

Public Hearing Testimony
SB: 1052
February 21, 2007

Name: Kerry Fair
Address: 38 Camp Yankee Road.; Eastford, CT

My name is Kerry Fair and I support SB 1052. Transportation is a major issue to many individuals in Connecticut, especially for health care appointments. With the rising costs of living, many cannot afford to own and operate a vehicle and therefore rely upon public transportation. But what about those who live in an area where public transportation does not exist??

About five years ago, I was working with a family who lived in Danielson, CT. Her son, 3 1/2 years old, attended the Head Start center I worked at. The first year he was there, he was seen on the Generations Across The Smiles Dental Van. Right away, the dentist stated that the child had many dental issues and needed to see someone who could address the multiple concerns in an office. However, this family was covered by HUSKY and many local dentists would not accept the plan or new patients. The family and I tried everything we could think of, but found no one local who could help.

Over time, we noticed the child refusing to eat many foods and generally not feeling well on most days. He was not complaining of any discomfort, but just said he didn't feel like eating. The next time the van visited the center, about 6 months later, they told the mother they would call DCF if she did not address her son's dental needs. He had multiple cavities, broken teeth and an abscess. The mother of course was distraught.

She lived off of disability income, did not and could not drive, and knew of no one who was able to bring her to Hartford, the only place which could now address this child's needs. The mother had no family in the area, few friends and none of them had reliable vehicles. She had no money to afford a cab and the transportation provided by her

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insurance stated they could not bring her that far and back. In the end, we were very creative in how the child made it to his dental appointment for major dental surgery. However, had she been able to transport the child the 20 minute drive to a dentist who accepted HUSKY in Willimantic, we would not have had to be so creative and the child would not have required such major dental surgery. The child's health would not have been as compromised as it was, simply because his mother could not get him to a dentist due to lack of transportation.

It is hard enough to support a family in today's economy. To have to know that your child's health is being jeopardized simply because you cannot get him to a provider is uncivilized. Everyone has the right to access appropriate health care, and that includes the transportation needed to reach an appointment.