Force. (2016, April 1). *Oral Health: Preventing Dental Caries, School-Based Dental Sealant Delivery Programs*. https://www.thecommunityguide.org/media/pdf/Oral-Health-Caries-School-based-Sealants_0.pdf



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
P. O. Box 3378
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doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony in SUPPORT of S.B. 2476
RELATING TO DENTAL HYGIENISTS**

SENATOR MICHELLE N. KIDANI, CHAIR
SENATOR DONNA MERCADO KIM, VICE CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Hearing Date: 2/9/2024

Room Number: CR 229

1 **Fiscal Implications:** None.

2 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health supports this measure that permits licensed
3 dental hygienists to conduct dental sealant screenings and apply dental sealants when under the
4 general supervision of a licensed dentist in a school-based oral health program.

5 This measure aims to streamline the dental sealant process by permitting dental hygienists to
6 perform dental sealant screenings without requiring an examination or treatment plan by a dentist.
7 This will significantly reduce the labor costs of a dentist performing dental sealant screenings in
8 schools and eliminates of an expensive barrier to promote, develop, and sustain school-based oral
9 health programs.

10 The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Dental Association studies
11 cite the application of dental sealants to molars as one of the most effective practices in preventing
12 tooth decay among children. Research indicates that providing dental sealants through school-based
13 oral health programs is a cost-effective strategy to reach low-income children, who are at a higher
14 risk of developing tooth decay. Hawaii's third-graders have one of the highest prevalence of tooth
15 decay in the nation.

16 This proposed practice aligns with the dental practice act in most states, follows best
17 evidence-based practices, and serves as a proactive step toward improving the oral health of children,
18 particularly those at greater risk.

19 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

20 **Offered Amendments:** None.

Senate Committee on Education
Re: SB2476 in strong support
Hawai'i State Capitol, Conference Room 229
February 9, 2024; 3:05pm

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **STRONG SUPPORT of Senate Bill 2476** relating to Dental Hygienists.

Children in Hawai'i have the highest rate of tooth decay in the nation. This bill would increase access to oral healthcare through school-based programs that provide dental sealants. According to the Hawai'i Smiles 2015 report, more than 60% of Hawai'i children do not have protective sealants and recommend prevention programs such as school-based oral health programs. Children in Hawai'i have the highest prevalence of tooth decay among third graders in the United States. More than [70 percent](#) of Hawai'i third graders are affected by tooth decay, compared to the national average of 52%. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)) and the American Dental Association (ADA) cite sealants as the most effective preventative strategy for tooth decay.

This proposal would allow dental hygienists to apply dental sealants in school-based oral health programs under general supervision, meaning the dentist is not directly on-site without a complete treatment plan or examination from the dentist. However, Hawai'i also has the most [severe restrictions](#) on dental hygienists, hindering the increased application of sealants in schools. Antiquated professional scopes of practice prevent dental hygienists from being a powerful contributor to improving children's oral health.

School-based sealant programs are efficient and [cost-effective](#), as each tooth sealed saves more than \$11 in [dental treatment](#) costs, making them an ideal solution to closing oral health care gaps throughout the state. [School sealant programs](#) can reach children who are most at risk for developing cavities, including low-income children and children in rural areas. These programs are designed to reach children from low-income families who are less likely to seek out oral healthcare and are at higher risk for other tooth decay problems. When children have access to a school-based oral health program, they are referred to their dental home in the community to follow up on any procedures and receive family education.

Oral health and physical health are no longer two distinct categories. The impact of poor oral health is felt for a person's lifetime. Hawai'i must turn the tide of poor outcomes for children's oral health. Changing key policies such as the ones outlined in this bill will allow for the expansion of school-based oral health programs and promote healthier, happier keiki. Mahalo for your support of Hawai'i's keiki.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

Mai Hall, M.Ed.
Children's Health Coordinator

February 7, 2024

Testimony in Support of SB2476, Relating to Dental Hygienists

Hawaii Dental Hygienists' Association

Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Mercado Kim and Esteemed Members of the Committee on Education

The Hawaii Dental Hygienists' Association applauds your efforts to help solve the problem of inadequate oral health care for Hawai'i children. According to the Hawai'i Smiles 2015 report, more than 60% of Hawai'i children do not have protective sealants on primary or permanent teeth. This statistic is a causative factor in the alarming decay rate seen among children in our state. Collected data shows more than [70 percent](#) of Hawai'i third graders are affected by tooth decay, compared to the national average of 52%, distinguishing Hawai'i children as having the highest prevalence of tooth decay in the nation.

