



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
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Honolulu, HI 96801-3378
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WRITTEN
TESTIMONY ONLY

**Testimony in SUPPORT of H.B. 617 H.D. 1 S.D. 1
RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH**

SENATOR DONOVAN M. DELA CRUZ, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Hearing Date: 03/31/23

Room Number: CR 211

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The proposed measure appropriates funds out of the State's general
2 revenues for fiscal year 2023-2024 and fiscal year 2024-2025 and 2.0 full-time equivalent (FTE)
3 positions to the Department of Health (DOH) to administer and oversee a contract to hire a
4 consultant to facilitate the work of the oral health task force, including completing the task
5 force's interim and final reports and to lay the foundation for a robust public dental health
6 program in the state. The Department defers to the Governor's Executive Biennium Budget
7 Request for appropriation priorities.

8 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health supports this measure to establish an oral
9 health task force to review information on the status of oral health in the state and make
10 recommendations to improve oral health infrastructure in Hawai'i.

11 An oral health program is a critical part of all state public health departments. However,
12 the DOH Dental Health Division was eliminated as part of the 2009 budget cuts. Oral health
13 disease is a particularly critical issue in Hawai'i with many children and adults suffering from
14 preventable dental disease. Access to dental care is a challenge since most of the primary and
15 specialty oral health providers are in the urban areas of the City and County of Honolulu. The
16 lack of access to oral health care is particularly serious in rural communities on the neighbor
17 islands and in low income urban/rural areas of O'ahu.

1 Rebuilding the Department’s oral public health program will help to fulfill the basic core
2 public health functions of assessment, assurance, and policy development and meet the dental
3 health mandates of Hawai‘i Revised Statutes Title 19, Chapter 321, Part V §321-61 to §321-63.

4 The oral health taskforce will be instrumental in identifying those key elements and
5 additional staff resources necessary to rebuild a public health dental program in the Department,
6 improve overall oral health in the state, and reduce inequalities in oral health.

7 Based on the specialized topic and comprehensive membership of this task force, it may
8 be difficult to recruit members that currently work together on oral health issues as part of their
9 employment or associations if they will be prohibited from continuing these professional
10 interactions during their tenure on the task force based on Part I, Chapter 92, Hawai‘i Revised
11 Statutes.

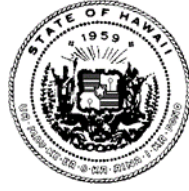
12 The DOH appreciates the funds and establishment of 2.0 permanent FTE positions that
13 will increase the Department’s capacity to conduct the necessary program activities to improve
14 the oral health of children, families, and other vulnerable populations statewide.

15 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

16 **Offered Amendments:**

17 Add to Section 2, Page 8 to read: “(g) no member of the task force shall be made subject to
18 section 84-17, Hawaii Revised Statutes, solely because of that member's participation on the task
19 force. The task force shall be exempt from part I, chapter 92, Hawaii Revised Statutes.”

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

March 29, 2023

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

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: [HB 617 HD1 SD1](#) - RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH.

Hearing: March 31, 2023, 9:45 a.m.
Conference Room 211 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the bill and defers to the Department of Health on implementation and resource needs.

PURPOSE: This measure establishes the Oral Health Task Force to review the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve the State's oral health infrastructure. Requires reports to the Legislature. Appropriates funds. (SD1)

The HD1 amended the measure by defecting the effective date and making technical amendments.

The SD1 amended the measure by:

- (1) Clarifying that community advocates and representatives of private entities shall be invited to serve on, rather than be appointed to, the Oral Health Task Force;
- (2) Requiring that the interim report on the Oral Health Task Force's findings and recommendations be submitted to the Legislature by December 1, 2024, rather than December 1, 2023, and the final report be submitted by December 1, 2025, rather than December 1, 2024;
- (3) Designating that the Department of Health, rather than the Oral Health Task Force, shall submit the final report on the Task Force's findings and recommendations to the Legislature;

- (4) Requiring the Oral Health Task Force to dissolve on June 30, 2026, rather than June 30, 2025;
- (5) Specifying that the funds appropriated for the establishment of two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) Program Specialist positions shall be for two permanent full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) Program Specialist positions;
- (6) Amending section 1 to reflect its amended purpose;
- (7) Making it effective upon its approval; and
- (8) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

DHS appreciates the Legislature's continued investment in and attention to the oral health needs of Hawaii's residents. In 2022, the Legislature appropriated general funds that allowed the restoration of dental benefits for adult Medicaid recipients. DHS will participate as a member of the task force.

