

“Oral health for all”



RE: S.B. No. 1135 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A SUSTAINABLE PATH FOR MAINTAINING THE BUDGET RESERVE FUND AND REDUCING THE EFFECT OF REVENUE VOLATILITY ON THE STATE BUDGET.

Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee

April 23, 2015

Senator Fonfara, Representative Berger, and distinguished members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am Mary Moran Boudreau and I speak today on behalf of the Connecticut Oral Health Initiative.

S.B. 1135 seeks to reduce the effect of revenue volatility on our state’s budget. We testify in favor of this effort, as well as in favor of higher revenue in the upcoming fiscal year to avoid harmful cuts to crucial public services.

The Governor’s budget cuts nearly \$600 million from programs critical to families across the state, in particular \$49.3 million from the HUSKY health insurance program for children, families, and pregnant women. I wish to address the adverse effect that the cuts will have to the **dental health** of children, families, and pregnant women.

HUSKY Dental has run very tightly and fiscally conservative over the past many years, providing only appropriate services. **Why make a cut that will negatively impact the health of our most vulnerable population and will inevitably increase costs to the state.** It is a better option to increase the revenue?

HUSKY Dental has made great strides in reducing disparities in oral health since 2008.

- It has maintained a relatively flat expenditure to the state while increasing the number of person covered. According to a report by the Department of Social Services enrollment in HUSKY has increased by 20% from September 2013 to August 2014, and it has experienced a slight decrease in total Incurred Cost of Care from 2010 to 2014.
- It has increased utilization for children and adults, with more requiring only preventive care and not more basic or major services.

The Connecticut Oral Health Initiative fear the **loss of Dental Medicaid for HUSKY A parents over the 138% FPL and Pregnant Women over the 190% FPL with the additional decrease in provider reimbursement rate, as it will be detrimental to their health, nutrition, employability and that of their children.**

- The estimated 34,000 HUSKY Adults who lose coverage are expected to move to Access Health CT medical plans and did you realize they will receive NO dental benefit? Modeling suggests 7,000-10,000 will not become medically insured. It is estimated that almost all of the **34,000 adults cut will have no dental coverage.**

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- Visits to the Emergency Departments for dental pain and infection will increase, with the cost estimated to be **10 times the cost for dental services**.
- Even though children of those parents will retain coverage, children will be less likely to receive dental care. According to a recent analysis of data, 1/3rd less children on HUSKY receive dental care if their parent has no dental visit, estimated to affect **over 59,000 children**.
- Since the 2008 rate adjustment, inflation in private dental fees has continued. By the end of the biennial budget in 2017 the value of Medicaid fees will have eroded to the point they will have had a 50% reduction compared to private sector fees, even WITHOUT the proposed 5.6% reduction. Using standard economic modeling, the 5.6% reduction in fees will result in **24,000 fewer individuals receiving a dental visit** if the state does not fully recover from the recession. As many as 81,000 fewer individuals if the state does fully recover, allowing dentists to expand services to non-Medicaid patients.

In order to avoid the harmful effect of these cuts, we ask the committee to raise revenue. We support the revenue ideas of groups like Connecticut Voices for Children, including a more progressive income tax, the elimination of certain tax breaks, and raising the cigarette tax, among others.

We need to make better choices. Every cut we make is a choice, and we must make better choices. For example, if we choose to end a 1994 tax break (\$138 million) for fostering the computer and data industry, we can maintain health insurance coverage for low-income parents and pregnant women (\$49.3 million) and restore the Provider Reimbursement Rates for all providers (\$43 million), not just dental (\$4.7 million).

Please make the best choice for the health of Connecticut’s most vulnerable populations.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Moran Boudreau".

Mary Moran Boudreau

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