According to the CDC, "Sealants prevent cavities and reduce associated dental treatment costs, especially among high-risk children, when sealants are applied to permanent molars they have been shown to avert tooth decay over an average of 5-7 years." Without access to regular preventive dental services, dental care for many children is postponed until symptoms, such as toothache and facial abscess, become so acute that care is sought in hospital emergency rooms. This frequent consequence of failed prevention is not only wasteful and costly to the health care system, but it rarely addresses the problem, as few emergency departments deliver definitive dental services.

School-based sealant programs are efficient and [cost effective](#), making them an ideal solution to closing oral health care gaps throughout the state. [School sealant programs](#) can reach children who are most at risk for developing cavities, including low-income children and children in rural areas. These programs are designed to reach children who are less likely to seek out oral healthcare in the private sector, and are at higher risk for tooth decay problems. Changing key policies such as the ones outlined in this bill will allow for the expansion of school-based oral health programs.

The Hawaii Dental Hygienists' Association is the only organization representing dental hygiene professionals in the state of Hawaii, and is a constituent of the American Dental Hygienists' Association. We strongly support SB2746 and stand behind extensive research supporting the effectiveness of dental sealants as decay-preventive agents.

Hygienists are known as the "Prevention Specialists" in oral healthcare, and are fully trained and capable of placing sealants on both primary and permanent teeth. Dental hygienists are

licensed professionals who have successfully completed an accredited dental hygiene program and passed the National Board Examination in Dental Hygiene, as well as a state or regional clinical Board exam. Accredited dental hygiene programs require an average of 2,910 clock hours of curriculum, including 654 clock hours of supervised clinical dental hygiene instruction.

A dental hygienist is licensed to perform specific oral health care duties such as educational, therapeutic and preventive procedures. Sealant placement is among those preventive procedures. Expanding the Hawaii practice act, allowing dental hygienists to place sealants in school-based oral health programs under general supervision, without prior examination from a dentist would remedy the existing procedural setback, and allow dentists to prioritize the advanced care needs of patients while increasing access to care by allowing dental hygienists to perform key prevention activities on the spot.

“Prevention is better than cure.” This common axiom applies to not only systemic maladies but oral ones as well. SB2746 takes Hawaii a step closer to preventing oral disease in the most needy and underserved of its population.

In closing, HDHA strongly supports SB2746 to address the prevention of dental disease among Hawai'i children. Dental hygienists possess the education and training to fulfill the goals described in this bill. We look forward to working toward our common goal of increased oral health care and decreased dental decay for Hawai'i children.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

February 7, 2024

Testimony in Support of SB 2476, Relating to Dental Hygienists

Senate Committee on Education
Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection

Friday, February 9, 2024
3:05 pm
Conference Room 229

Aloha Chairs Kidani and Keohokalole, Vice Chairs Kim and Fukunaga, and Committee Members:

Hawaii Dental Service (HDS) strongly supports SB2476, Relating to Dental Hygienists, because it will expand access to dental sealants, a proven preventive measure against tooth decay, for Hawai'i's most vulnerable keiki.

In response to the Department of Health's 2015 Hawai'i Smiles report that documented that more than 60% of children in Hawaii do not have dental sealants, the HDS Foundation formed a partnership with the University of Hawai'i to provide dental sealants for underserved children attending Hawai'i's Title I elementary schools.

The UH Nancy Atmospera-Walch School of Nursing's Hawai'i Keiki: Healthy and Ready to Learn program and the HDS Foundation collaborate with the Hawai'i Department of Education to provide sealants to protect the teeth of children at no cost to families. We officially launched the Seal Away Decay program on O'ahu in 2020, expanded to Maui and Kaua'i and this year will expand to the Big Island.

In the 2022-23 school year, the Seal Away Decay program provided oral screenings to more than 2,000 second graders in 68 schools on O'ahu, Maui and Kaua'i. Of those who were screened, 60% received sealants and 65 were referred to a dentist for urgent care.

Sealants in the schools is a powerful preventive tool to reach those who are hard to reach. There is room for improvement and expansion. If SB2476 becomes law, more keiki in more schools could take advantage of sealants to improve the oral health of Hawaii children.

Dental hygienists are trained to identify when sealants may be appropriate and to apply sealants to teeth. However, dental hygienists are currently only able to apply sealants when certain requirements are met: a child must be a patient of record with a dental provider and have a treatment plan from that provider before receiving a protective sealant. These requirements create administrative barriers that hinder efficiency and effectiveness of school-based oral health programs.

Allowing dental hygienists to apply sealants at the time of screening in a school-based setting is an effective, cost-free solution that improves oral health outcomes. While dental hygienists perform these key prevention activities, supervising dentists can prioritize patients' advanced



care needs. This would improve the sustainability, efficiency, and effectiveness of school-based oral health programs while increasing access to care.

Hawai'i's keiki deserve a healthy smile. Mahalo for considering SB2476.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Diane S.L. Paloma", written in a cursive style.

