

March 17, 2023

The Honorable Sen. Melissa Wiklund, Chair
Senate Health & Human Services Committee
95 University Avenue W.
St. Paul, MN 55155



RE: Support for Legislation Increasing Access to Medical Assistance Dental Services

Dear Sen. Wiklund and Committee Members:

The Minnesota Safety Net Oral Health Alliance (the “Oral Health Alliance”) is a coalition of safety net dental providers who provide oral health care to underserved communities across the state. We are writing you today to offer our support for three proposals before you this week.

Critical Access Dental Infrastructure Program: The Oral Health Alliance is very supportive of S.F. 1008 (Boldon) which would, as amended, create a critical access dental infrastructure program to provide \$25 million in one-time grants and forgivable loans to critical access dental (“CAD”) providers for the purposes of supporting the preservation and expansion of their clinical capacity. The funds can be used to support the construction of new clinics, the expansion or renovation of existing clinics, or the acquisition of dental equipment (including that used for mobile and/or tele-dentistry). CAD providers are uniquely suited to serve the communities enrolled in MA and these dollars will make an immediate and marked impact on Minnesota’s efforts to expand access to dental service for public program enrollees.

Dental Workforce Development Program: Also included in S.F. 1008 (Boldon), this proposal would allocate \$5 million in one-time funds towards grants and forgivable loans that would support the education, training, supervision, or onboarding of dental professionals. For example, these funds could provide stipends to educators for teaching/supervision projects or on-the-job training for new dental assistants. The Oral Health Alliance is very supportive of any support for the development of the next generation of dental professionals.

Restoring MA Coverage for Adult Dental Services: The Oral Health Alliance believes strongly that access to quality dental care is fundamental to public health and supports the language in Gov. Walz’s budget proposal and in S.F. 782 (Boldon) that would restore a full adult dental benefit set for individuals on Medical Assistance.

The Minnesota Oral Health Alliance looks forward to continuing to work with Sen. Wiklund and the members of this committee as you assemble the state’s health budget. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,

The Minnesota Safety Net Oral Health Alliance