

Testimony to the Human Services Committee

Senate Bill No. 843 - An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget
Recommendations Concerning Social Services

March 3, 2009

Senator Doyle, Representative Walker and Committee Members,

As a dentist who treats patients on Medicaid at a community health center, I can attest that the treatment we provide prevents a great deal of pain and infection in this high risk population. If the state were to cut funding, dental emergencies would dramatically increase and flood emergency rooms, which are not prepared to treat the underlying problems. Emergency rooms can prescribe antibiotics and pain meds, but the patient will return multiple times for the same problem until the dental cause is addressed. This will end up costing the state more money than continuing to provide the preventive dental treatment in the first place.

As any dentist will verify, treating a dental emergency is miserable for both patient and dentist. And if preventive dental procedures are cut as proposed, community clinics which normally would treat and prevent these emergencies, might not find it financially feasible to remain open. The result would be less access to care and even more dental emergencies going to hospital ER's.

It would be both more humane and cost effective to prevent the emergency in the first place. I urge the state legislature to maintain dental coverage at or near current levels for Medicaid patients. The proposed cuts to prevention make no sense financially, as they will only be consumed by higher costs for emergency treatment.

Sincerely,

Michael L. Mark, DMD