Dr. Diane S.L. Paloma
President and CEO
Hawaii Dental Service

To: The Honorable Michelle N. Kidani, Chair
The Honorable Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair House
Senate Committee on Education

From: Paula Arcena, External Affairs Vice President
Mike Nguyen, Public Policy Manager

Hearing: Friday, February 9, 2024, 3:05 PM, Conference Room 229

RE: **SB2476 Relating to Dental Hygienists**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support** of **SB2476**. This measure authorizes dental hygienists who are under the direct supervision of a licensed dentist to perform preventive dental sealant screenings and apply dental sealants on certain individuals in a school-based oral health program.

Founded in 1994 by Hawai'i's community health centers, AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan serving over 84,000 Medicaid and dual-eligible health plan members on all islands. Approximately 40 percent of our members are keiki. We are Hawai'i's only health plan exclusively dedicated to serving Medicaid and Medicaid-Medicare dually-eligible beneficiaries. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for access to quality, whole-person care for all.

Oral health is an essential aspect of a person's overall health and quality of life. Good oral health is important for healthy pregnancies and avoiding heart disease and diabetes complications and other conditions. Poor oral health is the cause for a wide range of health conditions that affect one's ability to eat, speak, smile and have positive self-esteem.

According to the "Hawaii Smiles 2015" report¹ issued by the Department of Health:

- Our keiki have the highest prevalence of tooth decay in the nation.
- 71% of Hawai'i's third-graders experienced tooth decay, 22% had untreated tooth decay, and 7% needed urgent dental care, compared to 1% nationally.
- More than 60% of Hawai'i keiki do not have protective sealants.
- 38% of Hawaii 3rd graders have sealants. 10.6% of the Medicaid population currently receive dental sealants.

¹ <https://www.hipi.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Hawaii-Smiles-Report.pdf>



Further, the DOH report recommended expanding school-based oral health prevention programs at high-risk schools to include, at a minimum, the placement of dental sealants, the application of topical fluorides and oral health education.

As a member of the Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition, AlohaCare supports this measure to improve access to dental sealants by allowing dental hygienists to apply sealants at the time of screening in a school-based setting is an effective, cost-free solution that improves oral health outcomes. While dental hygienists perform these key prevention activities, supervising dentists are able to prioritize patients' advanced care needs. This would improve the sustainability, efficiency, and effectiveness of school-based oral health programs while increasing access to care.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support of SB2476**.



Hawaii Dental Association

Committees: Senate Education Committee

Time/Date: 3:05 p.m., February 9, 2024

Location: State Capitol Conference Room 229 and via Videoconference

Re: SB 2476, Relating to Dental Hygienists

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Mercado Kim, and member of the committee,

The Hawaii Dental Association (HDA) is a professional association comprised of approximately 950-member dentists. **We are in support of SB 2476**, relating to dental hygienists. This bill authorizes licensed dental hygienists to perform preventative dental sealant screenings and apply dental sealants on individuals, under certain conditions, in a Department of Education school-based oral health program.

This February hearing could not be timelier, coming during children's oral health month. We have participated in stakeholder meetings with other members of the Hawaii Oral Health Coalition as this bill was being conceived and we support it. HDA's longstanding commitment to the health and well-being of Hawaii's keiki will culminate in its annual free children's oral health clinic at the Waikiki Health Clinic's Makahiki clinic on February 24 and we will continue to advocate for policies that improve children's oral health each and every day.

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 SB 2476.

February 7, 2024

Testimony in Support of SB2476, Relating to Dental Hygienists

To whom it may concern:

As a dental hygienist and dental hygiene instructor, I am strongly in support of SB2476. Hawaii is one of the leading states for dental caries in children. In the dental field, and in my neighborhood, I see cavities on children as young as one years old. The more education and prevention we can provide for the children of Hawaii the more we can help prevent early childhood caries, infections, and relieve pain and suffering related to their oral health.

There are programs in place and dental hygienists willing to use their professional expertise to help not only educate, but provide preventative services to help our local children. By placing sealants on molars at and around ages six and twelve when they get their first and second molars we can help prevent cavities that can lead to root canals or even extraction of teeth at a young age. School based sealant programs are the way to reach children with limited to no access to dental care across the islands.

Allowing dental hygienists to go out into our community and offer this preventative service can have a drastic effect on lowering our caries rates, improving oral hygiene, and positively impacting our community.

Mahalo for your time,

Erin Cortez, MSAH, BSDH, RDH

SB-2476

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 3:15:08 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/9/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gerraine Hignite	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, we are in SUPPORT of SB2476...

