



January 31, 2016

TESTIMONY: Written only

To: Representative Dee Morikawa, Chair  
Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Human Services

From: **Hawaii Public Health Association**

Subject: **SUPPORT – HB 1772 RELATING TO Oral Health**

Hearing: February 02, 2016 at 9:00am in State Capitol, Room 329

The Hawaii Public Health Association (HPHA) is an association of over 600 community members, public health professionals, and organizations statewide dedicated to improving public health. HPHA also serves as a voice for public health professionals and as a repository for information about public health in the Pacific.

HPHA **supports the passage of HB 1772** which appropriates funds to the Department of Human Services to restore basic adult dental benefits to Medicaid and QUEST integration enrollees.

Hawaii has one of the worst rates of oral health for children and adults alike in the U.S. The August 2015 DOH report, *“Hawaii Oral Health: Key Findings”*, reported that there are significant oral health disparities in Hawaii’s low-income residents, versus higher income residents, who are less likely to seek dental care, report more loss of teeth, over-use emergency room visits for oral health emergencies, and have lower overall dental health status. Good oral health is essential for optimal overall health, and poor dental health has been linked to higher rates of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and sepsis as well as premature infants of pregnant women.

There are also significant oral health disparities in Hawaii related to education, health insurance, and geographic location status. Children whose parents are on Medicaid are covered for preventive and treatment services, but their parents may not seek or access dental services, if the adult family members are not covered. Adults on Medicaid who are shown to be at greater risk and are more in need of oral health services are currently receiving emergency-only dental services, which are more invasive, painful and risky, more costly, and are a lower standard of care for oral health than our general population is receiving.

The DOH report specifically recommends as a key strategy based on these findings that, Medicaid services be expanded for ALL adults in Hawaii beyond the current coverage for emergencies only, to include preventative and treatment services. We ask that you provide the



policy support and resources to ensure appropriate standards of dental care for our adult Medicaid population.

Respectfully submitted,

Hoce Kalkas, MPH  
HPHA Legislative and Government Relations Committee Chair