

March 31, 2023

Dear Chair Wiklund and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Minnesota Dental Association (MDA), I write to you in support of the Senate Health and Human Services Omnibus - SF2995. The MDA supports the inclusion of various dental related provisions, most notably the restoration of comprehensive adult dental Medicaid benefits and dental rate rebasing. The MDA is grateful for your support and attention to these matters.

Comprehensive Adult Dental Medicaid Benefits – Article 1, Section 9

Article 1, 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 makes 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.

The MDA appreciates the inclusion of restoring adult dental Medicaid benefits in SF2995.

Dental Reimbursement Rate Rebasing for MHCP – Article 1, Section 35

Prior to the 2021 legislative session, Minnesota nationally ranked toward the bottom in dental Medicaid 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. 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. Despite this increase, rates are still based on average costs from 1989.

In February 2022, the Minnesota Department of Human Services produced a Legislative Report recommending rebasing rates with an inflationary factor. In April 2022, the Department published a report that concluded low provider reimbursement rates was the top issue driving provider hesitancy to participate in Medicaid and MinnesotaCare. It is evident that rebasing should motivate further provider participation in these programs.

The MDA appreciates the inclusion of ongoing dental rate rebasing in SF2995. This provision ensures that Minnesota does not fall behind again and maintains its place as a nationwide leader in dental care.

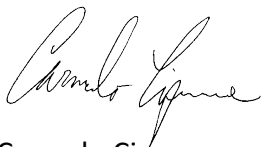
Dental Claims Added to All Payers Claims Database – Article 2, Sections 22-27

The MDA supports adding dental claims to Minnesota’s All Payer Claims Database (APCD). The MDA believes that adding dental claims can positively impact research on oral health and dental benefit trends in Minnesota.

While the MDA supports the bill, the MDA is concerned about how the data may be used and made publicly available. Primarily, the MDA is concerned that a disclosure of data may lead to the inadvertent disclosure of provider identities, particularly in clinics in which there are only one or two dental providers. Additionally, many dental clinics include the name of the dentist in the clinic name. Should this provision be amended, the MDA requests that any disclosure of claim data which may inadvertently identify a particular dental provider be explicitly prohibited.

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

Sincerely,



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.