

Dr. Hal Jeter
Proponent Testimony Substitute HB 33
Senate Medicaid Committee
May 25, 2023

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, and Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance committee--

Good morning and thank you for allowing me to testify concerning Substitute House Bill 33. My name is Dr. Hal Jeter and I am a general dentist practicing in, literally, the most southern portion of Ohio. I have been serving the village of South Point and surrounding areas of Lawrence County (and even Kentucky and West Virginia) for almost thirty years. I am also the Vice President of the Ohio Dental Association. Thank you for this opportunity to share some thoughts, some challenges, and basically tell you, my story.

For as long as I have been in practice, I have been an Ohio Medicaid provider. Upon opening my office in the mid '90's a local colleague offered to "sell" me all of his Medicaid patient charts for \$1.00. I was immediately grateful as I was anxious to have any patients in my brand new chair. However, in retrospect I can also assume that my colleague was equally grateful as that transaction basically marked the end of his tenure as a Medicaid provider.

I remained thankful though, for the reason that I entered dentistry as a second career was my deep desire to make a practical difference in the lives of those around me. My weakness has always been having someone say to me, as a young mother did early in my career, "...and no one would help me." I wanted to help her special needs Medicaid recipient child. Therein lies the conundrum—we, dentists, want to help. We have a compelling conviction to give back and we are acutely aware of the need for greater access to care for the Medicaid population but after 20+ years of rising overhead, exacerbated by more recent supply chain and workforce shortages, both resulting in escalating expenses for all dentists, the issue becomes one of survival. It was a heart wrenching decision for me to finally close my door to any new Medicaid patients, as I did several years ago. I, and most other dentists in Ohio simply can no longer absorb the losses incurred by receiving less than half of each dollar for care rendered to a Medicaid patient. We want to help but we need your help.

I am grateful for this current potential for a long overdue increase in the dental Medicaid plan. It is a disturbing thought that, according to the American Dental Association Health Policy Institute, Ohio ranks embarrassingly low at 42nd out of the 50 states in dental Medicaid reimbursement for children. In my location I can literally walk no more than 2 blocks from my office, stand on the riverbank and view the junction of Ohio, Kentucky, and West Virginia. Because of that proximity I am also a provider for Kentucky Medicaid and it's an interesting twist of irony to consider that I could terminate my participation with Ohio Medicaid, increase the proportion of Kentucky Medicaid patients in my practice, and be financially more stable.

Ohio dentists want to do the right thing for our citizens, especially those who depend on government assistance for their healthcare. Please help us do what we wish to do and are trained to do for your constituents by keeping the current increase in the substitute budget bill for the dental Medicaid program which raises the reimbursement to 65% of private dental insurance reimbursements.

Thank you for your consideration and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.