



MERCER COUNTY

HEALTH DISTRICT



Senate Finance Committee
May 24, 2023

Jason Menchhofer, MPH, REHS
Health Commissioner
Proponent Testimony, HB 33

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 33, which includes a proposed increase in Medicaid reimbursement for dentists. I am aware that Ohio dental providers have not seen a major increase in Medicaid reimbursement rates in 20 years, and I want to share a local perspective on how these stagnant reimbursement rates pose a challenge to rural Ohioans when trying to get the oral health care they need.

Over a year ago, the Mercer County Health District led community public health system partners in conducting a county-wide access to health care assessment. Collecting data through surveys, key informant interviews, and focus groups, we repeatedly heard stories of Medicaid clients who are unable to get the oral health care they need. Our county is not designated as a dental desert, yet there is an access problem for some of our most vulnerable individuals, since our local dentists generally do not accept new Medicaid patients. One local dentist explained that, due to low Medicaid reimbursement rates, he had to limit Medicaid clients to a fraction of his overall patient load so he could afford to stay in business.

When talking with local service professionals working for organizations like Mercer County Head Start and the Mercer County Department of Job and Family Services, I repeatedly hear stories of parents who depend on Medicaid healthcare coverage and cannot get their children the oral health care they need here in Mercer County. These are the same families who are challenged the most when faced with the need to take time away from work to drive to Dayton, Columbus, or Fort Wayne, Indiana to obtain care for their children.

Good oral health provides a foundation for good overall health, which is necessary for children to learn and for adults to work and function at their best. Increasing the Medicaid dental reimbursement rates would improve access to oral health care for many who need it very badly. For that reason, I encourage you to vote to retain the language in HB33 that would increase those rates and help thousands of Ohioans to access the care they need to lead productive and healthy lives.

Senator Dolan, I encourage you to vote to increase Medicaid dental reimbursement rates so Ohioans can access the care they need to lead healthy and productive lives. Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to protecting and advancing the well-being of all Ohioans.

Sincerely,

Jason D. Menchhofer, MPH, REHS
Health Commissioner
Mercer County Health District