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



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

March 31, 2023

The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
The Thirty-Second Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Senator Dela Cruz and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HB617 HD1 SD1 Relating to Oral Health

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities **SUPPORTS HB617 HD1 SD1**, which establishes an Oral Health Task Force to review the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve the State's oral health infrastructure. Requires reports to the Legislature.

First, we would like to highlight and thank the legislator for reinstating adult dental benefits for Medicaid recipients during the 2022 legislative session. Many of our intellectual and developmental disability (I/DD) community members rely on Medicaid as their source of healthcare coverage, and missing vital dental coverage was taking a toll on our community members' overall health. However, a long-standing issue that our I/DD community has faced is finding dental providers willing to accept Medicaid and work on individuals with I/DD.

Now that our Medicaid community has dental coverage again, many long-standing operations and care are needed for our community members. Our state's current dental infrastructure cannot meet our community's needs, specifically now that Medicaid covers dental services. With the increased number of patients, our dental workforce needs to change and grow with the increased demand. We hope this task force will help bring together dentistry's private and public sectors and promote positive adaptation for our state's dental needs moving into the future.

For any substantive recommendations, we defer to the Statewide Oral Health Coalition. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB617 HD1 SD1**.

Sincerely,

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator



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 Ways and Means
Friday, March 31, 2023 at 9:45 a.m.

by

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

and

Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 617 HD1 SD1 – RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 617 HD1 SD1 with comments.

This measure establishes an oral health task force to review the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve the oral health infrastructure in Hawai'i. The recommended members of the Task Force include a faculty member of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Nancy Atmospera-Walch School of Nursing (NAWSON) which includes the Department of Dental Hygiene. The faculty is to be appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives.

This Task Force will fill an important role in our state by creating the dedicated entity which will review information on the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve oral health infrastructure in Hawai'i.

The NAWSON also wishes to recognize the incredible talent and dedicated experts in oral health that are faculty of NAWSON. These faculty commit to enhancing access to oral healthcare through the education and training of the future dental hygienist workforce. In addition, Dr. Mattheus, PhD, APRN-Rx, CPNP, FAAN, Nancy Atmospera-Walch Professor in School Health & Associate Professor, is the Senior Practice Director and Dental Sealant Program Director for the Hawai'i Keiki: Healthy and Ready to Learn Program. Dr. Mattheus was a recipient of the Achievement Rewards for College Scientists (ARCS) Scholarship, Honolulu Chapter for her doctoral research study on the prevention of early childhood caries in primary care practice and currently serves as the Hawai'i State Oral Health Champion designated by Harvard University's Center for Integration of Primary Care and Oral Health (CIPCOH). We would like to recommend her to be a member of the task force.

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

HB-617-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2023 4:30:11 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/31/2023 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Louis Erteschik	Testifying for Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support.



Hawaii Dental Association

To: Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Time/Date: 9:45 a.m., March 31, 2023
Location: State Capitol via Video Conference and Room 211
Re: HB 617, HD1, SD1, Relating to Oral Health

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

The Hawaii Dental Association (HDA) provides comments on HB 617, HD1, SD1, relating to oral health. This bill establishes an oral health task force to review the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve oral health infrastructure in Hawaii.

We support the intent of this bill. 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.

We wholeheartedly agree with the importance of the Adult Dental Medicaid program and its successful implementation. This bill seems to conclude in advance, however, without yet conducting any of task force's work, that an insufficient number of Medicaid-serving dentists will cause the program to fail. We believe that the location of a dental clinic, its accessibility, the volume of patients served, and other factors such as the presence of care coordinators (e.g. Community Dental Health Coordinators), program navigators, and patient transportation are equally as or more important to the Medicaid program's implementation. We also note that only four states in the country have a higher dentist per capita population than Hawaii.

We are strongly interested in assisting the legislature in exploring the supports necessary to effectively implement the Medicaid program and improve overall health. **Therefore, we recommend naming *at least one additional dentist from each county to this task force.*** To create a task force premised on an assumption that there are too few dentists by seating only one dentist of a 20 member task force does not seem set up for optimal success.

