

May 11, 2023

The Honorable Mark Romanchuk
Statehouse, Room 049
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Chairman Romanchuk,

On behalf of Delta Dental of Ohio, thank you for the opportunity to offer written proponent testimony in support of the Medicaid dental rate increase in the operating budget, House Bill 33 (please see Comparison Document MCD55 Dental service reimbursement).

Poor oral health hurts more than our mouths. It can harm our overall health, employability, and financial security. By providing a substantial increase in Medicaid dental reimbursement rates, the General Assembly can help Ohioans have meaningful access to dental care which, in turn, can drive health and economic gains for families throughout our state.

Ensuring meaningful oral health coverage and access to dental care is a cost-effective way to support better health at every age. Lacking access to dental care risks our overall health and wastes resources. Poor oral health can make chronic conditions, like diabetes, more difficult and expensive to manage. It may also cause dangerous and costly pregnancy complications, with risks to parents and children. Greater access to dental care will reduce other unnecessary health spending, including the avoidance of hospital emergency department visits for dental pain.

Poor oral health has a particularly dramatic impact on Ohio's children. Tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease in the United States (five times more common than asthma), and children miss more than 51 million hours of school each year due to dental-related illness – most of which can be prevented. Children with dental problems have trouble smiling, eating, sleeping, concentrating, and learning in school.

According to the Ohio Dental Association, Ohio's Medicaid dental reimbursement rates are well below 50 percent of a dentist's usual, customary, and reasonable charge. As a result, there is a low percentage of dentists who participate in the Medicaid program, which makes it difficult for Medicaid enrollees, children and adults alike, to access dental care.

The Medicaid dental rate increase in the House-passed version of HB 33 is a big step towards making the Medicaid program more attractive to dental providers by beginning to eliminate one of the largest barriers to dentists' participation in the Medicaid program.

As a member of the Board of Oral Health Ohio (OHO), I am pleased to join my fellow OHO Board members and the Ohio Dental Association in support of the House-passed Medicaid dental rate increase in the operating budget in order to improve Ohioans' access to dental care. I look forward to working with you and members of the Senate Medicaid Committee to improve the oral health of all Ohioans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Erika Cybulskis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "E".

Erika Cybulskis

cc: Members of the Senate Medicaid Committee