

Senate Finance Committee
May 24, 2023

Tracy Morse
Proponent Testimony, HB33

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on HB33, which includes a proposed increase in Medicaid reimbursement for dentists. I am aware that Medicaid dental reimbursement rates have not had a major increase in 20 years and want to share my story about how difficult it has been to access needed oral health care as your committee deliberates the biennium budget.

My son, Ren Sandberg, was diagnosed with William's Syndrome at 3 years of age. He is fortunate in that he has always had health and dental coverage through my employer. When he turned 18, he began to receive SSI which also qualified him for Medicaid. He is now 29 years old and still has the health and dental coverage my employer provides as well as Medicaid. He now needs to have his wisdom teeth removed. I was referred to two different oral surgery practices located in the Toledo area. I chose the closest one. After giving them all the pertinent information regarding his commercial dental insurance on my initial call with the office, I made mention that he also has Medicaid. It was then that the provider told me, point blank, they would not be seeing Ren as a patient. When I reminded them that he had commercial insurance, they indicated that it did not matter. Because they currently have a contract with Medicaid and Ren has Medicaid, they would have to bill Medicaid. I do not believe they can deny him, but I was so upset that ultimately, I scheduled him with the other oral surgery practice. Incidentally the other practice does not accept Medicaid.

When I returned to the dentist who referred us, I shared the details of our first frustrating experience and he indicated that the reason most dentists, orthodontists and oral surgeons do not take Medicaid patients is due to the extremely poor reimbursement rates. It is my hope, Senator Dolan, that you will consider increasing the Medicaid reimbursement rates which I have learned have not had a significant increase in approximately 20 years. I believe more providers would accept patients with Medicaid which would allow for better access and overall better oral health for Ohioans.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter and your commitment to ensuring that all Ohioans are afforded the highest level of care. Senator Dolan, I encourage you to vote to increase Medicaid dental reimbursement rates so that Ohioans can access the care they need to lead healthy, productive lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tracy Morse". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "T".

Tracy Morse
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