



# 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  
Wednesday, February 12, 2025 at 10:15 a.m.

by

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And

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And

Michael Bruno, Provost  
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#### HB 1431 – RELATING TO ORAL HEALTH

Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify **in support of HB 1431**.

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 University of Hawai'i at Mānoa School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene (SONDH) and John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) both are engaged in and collaborate with.

The recommended members of the Task Force include a faculty member of the SONDH 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 JABSOM, to be appointed by the President of the Senate.

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. 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.

SONDH wishes to recognize the incredible talent and dedicated experts in oral health that are faculty of the school. These faculty commit to enhancing access to oral health

care through the education and training of the future dental hygienist workforce. In addition, Dr. Deborah Mattheus, PhD, APRN-Rx, CPNP, FAAN, 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 to serve on the task force.

The UH JABSOM recommends Dr. Jill Omori, Director of the Office of Medical Education, and Dr. Matthew Oishi, part-time faculty in charge of the oral health curriculum for the medical students, as qualified experts who would offer high value contributions to this Task Force.

The SONDH and JABSOM look forward to serving on this important task force.

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