

Lou Mansolillo

From: Leslie A Olton DMD <leslie@wecareforkidsdental.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 11, 2024 1:52 PM
To: House Corporations Committee
Subject: H-7082 Fair Share For Dental Care Act

Dear members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

I am writing in support for the bill H-7082 Fair Share for Dental Care.

I have been a dentist for 32 years and have been practicing in RI for 22 years. My practice, We Care for Kids Dental, Inc is located in East Providence and we treat primarily children and young adults. In addition to working in my practice, I have worked in the East Providence school department for the last few years screening children for dental needs. What I can tell you is there is no shortage of tooth decay in children and there is a great need for dental preventative services and treatment for decay including fillings and extractions.

My support for the the Fair Share for Care stems from the need for care in children that I see in my community. Many of the children in my practice have insurance plans that do not provide full coverage for diagnostic and preventative care. At a minimum all children should have full coverage for 2 exams, 2 cleanings, 2 fluoride treatments and sealants up to an age that the teeth that need sealant have actually erupted into their mouths. Some policies cut them off at a certain age but the teeth have not erupted yet. Additionally, the coverage for fillings should be covered 100% and not have deductible and copays that are very costly to the families. More often the families don't know what is covered so we check their benefits and inform them. What I hear from families is "I only want what is covered by my insurance".

The second concern is the lack of dental providers in RI. We need to be competitive with MA and CT and do more to attract providers to the state. My practice is less than 2 miles from Seekonk and I cannot compete with the salaries offered to assistants and hygienists. In recent years, I have lost some experienced assistants and hygienist who have left my practice to work in MA. This has put a great strain on my practice and my employees who provide dental care. Too many patients with dental needs and not enough providers to care for them. For those of us left to provide care, I fear will get burnt out soon. Our wait times for patient appointments continues to grow. We desperately need to attract more young dentist, hygienists and assistants who can provide these much needed services for children. I am one of many dentists over the age of 55 years old practicing in RI and I am concerned that I may not be able to find a dentist to join me and the support staff needed to continue the care for the children in my community when I decide to retire.

While I have seen some improvements over the years with preventative care for children, families should not have to decide whether to have basic dental care because their dental insurance won't cover it. Our children and families in our communities deserve high quality, affordable and timely dental care.

Sincerely,

Leslie A Olton, DMD
We Care for Kids Dental Inc.