

Ohio Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee
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Opponent Testimony
Senate Bill 148

Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Hottinger, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee, my name is Rick Lantz and I am the Vice President and Chief Lobbyist for Delta Dental of Ohio.

Thank you for this opportunity to express Delta Dental of Ohio's opposition to SB 148. There has been a lot of focus in recent years on finding ways to hold down the costs of health care for consumers - the issue regarding surprise billing that is currently before this committee is one major example - but this proposed legislation goes in the exact opposite direction of that trend and would make dental care more expensive for insured Ohioans.

Delta Dental of Ohio opposes SB 148 for two primary reasons:

SB 148 is unwarranted government interference in private contracts voluntarily entered into by dentists and dental plans. SB 148 would allow dentists to receive the fruits of their private contract with a dental plan, but would relieve them of one of its responsibilities. That makes SB 148 a prime example of government intrusion in a private contract voluntarily entered into by two willing parties.

SB 148 will effectively eliminate a consumer cost protection measure and increase the cost of dental care for Ohioans. SB 148, if enacted, will result in increased out-of-pocket costs for dental care for Ohioans. The dentists' gains will come at the expense of the patients who will have to figure out how to pay more or decide that they will forego care due to the higher cost of care.

SB 148 is not needed in Ohio.

The proponents of this legislation may claim that this legislative intervention in a private business contract is needed because they do not have a choice, but that is simply not true. It is important to remember that Ohio has a very robust and competitive dental insurance market. Dental plans, including Delta Dental of Ohio, strive to provide competitive offerings to businesses, retiree groups, and individuals seeking private insurance, while at the same time maintaining healthy participation by dentists in their networks. Please consider the following figures:

- Ohio's population is approximately 11.7 million people.
- Approximately 6 million Ohioans, or 51%, are enrolled in a private dental plan.
- Delta Dental of Ohio has just over 1 million subscribers in Ohio.

With figures like these, it seems unlikely that most Ohio dental practices have a majority of patients who have private dental coverage or that Ohio dentists are experiencing significant financial hardship as a result of the non-covered services policies of Delta Dental or other insurers.

Most importantly, dentists have the ultimate control over their own practice's relationships with dental insurers. Dentist participation with an insurer is purely voluntary. If a dentist is already a participating provider, but decides he or she no longer wishes to contract with Delta Dental, he or she can terminate his or her contract at any time with 60 days' notice.

Since Delta Dental implemented its non-covered services policy in 2008, the percentage of Ohio dentists who have a signed participation agreement with Delta Dental has increased. If Delta Dental were treating dentists unfairly, one would expect the percentage of participating dentists to shrink, not grow.

SB 148 is bad for business and bad for consumers.

Please consider whether SB 148 is a good deal or a bad deal for Ohio dental patients. The answer is simple - if passed, SB 148 will result in higher costs for dental care for Ohioans. We respectfully request that you oppose SB 148 along with the wide and diverse coalition of parties that have weighed in as opponents of this bill:

- AFSCME Ohio Council 8
- America's Health Insurance Plans
- National Association of Dental Plans
- Ohio Association of Health Plans
- Ohio Chamber of Commerce
- Ohio Education Association
- Union Benefits Trust
- Westfield

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