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 provide comments on HB 617, HD1, SD1.



HAWAI'I ORAL HEALTH COALITION

Date: March 29, 2023

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

Re: Support for HB617 HD1, SD1, Relating to Oral Health

Hrg: March 31, 2023, at 9:45am - Conference Room 211 & via Videoconference

The Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition, a program of the Hawai'i Public Health Institute, is in **strong support of HB617 HD1, SD1**, which establishes an oral health taskforce to review information on the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve or health infrastructure in Hawai'i, and appropriates funds to the Department of Health for two positions to facilitate the work of the oral health taskforce.

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 increasing access to 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. The HOHC operates under the auspice of the Hawai'i Public Health Institute.

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:

- 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.

Forty-two states maintain dedicated public dental health staff responsible for assessing and monitoring the population's oral health status, community needs, and infrastructure; informing and educating the public about the importance of oral health; and working to reduce barriers to dental

care. With over 288,000 adults with Medicaid dental benefits, there is a lack of dental providers to adequately meet the need for services among the population.

Our state's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) cared for approximately 40,000 dental patients in 2021ⁱ, and often have long wait lists due to the limited facility and staffing capacity. Additionally, only 240 FQHC and general practice dentists are active in Medicaid in Hawai'i. However, it is unclear how many currently accept new patients. While the legislature recently allocated funding to reinstate basic services to adults enrolled in Medicaid, the shortage of Medicaid providers and limited infrastructure hinders the provision of services across the state, primarily in rural and neighbor island communities.

It is imperative that we invest time and resources into further examining the oral health landscape in Hawai'i to better understand the full scope of oral health needs, resources, infrastructure, and to identify evidence-based best practices, which can best address the barriers and gaps in our existing oral health care systems. A dedicated oral health task force comprised of key stakeholders is necessary to identify and develop the strategies that address the critical needs of our communities.

Additionally, dedicated staffing under the Department of Health to facilitate and advance the work of an oral health task force will lay the foundation for ongoing assessment of oral health trends and systems, and the development of effective approaches to improving oral health outcomes for all Hawai'i residents.

The State has begun to reinvest in the oral health of its most vulnerable residents. HB617 HD1, SD1 is an effective approach to supporting the success and sustainability of this investment. Most importantly, this measure will promote a strong foundation for improved and inclusive oral health outcomes.

For these reasons, we respectfully ask you to pass HB617 HD1, SD1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,



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

ⁱ <https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/data-reporting/program-data?grantNum=H80CS06640>



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

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

Re: HB617 HD1 SD1, relating to oral health
9:45 a.m., Mar. 31, 2023

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

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **STRONG SUPPORT** of House Bill 617 HD1, relating to oral health.

2023 is a promising time for oral health in our state. Earlier this year, dental benefits for adults on Medicaid were reinstated. This comes after the legislature's commitment last session to make this investment.

With this momentum in full swing, we must continue our work to rebuild a robust oral health system. This bill establishes an oral health task force, among other provisions. The task force will be vital to developing a statewide oral health strategic blueprint. The task force and this blueprint will help us identify opportunities and challenges so our state can make informed, strategic decisions. We appreciate that task force membership is diverse and representative of varied constituencies so that our numerous communities can be served well.

Additionally, we appreciate that the task force will be integrated into the Department of Health. We believe that **oral health strategies must be holistic**. They must incorporate both preventative measures and services and access to regular and emergency dental care. We believe, as the state's public health agency, the Department of Health is the most appropriate state agency to facilitate the task force. We look forward to their leadership in this work.

HB617 is important to chart the future of oral health in Hawaii. Please advance this measure.

Mahalo,
Ke'ōpū Reelitz
Director of Early Learning and Health Policy



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

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

Hearing: Friday, March 31, 2023, 9:45 AM

RE: **HB617, HD1, SD1 Relating to Oral Health - Support**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of HB617, HD1, SD1**. This measure establishes an oral health task force within the Department of Health and appropriates funds for positions to facilitate its work.

Founded in 1994 by Hawai'i's community health centers, AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit, safety net health plan serving over 80,000 Medicaid and dual-eligible health plan members on all islands. Approximately half of our membership 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 health care for all. We believe that health is about supporting whole-person health needs.

