



FAMILY DENTAL CARE, INC.

January 31, 2020

House Committee on Education
State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301
hed.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

Subject: HB4127 Written testimony

Dear Chair Doherty and Members of the Committee:

My name is Deborah Loy. I am the Executive Director of Family Dental Care, Inc. a dental care organization serving Oregon Health Plan (OHP) members. Dental disease is the number one chronic disease in children, more common than asthma. I have done work related to the OHP dental program for many years. Vulnerable families struggle with barriers in obtaining health care services, for example: obtaining transportation, difficulty getting time off to attend an appointment, or losing out on pay when they do. For these reasons I believe it is important to bring dental disease prevention, early screening, and oral health education to children, in the school setting. I am asking for support of HB4127.

I would like to share a true story. A hygienist was onsite at a rural elementary school doing sealants on 2nd graders. School staff approached her and asked if she could look at one of their 1st graders. He wasn't eating well, not engaging in school, seemed in pain and other children avoided him because his mouth smelled. When he was examined, she found multiple dental abscesses. An emergency dental visit was arranged, however due to the level of disease not one of this little boy's teeth could be saved. There was not a dry eye at the dental provider office. Yes, his permanent teeth will come in post extractions. Until they do come in, he will be toothless affecting his self-esteem, speech, and ability to eat. This boy's single mom was 22 with two other younger children and barely surviving. A referral was made for case management services. This little boy missed out on dental prevention services, but without screening and arranging emergency dental services his abscesses could have become life threatening. This is just one of the stories that drives my commitment to school based dental services.

Oral health education needs to be part of school health education programs. Many parents mistakenly think baby teeth aren't important. They don't understand dental disease is a chronic infectious disease that can be prevented and needs to be treated. Sugar, pop and other diet choices feed the bacteria that causes dental disease (same culprits contributing to obesity). Teens smoking and chewing tobacco can contribute to dental disease, and even lead to oral cancers. More than one US surgeon general has stated you cannot have health without oral health. I agree, when the mouth is sick the body is sick. When it is healthy the body and a person's overall health benefits.

It is not just about teeth, but rather it is about health and Oregon's children being able to have healthy mouths, that allow them to focus on learning and not missing school because of a toothache. I want to thank you for your support of HB4127 as an investment in Oregon's children.

Sincerely,

Deborah Loy

Executive Director
Family Dental Care, Inc.