



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

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and

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and

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HB 2744 – RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH

Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on **HB 2744 in support.**

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. This initiative is in collaboration with the Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition, of which faculty from NAWSON and JABSOM both are engaged in and collaborate with.

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. The program also offers clinical services for community members at the UHM Dental Hygiene Clinic. 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.

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. In addition, the Task Force will include a

representative of the University of Hawai'i John A. Burns School of Medicine, to be appointed by the President of the Senate.

This Task Force will fill an important role in our state by creating a 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. Benefits of this Task Force include stronger cross-sector collaboration on oral health issues, up-to-date analysis of community oral health status, increased awareness of the importance of oral health, and clear, actionable recommendations for improvements.

The NAWSON 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 Endowed Professor in School Health & 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 has served 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 as a candidate task force member.

The UH JABSOM medical student curriculum, including the Hawaii Houseless Outreach through Medical Education (HOME) project, and primary care residency and geriatrics fellowship curricula include oral health and training to apply dental sealants to better meet the needs of the many underserved patients we see. JABSOM has an Oral Health Director, Dr. Matthew Oishi, embedded within our Office of Medical Education. We would like to recommend him as a candidate task force member.

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