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.

In 2022, the legislature approved \$29.9 million to reinstate an adult Medicaid dental benefit, with services becoming available January 1, 2023. We are grateful to the legislature and the MedQUEST Division for this tremendous win for better oral health care for our community. However, even with the new benefit the historical challenge of an insufficient network of dentists to provide oral health care to Medicaid beneficiaries persists. In order for Medicaid beneficiaries to have access to services, we need more dental providers. The dental provider shortage for Medicaid and other infrastructure shortcomings impact our rural and neighbor island communities most, putting Hawai'i's most vulnerable populations at risk.

Establishing an oral health task force of key stakeholders to assess our State's oral health system will give us an opportunity to systematically review and understanding of our State's needs, current resources and infrastructure, and identify next steps for improving oral health outcomes for our residents. We must continue to invest in a healthier Hawai'i and this measure is a step in the right direction.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB617, HD1, SD1**.

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



3/ 31/2023

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Bill HB617, HD1, SD1, RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Keith-Agaran, and Committee,

My name is Anthony S. Kim. I am the Dental Director for the Waimanalo Health Center, past Chair of the Hawaii Oral Health Coalition, President-Elect of the Hawaii Dental Association, and concerned dentist.

The Waimanalo Health Center **strongly supports HB617, HD1, SD1.**

The bill we support is a critical piece of responsible governing. This Oral Health Task Force would ultimately guide the development and deployment of oral health services and resources for Medicaid recipients and help to form the backbone of a statewide effort to improve oral health for our most vulnerable. The effort needs to be inclusive of crucial sectors in oral health and receive the benefit of Department of Health administration oversight.

Dental providers are a critical part of oral health infrastructure and it is important to have dentists serve on this task force. We also understand that oral health involves more than Dentists, Dental Hygienists, and Dental Offices. Much is to be gained by the careful planning around the patients, their families, and their communities.

A positive component of this bill is the inclusivity of groups that have not been given the opportunity to lend their community and cultural expertise to the problem of poor oral health in Hawaii. After 17 years of practicing with the uninsured and Medicaid population, the oral health challenges go beyond “going to a dentist”. Improving oral health outcomes requires cultural relevance, oral health education, home hygiene, nutrition education, food security, transportation, economic stability, and the prioritization of healthcare throughout community systems.

This task force will analyze and report on the systemic issues to guide and maximize the Medicaid oral health program and collateral state oral health resources. The oral health for our most vulnerable population will benefit from this task force. Please support HB617, HD1, SD1.

Mahalo,

Anthony S. Kim DMD

Dental Director
Waimanalo Health Center



Papa Ola Lokahi
Nana I Ka Pono Na Ma

894 Queen Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Phone: 808.597.6550
www.papaolalokahi.org

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

Friday, March 31, 2023, 9:45 AM, Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

RE: HB 617 HD 1 SD 1 – RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH

Position: IN SUPPORT

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

Papa Ola Lokahi testifies **IN SUPPORT** of HB 617 HD 1 SD 1, which establishes an oral health task force to review the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve oral health infrastructure in Hawaii. Given the limited capacity of the Department of Health to meet the oral health needs across the state, the formation of this task force is critical if we are to advance oral health needs in Hawaii. In addition, with adult dental benefits being restored last year, evaluating our oral health infrastructure and our community's needs is critical to delivering oral health services to those most in need.

Papa Ola Lokahi supports efforts to assess, evaluate, and update our health infrastructure to deliver essential health care services. We appreciate and support the task force structure, which establishes a space for the intersection of community voices, relative administrative units, and oral health professionals. We especially support the recognition of Native Hawaiians who face oral health disparities. Oral disease risk is higher for those who suffer from chronic conditions such as heart disease, emphysema, diabetes, hepatitis C, and obesity. Native Hawaiians experience shorter life expectancies and higher mortality rates due to these chronic conditions and are overrepresented in the Medicaid population. Thus, despite the restoration of Medicaid adult dental benefits, the lack of oral health care service delivery will continue to impact Native Hawaiians disproportionately.

We appreciate the State Legislature's intent to thoughtfully respond to address the oral health care infrastructure across the State by forming a task force and for being included in the membership, for which we are happy to serve.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify **IN SUPPORT** of HB 617 HD 1 SD 1.

