



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Health & Homelessness
Friday, February 09, 2024 at 8:30 a.m.

by

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

and

Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 1777 – RELATING TO DENTAL HYGIENISTS

Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on **HB 1777 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.