

Appropriations Committee  
Legislative Office  
300 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Governor's Proposed Medicaid Cuts 2016

Dear Senator Bye, Representative Walker and distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee,

As the Executive Director of the Connecticut Oral Health Initiative, I champion causes that pertain to oral health care and coverage. I am concerned about the inevitable affect that Governor Malloy's proposed State Budget will have on residents covered by HUSKY. People who reside in our cities and towns will be affected by the 5.75% cuts at the Department of Social Services (DSS), and without legislator's input, these cuts could further jeopardize the advancements in health care for those covered by Medicaid. The DSS has improved the processing of Medicaid over this last year. If any of the Governor's proposal to cut over 1000 state jobs were to occur at DSS, we would see a return in the poor service that legally jeopardized DSS just a couple years ago. The problems with the untimely processing of applications and delayed redeterminations results in eligible individuals going without benefits and services. I feel it necessary to remind you that this will only get worse if the staffing at DSS processing centers and regional offices is decreased. Presently, DSS has vacancies which need to be filled promptly. We are asking you to consider alternative budget adjustments and keep HUSKY the successful program it is for our state's residents.

The Governor's proposed cut to orthodontia for children on Medicaid is a further setback to the program, as last year's adjustment on the Salzmann Scale from 24 to 26 points has already harmed many children in need of this service. **It is extremely important to note, the Salzmann Scale was not developed to use as cut off for whether a child received orthodontic treatment or not, it is a diagnostic tool.** Connecticut is only one of nine states that uses the scale to determine appropriateness for coverage. If we continue to use the Salzmann Scale to legally determine whether HUSKY will support this level of care, we need to keep the requirement at 26 or at least consider altering the statute's language. Altering the statute's language will assist those who need orthodontic service with accessing it and prevent future oral health, medical, mental, behavioral or emotional problems that naturally result from a lack of access to orthodontia care. We suggest the below language which is more aligned with Medicaid language: (Also note, orthodontia language is stricter than the language used in other Medicaid related statutes.)

A possible alternative to opposing the Salzmann number increase might be to **remove** this language:

"... including (1) documentation of the presence of other severe deviations affecting the oral facial structures; and (2) the presence of severe mental, emotional or behavioral problems or disturbances, as defined in the most current edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, published by the American Psychiatric Association, that affects the individual's daily functioning."

And **replace** it with: "... based on the definition of medical necessity applicable to Medicaid services in Conn. Gen. Stat. Section 17b-259b."

In conclusion, Dental Medicaid and Medicaid's Person-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) programs are a success in addressing the health of your constituents covered by Medicaid and has proven its worth in many ways, including reductions in costs. As a member of the State Innovation Model's Practice Transformation Task Force for two years, we work towards the Triple Aim of increasing the quality of care, decreasing costs and improving population health. These two programs under Medicaid, Dental and PCMH, exemplify what can be done in Connecticut. Please do not allow the budget proposal to affect these successes.

I am sorry I could not attend the Public Hearing today as I am out of town at a national oral health convening focused on the Healthy People 2020 goals. I am available to address any of your concerns or respond to questions you have upon my return tomorrow morning.

Sincerely,

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