Papa Ola Lōkahi, the Native Hawaiian Health Board, authorized by the federal Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act, is charged with raising the health status of Native Hawaiians to the highest possible level, which we achieve through strategic partnerships, programs, and public policy.

**TESTIMONY FOR HB617 HD1 SD1
RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH**

Date of Hearing/Time:

March 31, 2023, 9:45 am

Committee:

Committee on Ways and Means

Testifier:

Andrew Tseu, DDS, JD

March 29, 2023

Dear Chair Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support on HB617 HD1 SD1, relating to the establishment of an oral health task force and staffing to rebuild the Department of Health's public health dental program.

My name is Andrew Tseu and currently employed as a community center dentist. I am submitting testimony as a Hawaii resident.

The establishment of an oral health taskforce will be essential in evaluating the existing oral health environment in the State and propose recommendations to improve the oral health infrastructure in Hawaii. This task force will also help facilitate the collaboration/partnerships between the oral health stakeholders moving forward to improve the access and oral health care for Hawaii residents. The addition of staffing for the public health dental program is necessary to help reestablish the department's program to improve overall oral health in the state and reduce inequalities in oral health.

Thank you for your review. Please feel free to contact me at (808) 781-3613 to discuss my testimony further.

Best regards,

Andrew Tseu, DDS, JD

HB-617-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2023 12:44:36 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/31/2023 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Annette Mente	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Studies show Hawaii's children continue to suffer from some of the worse oral disease rates in the U.S., largely due to a lack of water fluoridation. Since community water fluoridation is not likely to occur soon, this legislation is a critical step to plan for alternative statewide strategies to prevent future generations from suffering a lifetime of poor oral health (and adding to overall healthcare care costs).

I appreciate your support to pass this bill.

Annette Mente

Date: March 31, 2023

Committee: Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Bill #HB617,HD1,SD1, RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH

Testifier: Nancy S. Partika, RN, MPH

Aloha Chairperson Donovan, Vice-Chair Keith-Agaran, and Committee Members;

My name is Nancy Partika, and as a lifelong public health professional, I wish to indicate strong support for HB617,HD1,SD1, which establishes an oral health task force to review the status of oral health in the State, and make recommendations to improve oral health infrastructure in Hawaii, as well as appropriate funds to DOH to staff its oral health oversight program.

We are all aware that Hawaii's oral health system has been ailing for decades, and has struggled to meet the growing needs of its populations statewide, especially those with health and social disparities. Hawaii has a long history of neglect and systemic problems in oral/dental health, which have not been resolved to date.

Currently, oral health care in Hawaii is available to those who can afford it. Those who cannot/do not have adequate dental insurance struggle to get even acute dental needs met. All ages are adversely affected by the broken oral health system—from young keiki to our elderly, as are all islands.

State oversight of oral health is problematic and lacks clear lines of responsibility and communication. Communication between DOH and DHS, the primary leads for the state on oral health, appears to lack regular dialogue on the broader coordination of systemic roles and responsibilities. Also, there has been a significant lack of resources over long period of time to fix/build the leadership infrastructure, which should be facilitating clear evidence-based policies and programs.

The 2022 Hawaii State Legislative session allocated over \$25 million to MQD/DHS to reinstate adult dental benefits and MQD-DHS has rolled out the reinstatement of adult dental benefits for Medicaid as of January 2023. Unfortunately, does not address the needs for ongoing and sustainable statewide leadership and coordination.

The dental provider network to serve an estimated 329,000 adults and children currently on Medicaid is totally inadequate, and significantly depends on the dental services provided by Hawaii's 14 FQHCs, which served just under 40,000 persons total in CY 2021. Only 11% of Hawaii's dental providers serve 100 or more persons on Medicaid, likely due in part to the fact that adult recipients have had emergency-only benefits from 2009-2022.

Infrastructure issues as well as roles and responsibilities need more open discussion, and a wider and more diverse evidence-based process to work through the chronic infrastructure problems that Hawaii faces in addressing oral health needs. HB617, HD1,SD1 proposes to establish a statewide Oral Health Task Force with 21 representatives from the public and private sectors tasked to examine all available oral health data and evidence, discuss the issues/problems/barriers, and make policy recommendations on how to improve our oral health system in Hawaii. This model was successfully implemented most recently in Massachusetts, where their State Legislature passed legislation to create a Special Commission on Oral Health. This task force, if implemented here in Hawaii, can enable us to develop a more systemic approach to improving oral health, particularly for those who are underserved.

