
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO ADULT DENTAL MEDICAID BENEFITS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that oral disease is a
2 significant health problem for many Hawaii residents, affecting
3 their overall health and well-being. Native Hawaiians and
4 Pacific Islanders were disproportionately represented in
5 emergency room visits for dental-related diagnoses. In 2009,
6 the State terminated all preventive and restorative dental care
7 services for adult medicaid recipients and reduced coverage to
8 emergency-only care that is limited to pain relief, injuries,
9 trauma, and tooth removal and extraction. The lack of
10 preventive and restorative dentistry services for adult medicaid
11 beneficiaries increases potential health care complications for
12 persons with co-existing chronic diseases, such as diabetes and
13 heart disease. Poor oral health, combined with co-existing
14 conditions like these, have been shown to lead to increased
15 disability and death.

16 Since 2010, Hawaii has received a failing grade of "F" in
17 three oral health report cards published by the Pew Center on



1 the States due to multiple policy and systems issues in the
2 State that have left the oral health of Hawaii's families and
3 children worse than the rest of the nation.

4 The legislature further finds that in Hawaii, a
5 disproportionate number of adult medicaid enrollees ages twenty-
6 one to forty-four use the emergency room for emergency dental
7 services. While adult medicaid beneficiaries represent about
8 twenty-five per cent of Hawaii's population, they represent
9 forty-seven per cent of all dental services provided by
10 emergency rooms. Between 2016 and 2020, medicaid enrollees made
11 an average of two thousand seven hundred emergency room visits
12 per year for acute oral health conditions, totaling \$21,700,000
13 in charges for outpatient emergency room services only.

14 Recent analysis suggests that investing in preventive
15 dental benefits for medicaid-enrolled adults will, in the long
16 term, lead to reductions in medical costs paid by medicaid. A
17 February 2020 research brief authored by the American Dental
18 Association's Health Policy Institute and the Hawaii med-QUEST
19 division estimates the cost of reinstating coverage in Hawaii
20 and identifies three possible options:



1 (1) Option 1 (\$7,800,000 per year or \$3.32 per enrollee)
2 covers a basic package of diagnostic, preventive, and
3 restorative services;

4 (2) Option 2 (\$19,900,000 per year or \$8.45 per enrollee)
5 includes the basic package plus core prosthodontic
6 services; and

7 (3) Option 3 (\$36,200,000 per year or \$15.37 per enrollee)
8 further expands prosthodontic services.

9 All three options cover periodontal services. The research
10 brief estimates potential medical care cost savings of
11 \$1,900,000 to \$5,300,000 per year, which is attributable to a
12 reduction in emergency department visits for dental conditions
13 and reduced medical care costs among medicaid beneficiaries with
14 diabetes and coronary artery disease, as well as pregnant women.

15 It has been twelve years since the State removed all but
16 emergency medicaid adult dental benefits. The legislature
17 additionally finds that it is in the best interest of the State
18 and its residents to expand access to care by restoring dental
19 benefits to adult medicaid enrollees.

20 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to appropriate
21 funds to restore diagnostic, preventive, and restorative dental



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1 benefits to adult medicaid enrollees. This appropriation will
 2 make Hawaii eligible for federal matching funds via medicaid's
 3 Federal Medical Assistance Percentage for these purposes.

4 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
 5 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
 6 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2022-2023 to
 7 restore diagnostic, preventive, and restorative dental benefits
 8 to adult medicaid enrollees; provided that the department of
 9 human services shall obtain the maximum federal matching funds
 10 available for this expenditure; provided further that the
 11 department of human services shall pursue all funding sources
 12 known to the State, including private grants, prior to expending
 13 any general revenues appropriated pursuant to this Act.

14 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
 15 human services for the purposes of this Act.

16 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2022.

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INTRODUCED BY:

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JAN 21 2022



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Report Title:

Adult Dental Benefits; Medicaid; Department of Human Services;
Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates funds to restore diagnostic, preventive, and restorative dental benefits to adult medicaid enrollees; provided that the department of human services obtains maximum federal matching funds available and pursues all funding sources, including private grants, prior to expending any general fund appropriations.

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