February 9, 2016

To: Representative Angus L. K. Mc Kelvey, Chair
    Representative Justin H. Woodson, Vice Chair
    Members of the House Committee on Consumer
    Protection and Commerce

From: Hawaii Public Health Association

Subject: SUPPORT – HB 1772 RELATING TO Oral Health

Hearing: February 10, 2016 at 2:10pm in State Capitol, Room 325

The Hawaii Public Health Association (HPHA) is an association of over 600 community
members, public health professionals, and organizations statewide dedicated to improving
public health. HPHA also serves as a voice for public health professionals and as a repository
for information about public health in the Pacific.

HPHA supports the passage of HB 1772 which appropriates funds to the Department of
Human Services to restore basic adult dental benefits to Medicaid and QUEST integration
enrollees.

Hawaii has one of the worst rates of oral health for children and adults alike in the U.S. The
August 2015 DOH report, “Hawaii Oral Health: Key Findings”, reported that there are significant
oral health disparities in Hawaii’s low-income residents, versus higher income residents, who
are less likely to seek dental care, report more loss of teeth, over-use emergency room visits
for oral health emergencies, and have lower overall dental health status. Good oral health is
essential for optimal overall health, and poor dental health has been linked to higher rates of
diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and sepsis as well as premature infants of pregnant women.

There are also significant oral health disparities in Hawaii related to education, health insurance,
and geographic location status. Children whose parents are on Medicaid are covered for
preventive and treatment services, but their parents may not seek or access dental services, if
the adult family members are not covered. Adults on Medicaid who are shown to be at greater
risk and are more in need of oral health services are currently receiving emergency-only dental
services, which are more invasive, painful and risky, more costly, and are a lower standard of
care for oral health than our general population is receiving.

The DOH report specifically recommends as a key strategy based on these findings that,
Medicaid services be expanded for ALL adults in Hawaii beyond the current coverage for
emergencies only, to include preventative and treatment services. We ask that you provide the
policy support and resources to ensure appropriate standards of dental care for our adult Medicaid population.

Respectfully submitted,

Hoce Kalkas, MPH
HPHA Legislative and Government Relations Committee Chair