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Ola Lokahi

Creating a Healthy Hawaii Together

The mission of the Department of Health is to protect and improve the health and environment for all people in Hawaii. We believe that an optimal state of physical, mental, social and environmental well-being is a right and responsibility of all of Hawaii's people.

2018 Legislative Highlights

The Hawaii Department of Health (DOH) strategic plan serves as a road map to better health for Hawaii residents.

With numerous obstacles on the road to better health, changing existing laws or introducing new legislation is often needed.

Enter **Lorrin Kim** Chief, Office of Planning, Policy, and Program Development (OPPPD) who invests time and resources to shape public policy each legislative session. The process is time-consuming but well worth the effort as evidenced by the number of big wins to advance public health this past legislative session.

Making health care services accessible for more Hawaii residents, reducing healthcare costs, and addressing health disparities were major underlying themes this past legislative session. DOH testified in favor of numerous initiatives to further the implementation of DOH's strategic plan. Here are some of the highlights of the five-month session:

ALL-PAYER CLAIMS DATABASE

This bill establishes positions for a new health analytics and informatics program within the Hawaii Department of Human Services (DHS) to collect and analyze information collected by DOH and the State Health Planning and Development Agency's all-payers claims data warehouse. Collecting and analyzing claims data helps identify

trends, serves as a tool in health policy decision-making, and helps to operate state-run health programs such as Medicaid more efficiently.

The bill helps to operationalize Act 139, which went into effect November 2016. It requires organizations funded by the employer-union health benefits trust fund (EUTF) or Medicaid to submit claims and payment data from health plan beneficiaries.

LICENSURE BY ENDORSEMENT

As a way to address provider shortages in Hawaii, this bill helps to eliminate barriers for qualified physicians, surgeons and osteopathic physicians from outside the state to practice in Hawaii through "licensure by endorsement." Licensure by endorsement means that a provider is already in good standing and currently has an active license in another state and the requirements are equal to or greater than the qualifications for licensure in Hawaii and has been practicing for at least two of the previous five years.

HEALTHCARE PRECEPTORSHIP TAX CREDIT

As another way to make care more accessible and to prepare the next generation of healthcare providers, DOH advocated for a healthcare preceptor tax credit for clinical preceptors and training sites. The tax credit provides an incentive to preceptors to offer professional

instruction, training and supervision to students and residents seeking careers as healthcare providers. This would cover medical students, as well as those in social work, physical therapy, and psychology.

VIRTUAL DENTAL HOME

The shortage of licensed dentists in rural neighborhood has made access to quality oral health care an ongoing challenge. A bill to broaden the scope of services that can be performed by licensed dental hygienists in various public health settings under the supervision of a licensed dentist will help to expand virtual dental home projects, or teledentistry, and opens the door for more new patients to receive care they may not otherwise receive.

SUPPORT FOR HAWAII OPIOID TASK FORCE

A bill to address over-prescribing opioids for pain helped to further the implementation of the initiatives outlined in the Hawaii Opioid Task Force. Many injured workers may be in pain because there is a high number of workplace injuries and the bill helps to address inadvertent addiction and overdose. The bill establishes limits for concurrent opioid and benzodiazepine prescriptions for patients in the workers' compensation system and mandates prescribing professionals to check if a patient has already received a prescription.

(Cont'd on page 2)

Legislative Bills Move DOH's Strategic Plan Forward *(Cont'd from pg. 1)*

BAN ON THE PESTICIDE CHLORPYRIFOS

The legislature also advanced a number of bills relating to environmental health. If signed by Gov. David Ige, Hawaii will be the first state in the nation to ban the restricted-use pesticide chlorpyrifos, which has been identified by some as a highly toxic neurotoxin that causes significant damage to brain development in children. In addition to banning chlorpyrifos, the bill requires all users of restricted-use pesticides to report their usage and mandates minimum 100-foot no-spray zones for restricted-use pesticides around schools during school hours.

BAN ON SUNSCREENS WITH OXYBENZONE AND OCTINOXATE

A bill banned the sale and distribution of over-the-counter sunscreens containing oxybenzone and octinoxate in Hawaii, which is believed to be harmful to coral reefs. If Gov. Ige signs the bill into law, it will take effect Jan. 1, 2021 and make Hawaii the first state in the nation to enact such a law.

CESSPOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL AND GRANT PROGRAM

Sewage contamination of coastal waters is another source of oxybenzone and octinoxate environmental contamination because these chemicals are not removed by the State's wastewater treatment system. Oxybenzone and octinoxate are also discharged to ground and surface waters from cesspools, leaking septic systems, and municipal wastewater collection and treatment systems.

For that reason, the Legislature looked at ways to eliminate 88,000 cesspools in Hawaii, the most of any state in the nation. Collectively, these cesspools leach about 53 million gallons of sewage into Hawaii's groundwater

every day. The Legislature previously established the goal of eliminating all cesspools by 2025, and since the cost to upgrade or convert a cesspool to a septic tank system, an aerobic treatment system, or connecting to a sewer system can be prohibitive for some homeowners, few take advantage of the tax credit program. This bill proposes the formation of a cesspool advisory council that would be administratively attached to DOH to develop a pilot grant program for qualified individuals to help with the upgrade and/or conversion process.

SUPPORT FOR THOSE WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Although the department's Developmental Disabilities Division (DDD) worked hard to establish "administrative claiming" to recover the costs associated with administering Hawaii's home and community based services Medicaid Waiver for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities for the Department of Human Services, this bill was held back in the final days of the session. There currently is no fund to ensure the ongoing, efficient administration of the waiver and to meet the expanding federal requirements for community integration, quality and accountability. However, DDD successfully moved forward a bill to extend behavior analysis services to children with autism spectrum disorder who are covered under the Medicaid health plan.

DDD advocated for a qualified workforce to provide necessary behavior interventions while building an adequate workforce for clients who depend on these services. Teachers in public schools are not permitted to independently conduct functional behavior assessments, or to design,

develop, or independently oversee applied behavior analysis services and the bill proposes enlisting the support of licensed or credentialed practitioners. The bill requires the Department of Education (DOE) to create an implementation plan to seek reimbursement from Medicaid for any applied behavior analysis the DOE may provide to students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

OHANA ZONES TO PROVIDE BETTER HEALTH FOR HAWAII'S HOMELESS

Hawaii continues to have the highest number of individuals experiencing homelessness per capita of any state in the nation. The City and County of Honolulu, which has the highest number of individuals experiencing homelessness of any county in Hawaii, has seen the number of unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness rise over the past five years and the number of people in shelters decline during the same period, despite increased investment in shelters and enforcement.

To address these challenges, the Legislature wanted to try a pilot program to establish "ohana zones," which are designed to provide welcoming, safe havens for temporary housing and social services until those who are homeless can transition into permanent housing. The goal of ohana zones is to improve the health and well-being of individuals experiencing homelessness and provide access to needed services.

A huge mahalo goes out to all those who worked tirelessly on coordinating legislation affecting public health this year. Your efforts were outstanding and you made a difference in the lives of the people of Hawaii!