



## **Hawai'i Primary Care Association**

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**Senate Committee on Human Services**  
The Hon. Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
The Hon. Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2264**  
**Relating to QUEST Health Care Payments**  
**Submitted by Beth Giesting, Chief Executive Officer**  
**January 28, 2010      1:50 p.m. Agenda, Room 016**

The Hawai'i Primary Care Association strongly supports this measure which appropriates funds to restore basic dental services for adults covered by Med-QUEST.

The mouth, teeth, and gums are as essential to health as any other part of the body. We should no more exclude the mouth from routine health care than the arms, liver, or ears. Accordingly, dental coverage limited to emergency-only services threatens the overall health of an individual: Recent research points to associations between chronic oral infections and diabetes, heart and lung disease, stroke, and low-birth-weight births—conditions that are more complicated and costly to treat than effective, timely oral health care. In addition, poor oral health and its impact on a person's appearance are linked to poorer prospects for getting and maintaining employment.

Adults covered by Med-QUEST are, by definition, low income and hence unable to pay out of pocket for the often substantial amount of dental care they need. Health centers, which should be the safety net for these underserved adults, are unable to meet the challenge because of the high cost of care and shortage of public support for this service. This financial conundrum severely hampers their ability to expand services to meet the needs of both Med-QUEST enrollees and the very large number of other low income people who have no dental insurance. Covering dental services through Med-QUEST is also a good investment because it earns a considerable federal match.

The Hawai'i Primary Care Association and its membership of community health centers, Native Hawaiian Health Systems, and other primary care organizations, providers and advocates, consider this measure among our highest priority legislative initiatives for 2010.

We all urge you to pass this measure and restore this essential health service. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of this very important bill.