

Health Department

February 20, 2025

To: Senate Committee on Health Care

From: Jenna Green, Interim Executive Director of Multnomah County Community Health Center

Azma Ahmed, Multnomah County Health Center Dental Director

Barbara Broderick, Multnomah County School & Community Oral Health Programs Supervisor

Re: Support for Senate Bill 597

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share our comments in support of Senate Bill 597, which would provide much needed funding for critical dental services that have the capacity to significantly improve outcomes for children across the state.

Multnomah County's Community Health Center is the largest public federally qualified health center in Oregon and provides integrated health care services to over 56,000 patients a year through our seven primary care clinics; seven pharmacies; seven dental clinics; a Health Services Center that provides tailored care for individuals living with HIV; a mobile health clinic supporting individuals in low income and transitional housing, and our nine Student Health Centers.

Our School and Community Oral Health Program provides free dental screenings and sealants for school-aged children in public schools across Multnomah County, and is a key component of the dental services that we provide. In the 2023-2024 school year, we provided services in 92 schools, which included: oral health assessments for 3,760 students, dental sealants for 2,752 students (for a total of 9,053 teeth with sealants placed), fluoride varnish provided to 3,368 students, and 186 students were referred for care coordination and urgent services.

While providing sealants is a proven preventive strategy to protect kids from cavities, infections, and tooth decay, many of the students to whom our program provides dental screenings have not been engaged in routine dental care and present with existing needs that require more intensive dental services. To fully address these needs, referral to a dental clinic is necessary - as early intervention for the treatment of concerns identified in screening (such as cavities, gum disease, etc.) can be addressed in an efficient and cost effective manner before they result in more serious health concerns. The follow-up care coordination provided by our School Dental Screening and Sealant Program is essential in helping families navigate the system to ensure kids with the highest needs are able to access the appropriate dental services. Though this care coordination is a crucial component

of improving health outcomes, and critical for preventing pain, difficulty eating and/or speaking, and costly emergency dental procedures, currently there is no payment mechanism for providing this important service for this population. SB 597 will provide resources necessary to ensure that School Dental Screening and Sealant Programs are able to deliver this service that is vital to both the short and long-term health of our children.

SB 597 is a strategic investment in the health and well-being of our future generations. It will support a critical function in ensuring that children are connected to the timely dental services that they need to thrive. The Multnomah County Community Health Center appreciates your consideration of this important legislation, and we strongly urge you to support SB 597. Please do not hesitate to contact barbara.r.broderick@multco.us or (503) 988-9472 if you have questions or require additional information.

Thank you,

Jenna Green, MHA
Interim Executive Director
Multnomah County Community Health Center

Azma Ahmed, DDS
Dental Director
Multnomah County Community Health Center

Barbara Broderick
Program Supervisor
School & Community Oral Health Programs
Multnomah County Community Health Center