Gerraine Hignite, RDH gerrainehignite@gmail.com

Kim Schneider, RDH kschneider@hawaii.rr.com

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LATE

2.8.2024

Committee on Education

To Senator Michelle Kidani, Chair, Senator Donna Kim, Vice Chair, and committee members:

I am writing in support of SB2476 Relating to Dental Hygienists and am pleased that the bill is under consideration. I am a dental hygienist, licensed in Wisconsin since 1982, who has relocated to Hawaii. I currently work for Easterseals as a Case Coordinator for the Home and Community Based Services program. I am also a member of the Hawaii Dental Hygienists' Association and a member of the Hawaii Oral Health Coalition who both are in support of the bill. Hawaii has excellent examples of dental hygienists working in community settings to provide oral health services in the community. This bill making changes to the Hawaii Dental Practice Act will remove barriers to care and expand the reach of school-based sealant programs to more children of Hawaii.

In 2000, I was hired as a Dental Hygienist/Dental Health Program Coordinator to create and disseminate a school-based sealant program as part of the Wisconsin Seal-A-Smile program. The work I provided is similar to what is described in this bill. Our program conducted dental sealant programs in 14 elementary schools. We screened an average of 1,000 students in targeted grades annually during a ten-year period from 2000-2010. By the time I transitioned to a new position, our team had placed 10,000+ sealants and fluoride varnish treatments in school-based settings. During that time, I also provided required EDPST dental screening and fluoride varnish applications for five Head Start centers in the region.

Evidence-based oral health practice has highlighted the benefits of school-based sealants. Other benefits that were realized in our program were similar to experiences of my colleagues:

- For many children, the dental sealant program was the child's first dental visit. This was at the time that *Best Practice* oral health guidelines were being developed for a child to visit a dentist before their first birthday or eruption of their first tooth.
- Many children served used a language other than English as their primary language. This provided a barrier to parents not benefitting from messaging provided through the school and Women Infant and Children (WIC) clinics about anticipatory guidance for oral health practices. This enabled English as Second Language (ESL) teachers to assist in our work with the children, translation of materials that were made available to families and the ability for ESL teachers to provide technical assistance for families during the school-based program and further with transition to dental offices.
- Decrease in the prevalence of dental caries in the teeth receiving sealants and other teeth in the dentition due to decrease in oral health bacteria.
- The dental sealant program created a positive peer experience for students with dental anxiety and provided an opportunity to gain confidence to visit a dentist in another setting since they had a good first experience at school.
- The ability for the dental school program to spend additional time with students with special health care needs to accomplish placement of dental sealants. The program often received referrals from private dental offices for requests to work with a student that was not able to complete dental sealant placement in a private setting.

- As a dental hygienist employed by a public health department, the dental sealant program was an extension of the school health nursing program. The school nurse had resources to provide triage and referral services to extend the care with transportation, wrap around services etc.
- Collaboration with local dentists provided care for unmet dental needs for students that presented during the school dental sealant program for teeth not selected to receive dental sealants. This often resulted in returning to primary care dental offices after a gap in care or establishing care with a dentist provider for the student participating in the dental sealant program and often for their siblings or other members of the family.

Passage of the bill will have positive effects for the students, their family, and the entire community.

Mahalo for consideration of this bill.

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LATE

SB-2476

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 9:11:56 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/9/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caroline Kunitake	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Mercado-Kim, and Committee on Education Members,

Mahalo for allowing us this opportunity to share this testimony in SUPPORT of SB2476.

Children in Hawai‘i have the highest rate of tooth decay in the nation. This bill would increase access to oral healthcare through school-based programs that provide dental sealants. According to the Hawai‘i Smiles 2015 report, more than 60% of Hawai‘i children do not have protective sealants and recommend prevention programs such as school-based oral health programs. Children in Hawai‘i have the highest prevalence of tooth decay among third graders in the United States. More than [70 percent](#) of Hawai‘i third graders are affected by tooth decay, compared to the national average of 52%. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)) and American Dental Association (ADA) cite sealants as the most effective preventative strategy in tooth decay.

Because our public water is not flouridated, there is a higher risk of tooth decay. Only the water provided on military bases have flouridated water in Hawaii. Without flouridated water, children without regular dental care or regular oral hygiene will suffer from tooth decay. We need to do more for Hawaii's keiki to prevent tooth decay and tooth loss.

School-based sealant programs are efficient and [cost effective](#), as each tooth sealed saves more than \$11 in [dental treatment](#) costs making them an ideal solution to closing oral health care gaps throughout the state. [School sealant programs](#) can reach children who are most at risk for developing cavities, including low-income children and children in rural areas. These programs are designed to reach children from low-income families who are less likely to seek out oral healthcare, and are at higher risk for other tooth decay problems. Changing key policies such as the ones outlined in this bill will allow for the expansion of school-based oral health programs, and as a result promote healthier, happier keiki. Mahalo for your support of Hawai‘i’s keiki.

Mahalo,

Caroline Kunitake