

Testimony in Support of SB 1056: An Act Expanding Access to Medical Assistance

**Testimony of Pareesa Charmchi Goodwin, MPH
Executive Director of The Connecticut Oral Health Initiative, Inc.
Before the Human Services Committee**

Thursday, March 25, 2021

Dear Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Berthel, Representative Case, and esteemed members of the Human Services Committee,

My name is Pareesa Charmchi Goodwin and I am testifying on behalf of the Connecticut Oral Health Initiative (COHI) in my role as Executive Director. COHI is a nonprofit oral health advocacy organization with the mission of increasing access to quality, affordable oral health services for all Connecticut residents. **Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 1056.**

HUSKY offers comprehensive coverage without co-pays.

Lack of coverage and the high cost of care is the main reason people forgo health services, including dental care.¹ Routine and preventive care is cheaper than restorative dental treatment and prevents more serious illness. Untreated cavities can turn into infections and spread to the heart or brain, causing death or serious injury.

Dental coverage in Medicaid helps adults obtain and maintain employment and reduces costly emergency room visits.² Keeping people engaged in care is directly linked to coverage.

It is critical to expand HUSKY eligibility for adults earning up to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. People earning 200% or less of the Federal Poverty Level are low-income and struggling to make ends meet. Routine care many of us take for granted, like a dental cleaning, are out of reach for many of our neighbors.

I welcome the opportunity to further discuss this matter. I can be reached at pareesa@ctoralhealth.org or 860-246-2644.

Thank you for raising the issue and for your dedication to the residents of Connecticut.

Respectfully,
Pareesa Charmchi Goodwin, MPH
Executive Director

¹ American Dental Association Health Policy Institute. Cost Barriers to Dental Care in the U. S. https://www.ada.org/~media/ADA/Science%20and%20Research/HPI/Files/HPIgraphic_1117_4.pdf?la=en

² Medicaid Adult Dental Benefits. DentaQuest Partnership for Oral Health Advancement. 2020. <https://www.dentaquestpartnership.org/system/files/Medicaid-Adult-Dental-Benefits.pdf>