The establishment of a 2-year Task Force on Oral Health will help to move us in the direction of improved health and dental services access and delivery. Mahalo for your consideration of HB617, HD1,SD1.

HB-617-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2023 3:34:32 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/31/2023 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emi Eno Oriksa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Date: March 29, 2023

To: The Honorable Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair

The Honorable Senator Gilbert Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

Members of the Committee on Ways and Means

Re: Support for HB617, Relating to Oral Health

Hrg: March 31, 2023, at 9:45 am - Conference Room 211 & via Videoconference

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

My name is Emi Oriksa and I am a Native Hawaiian Health Care System dentist. I am submitting testimony as a Hawai'i resident in strong support of HB617, relating to the establishment of an oral health task force and staffing to rebuild the Department of Health's public health dental program.

The establishment of an oral health task force is essential in evaluating the current state of oral health in Hawai'i and proposing recommendations to address the critical needs of our communities. Additionally, dedicated staffing under the Department of Health to facilitate the work of the task force will allow for ongoing data collection and the development of programs to reduce inequalities in oral health and improve outcomes for all Hawai'i residents.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Me ka 'oia'i'o,

Emi Oriksa, DDS

HB-617-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2023 5:55:19 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/31/2023 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michelle Kobayashi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Whom it may concern:

I am a pediatric dentist in Honolulu and in Maui. The oral health of Hawaii's children is one of the worst in the nation. Something needs to be done about this. There is a lot of room for improvement but that improvement needs to be organized, wide reaching, and preventive in nature. There are only so many cavities dentists can fix.

Mahalo,

Michelle Kobayashi

Date: March 31, 2023

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

Support of Bill # HB617 HD1, SD1 Development of Oral Health Task Force

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

I am writing in **support of HB617 HD1 SD1** which provides funds for a Hawaii Oral Health Task Force. As a member of the Hawaii Oral Health Coalition and the Hawaii Dental Hygienists' Association, I support the testimony both have offered on HB617 HD1. I am grateful and was very supportive of the 2022 effort to reinstate Medicaid Adult Dental Health benefits in Hawaii. Positive momentum and collaboration that is occurring statewide support utilization of a Task Force. The Oral Health Task Force could support a coordinated approach to the complex issues surrounding unmet oral health needs.

Mahalo

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Date: March 31, 2023

Committee: WAYS AND MEANS

Honorable Chair Donovan Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, WAM Committee members

Bill: HB 617, HD1, SD1 RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH

Testifier: Dr. Don B. Sand DDS

Chair Donovan Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran; Distinguished Committee Members;

My name is Dr. Don Sand, a former cosmetic dentist from California who has been, for 8 years, working as both a frontline dentist and a consultant to the underserved in Hawaii. I am a leader in 4 oral health organizations, 2 national best practices and 2 local coalitions that have been working to address care disparities in Hawaii. With this experience in clinical care and advocacy I am testifying as an individual dentist.

I stand in strong support of HB 617 HD1, SD1.

The purpose and intent of this measure is to:

- (1) Establish an Oral Health Task Force to review information and data relating to the status of oral health in the State and make recommendations to improve the State's oral health infrastructure; and
- (2) Appropriate funds to help facilitate the work of the Oral Health Task Force.

Your referring committee HHS has found that:

"...oral health is essential to an individual's overall physical, psychological, social, and economic well-being. Despite the importance of oral health, Hawaii residents generally suffer from poor oral health, and Hawaii has among the highest prevalence in the nation of preventable dental decay in children and adults. Further, the Department of Health's Dental Health Division was eliminated as part of the 2009 budget cuts. To address this public health concern, this measure establishes a task force to identify and develop strategies to improve oral health outcomes for Hawaii's residents.

More on the problem:

Thousands of our people in Hawaii have some missing front teeth needed to smile for work, for job interviews or to be able to enjoy essential social and behavioral health needs from feeling basic esteem in their smile. Everyday thousands of adults are suffering the inability to enjoy plate lunch much less have enough back teeth to meet their minimal nutritional needs. Finally, because the system is broken everyday our people are suffering pain of oral infections and facial infections due to abscessed teeth or gum that is costing the patient and our state. In a recent 5-year Hawaii study, the conclusion is that oral disease that could have been prevented cost our ER hospital systems \$38.7 million, close to half being Medicaid funds lost.

