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HAWAII PRIMARY CARE ASSOCIATION

House Committee on Health

The Hon. Della Au Bellati, Chair

The Hon. Dee Morikawa, Vice Chair

Testimony on Senate Bill 1240

Relating to the Pediatric Dental Health Coverage

Submitted by Nani Medeiros, Policy and Public Affairs Director

March 13, 2013, 8:30 a.m., Room 329

The Hawai'i Primary Care Association, which represents community health centers in Hawai'i, **supports with reservations**, Senate Bill 1240, Relating to Pediatric Dental Health Coverage.

The goal of the bill is to decrease rates of tooth decay among children. This is of paramount importance here in Hawaii, where tooth decay in children is twice as high as that for children living on the mainland. As a point of reference, 19 percent of six year olds in Hawaii are entirely free from cavities compared to over 94 percent of mainland children.

Statistics show unequivocally that there is a direct correlation between the rate of tooth decay in children and the percentage of children covered by dental insurance. Uninsured children are 2.5 times less likely to receive dental care than their insured counterparts and are reported to have three times the need. For those reasons, the Hawaii Primary Care Associations supports including pediatric dental coverage in the Hawaii Health Connector.

At the same time, we would like to raise some concerns regarding the increased cost that adding such coverage would pass along to consumers. As with any plan that offers a more robust package, it bears to reason that monthly premiums will be raised accordingly. Many families, especially those recently disenrolled from Medicaid or those currently uninsured, will barely be able to afford coverage as is. A family of four currently residing at 134% of the Federal Poverty Level, the level at which individuals and families go into the Connector, brings home approximately \$36,000 a year. Raising the baseline premium amount by including pediatric dental could make it that much more difficult for them to afford.

We thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 1240.