



# **UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM**

## **Legislative Testimony**

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Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Human Services  
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by

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and

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### **SB 467 – MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO RESTORE ADULT DENTAL BENEFITS TO MEDICAID ENROLLEES**

Chair Ruderman, Vice Chair Rhoads and members of the Senate Committee on Human Services:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of this bill, SB 467. This bill aims to improve the oral health in Hawai'i by expanding dental service benefits for the State's adult Medicaid enrollees. This requires the State to appropriate funds to restore diagnostic, preventive, and restorative dental benefits to adult Medicaid enrollees.

The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene (UHM SONDH) and our sister health sciences schools provide services to adults whose lives are impacted severely by lack of access to oral prevention and treatment services. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) notes oral conditions are frequently considered separate from other chronic conditions, but these are actually inter-related. An adult oral health benefit in the Medicaid program can save money in emergency care, address chronic disease and the dangerous spread of disease from the mouth to other parts of the body, help people preserve their teeth into old age, and improve adults' job prospects. Further, adults with access to dental care may be more likely to recognize the value of the benefit, gain information related to improving their and their family's oral hygiene practices, and use the pediatric benefit in the state plan.

The UH Mānoa Dental Hygiene Clinic provides direct services and sees many adults whose oral decay and infections contribute to their inability to be employed and whose poor teeth are a deterrent when they do seek employment. Our Bachelor of Science in Dental Hygiene students and supervising dentist provide dental cleaning services and referral to individuals who are in high need of oral health care and are underinsured or

without dental insurance. Through these patient care experiences, we recognize the dire need for enhanced access to oral care and improved financial support for people needing diagnostic, preventive, and restorative dental services. This measure creates a clear pathway for improved oral health care for adult Medicaid enrollees in this state.

Therefore, the UHM SONDH on behalf of the University of Hawai'i respectfully requests that SB 467 pass as written. We appreciate your continuing support of dental health and all health care professions in Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.