

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO GOVERNOR RELL'S DEFICIT MITIGATION PLAN

March 11, 2010

As an employee of a Medicaid-based dental practice in New Britain, I have seen firsthand the untold stories of joy and compassion in our city. Open a mere nine months ago, we were embraced by a community of patients eager to attain dental care and rectify life-long health issues. I have had more patients than I can count come into my office, tears in their eyes, and extend not a handshake or a gratuitous smile, but rather a hug. A hug, exemplifying years of self-deprecation due to the lack of a healthy smile. The 81 year old grandmother of 8. The 23 year old single mom working two jobs and attending night school. The 45 year old father of 3, too proud to ever admit his poor self-image due to a mouth full of dead and decaying teeth. These people all entered my office and extended a hug and gratitude of unequivocal meaning after spending one or two short visits with the confines of our small practice.

These stories are not unique to our group. As you read this, thousands of providers across the state are pouring their heart and souls into a medical trade that inspires someone to not only feel better about themselves, but salvages their overall health. Studies show how a lack of proper oral healthcare is being linked to more and more diseases in today's society. Birth defects, heart disease and blood poisoning are just a few of the sad realities of a lack of proper dental care. By cutting essential preventative measure, we are not only allowing these results, we are encouraging them.

You - as the chosen Representatives and Officials of our cities and counties - have the titanic onus of assessing the Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan. You - as parents, siblings and friends- also have the privilege to act as hero or heroin to the citizens of our communities by maintaining a healthcare structure enviable to many outside of our State lines. We all aim for a socially and fiscally balanced community of peers, bequest of opportunity. You all strive day in and day out to make this a reality. However, we must not follow a path of social dehumanization simply to balance the financials! Explicitly, this is exactly what the Governor has called for in the elimination of the non-emergency adult dental Medicaid program.

Beyond any vested interest in the dental state of affairs within Connecticut, I stand before you as a concerned citizen; a graduate of the University of Connecticut Business School, a member of varied organizations grassrooted in Connecticut and a home owner and resident of Somers. My contemporaries and I all returned here after travels both at the foreign and domestic levels, as we see this State built upon a foundation of social and fiscal balance, of both person and trade. Let us continue the sanctity of Connecticut's residents, and let us maintain the healthcare system that we've worked so hard to institute. Without proper preventative oral healthcare measures, we will face an epidemic unknown to this State for many decades. Let's learn from Deamonte Driver and Blanche Lavire. Let's keep non-emergency dental benefits intact.

As a final note, let us recall that cutting a portion of the Dental Medicaid program, we are also eliminating the Federal matching funds that come in to our State. The result of this is just as disastrous as it may sound. These funds represent a sustainable relief to other cost-accruing functions of our economy. By eliminating the program, we fall penny wise and pound foolish.

I humbly thank you for your time and attention.

With sincere gratitude,

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