The first big successful step in 12 years since the adult dental Medicaid benefit was lost in 2009, is credited to this **WAM Committee** and the **2022 Hawaii State Legislative session** who in their wisdom passed a measure to reinstate Adult Dental Medicaid with an attached allocation of matched State and Federal funds totaling \$25.9 million. These funds are currently waiting in DHS, the MedQuest division.

Unfortunately, this allocation does not address the need to increase the capacity of the system. 280,000 patients who became eligible for dental care Jan 1, 2023. Due to the low capacity, these patients will not have an easy chance to get an appointment. In fact due to an obvious oral health crisis, a study is not needed as everyone working with the underserved know that there is a need for a urgent capacity response. Mobile and portable dental outreach program can be partial answer to begin to mitigate the immediate needs. However an Oral Health Task Force connected to DOH is needed to create a sustainable 2-5 year plan as well as to create an infrastructure long term plan for Hawaii.

One quick example that may illustrate this **huge need** compared to our **existing capacity** can be seen by looking at the rough numbers of patients seen in our 14 safety-net community health centers in 2021. The total estimated **combined patients** seen were just under **40,000**. Please contrast that number 40,000 served to the **280,000 adults** that can now be eligible for Medicaid dental services starting last month Jan 1, 2023. It may be noteworthy that of those 280,000 eligible it is estimated that 70,000 are Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders.

This bill would establish a **think tank** of the top thought leaders, dental directors, University MPH's, DOH leadership, insurance CEO's, top JABSOM data analyzers, Native Hawaiian health leaders, and oral health business system experts, *frontline private practice dentists* *. Joined to this competent team will be the *essential oral health dentists who are passionate about improving the disparities for the underserved*. This super team must be partnered on the ground level together with the key Legislative decision makers. Without the Legislators in partnership any plan will not have the power, influence or financial support needed to implement the plan. This dream-team of the top leaders in oral health along with the bosses of the healthcare systems can be commissioned to create 3 levels in staged plans: a short- term emergency plan is needed today for our oral health crisis; a middle term smart systematic 2-3 year- plan and a 5-10-year, long term road map for our State.

This taskforce or commission would be authorized to study the many moving parts that have contributed to the failing outcomes, to design plans to improve access. Most importantly the taskforce can become a leader in connecting public-private investments into the capacity infrastructure build-out that will be authorized to implement a state master plan

In order to increase the probability for successful outcomes of this taskforce I humbly as that we add to the appropriation a budget to hire national career oral health systems consultants.

Many states have Nation Oral Health experts with notable careers that have been built on implementing innovated best practice strategics and tactics of health care systems improvement. Especially valuable to Hawaii would be National Experts with years of success developing innovative Medicaid delivery systems. These experts also work in and know the federal and congressional policy systems that can be used to support our State oral health care systems. Instead of having to recreate the wheel, our state can save millions of dollars and save many years by resourcing the professional expertise and experience of a few key National Public health experts advising our taskforce team.

Mahalo for this valuable opportunity to testify,

Dr. Don Sand DDS

LATE

HB-617-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2023 12:50:57 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/31/2023 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zosimo A Arista	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong support of HB617 HD1 SD1. I support a task force to study data and the oral health infrastructure in Hawai'i's dental system to better support people with disabilities who need dental services.

LATE

HB-617-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2023 4:07:34 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/31/2023 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alfred Torres Jr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My wife and I are both retired collecting Social Security and I have a pension. My wife has incurred exorbitant dental bills exceeding \$25,000. I have a temporary crown that was supposed to be good for a few months now going on five years because of the prohibitive cost. I recently cracked a tooth add cost over \$1000. I know many seniors that have had to make the choice fix their teeth or suffer because they can't afford it. The seniors are not indigent and don't qualify for the cheaper or free low-cost dental programs. By the way my wife has the Akamai advantage dental care which doesn't cover much of anything. Senior should not have to forgo much needed dental care because they can't find options to help pay for it.

regards Alfred Torres Jr