

3/13/25

Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Javadi & Nelson and Members of the Committee

Senate Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

2025 Oregon Legislative Session

I am writing to you in support of HB 2597 that if passed will require the OHA and CCOs to reimburse dental providers at a minimum of 59.8% the average rate paid by insurers in Oregon.

I am an expanded practice dental hygienist (EPDH), I live in Hillsboro Oregon, and I work in public health through a non-profit sealant program serving infants through 8th grade, and teaching clinical skills to the dental hygiene students at a College.

I support this bill because many patients delay treatment due to unaffordability and low amounts of dental coverage. I see first hand daily the struggle of the populations I work with who have to decide between keeping themselves healthy and paying bills.

This is a cycle, in that patients need better coverage to be able to get their necessary treatments done. Treatments that decrease infection and decay present in their oral cavity, which can spread into their whole body. When not addressed these same people often end up missing work due to pain or ill health that could be correlated with not completing dental work.

Older individuals struggle financially and maintaining oral health is proven to decrease likelihood of pneumonia, maintains nutritional balance (able to eat comfortably) and retains the ability to communicate with their loved ones.

More and more children I see qualify for these dental programs. The ability to see these patients, invest in them and educate them will change their family tree dental health wise! And growing up with better oral health will decrease the cost load on the dental and insurance sectors in the future.

Few providers accept these coverages due to the low reimbursement. EPDH's like myself, who are willing and able to go provide preventive services and assessments many patients in their locations (many times they are homebound) cannot make a living wage doing this at the current reimbursement levels. Low reimbursement rates sustain the lack of interest in becoming a provider that serves the most needy.

I strongly urge you to refer HB 2597 to the House with a do pass recommendation

Sincerely,

Tana Spencer, BSDH, EPDH,

Community Dental Health Coordinator