



March 23, 2023

Dear Chair Wiklund and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Minnesota Dental Association (MDA), I write in support of two important provisions contained in SF2966. In particular, Article 8, Sections 9 and 19. The MDA thanks Governor Walz and his administration for including these provisions in his budget proposal.

Comprehensive Adult Dental Medicaid Benefits – Article 8, Section 9

SF2966 Article 8, Section 9, would provide the same Medicaid dental benefit set for all eligible Minnesotans. This provision contains language from SF782, heard in your committee and laid over on March 17, 2023.

Minnesota currently has two different dental benefit sets for enrollees in Minnesota's Medicaid program (Medical Assistance); (1) a benefit set for pregnant adults and children, and (2) a benefit set for non-pregnant adults. In 2009, benefits for non-pregnant adults were significantly limited due to budget cuts. While pregnant adults and children experience extensive dental benefits, many of our vulnerable adult residents enrolled in Medicaid lack coverage of basic dental services. This provision takes the benefit set currently available for pregnant adults and children and making it available to every medical assistance recipient regardless of age.

As noted during the hearing on March 17, 2023, this provision could save long term costs on emergency dental care. Recent data obtained from the Minnesota Hospital Association indicates that in 2021, approximately \$22 million was spent on dental care in the emergency room. \$8.1 million was spent providing emergency dental care to recipients on the adult dental benefit set. Spread over a biennium, approximately \$16.2 million could be saved if comprehensive adult dental Medicaid benefits are restored.

Dental Reimbursement Rate Rebasing for MHCP - Article 8, Section 19

Prior to the 2021 legislative session, Minnesota nationally ranked toward the bottom in reimbursement rates. A 2021 study by the American Dental Association ranked Minnesota at 47th out of 50 states for adult dental reimbursement, and 49th for pediatric dental reimbursement. Worse, the dental provider reimbursement rates were based on average submitted charges from 1989, over thirty years ago.

In 2021, significant progress was made to increase medical assistance reimbursement rates for dental care. The 2021 Health and Human Services Finance omnibus bill appropriated approximately \$61 million to increase reimbursement rates, resulting in an approximate increase of 98% for many dental providers.



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Article 8, Section 19, ensures that Minnesota maintains fair and updated rates by requiring the Department of Human Services to rebase payment rates every three years after January 1, 2024. This provision ensures that Minnesota does not fall behind again and maintains its place as a nationwide leader in dental care.

The MDA strongly urges members to vote in favor of SF2966 to restore the adult dental Medicaid benefit set and to rebase dental payment rates.

Should you have any questions, please contact the MDA's Government Affairs Manager Dan Murphy at dmurphy@mindental.org or 612-767-4255.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carmelo Cinqueonce".

Carmelo Cinqueonce, MBA
Executive Director

The Minnesota Dental Association is a statewide professional membership organization representing Minnesota-licensed dentists and dental students, with a membership of over 3,000 dentists.