

Testimony of

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*Supporting*  
*Senate Bill 1299: An Act Concerning Medicaid-Covered Dental Care*

Human Services Committee  
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Thank you for the opportunity to provide support for Senate Bill 1299, An Act Concerning Medicaid-Covered Dental Care.

On behalf of the Community Health Center Association of Connecticut (CHC/ACT), and its sixteen-member community health centers, I want to thank the Committee for its dedication to listening to Connecticut’s residents about these important issues. Connecticut’s community health centers serve more than 440,000 people each year – including over 264,000 HUSKY enrollees – providing medical, behavioral health, and dental care in hundreds of locations across the state.

**We stand with others in support of this bill, which would improve access to dental care for HUSKY enrollees. We also respectfully request that the Committee support increasing dental reimbursement rates for FQHCs and other dental providers.**

CHC/ACT supports exempting preventive services from the current \$1,000 cap on nonemergency dental services and increasing the allowance from one to two dental cleanings per year. Both of these measures have the potential to improve oral and overall health for adult HUSKY enrollees.

CHC/ACT also supports the proposed change to allow mobile and school-based clinics to “unbundle” their dental visits when necessary. This provision reverses a harmful provision that was put into place in 2022, which prohibits more than one payment for a dental cleaning and other nonemergency services that need to be spread across multiple visits. School and mobile settings often have only enough physical space for one dental chair, which makes scheduling a hygienist and a dentist to be present on the same day complicated and inefficient.

## Dental rates

Without question, the most impactful way to enhance dental access for HUSKY enrollees is to increase dental rates.

DSS's recent rate study showed that health centers in Connecticut are paid approximately 73.4% of the rates paid by comparison states (Maine, New Jersey, New York) for dental services. CHC/ACT examined rates paid by Massachusetts and Rhode Island as well – when those states' rates are added into the analysis, Connecticut health centers are paid 71% of comparison states.

CHC/ACT also examined the difference between reimbursement rates and actual cost incurred by the health centers for the average visit. This analysis utilizes the Medicaid cost reports that DSS requires health centers to submit annually; importantly, DSS determines what is allowed to be counted as "cost."

CHC/ACT's analysis shows an average loss of \$121 per patient visit, for a total loss of over \$10 million annually on Medicaid dental visits for all Connecticut health centers combined. Although these data are from 2022, we know that the problem has only worsened since the bundling legislation passed.

These low rates have a direct impact on access to care by impeding health centers' ability to hire providers and treat patients. Simply put, health centers cannot continue to take these losses and stay in business. In fact, one health center made the difficult decision to suspend dental operations as of 2/28, and another has ceased crowns, bridges, and root canals.

Rebasing rates to reflect allowable costs would have an immediate impact on the viability of health centers – and would therefore improve access to care for HUSKY enrollees.

Thank you for your consideration and your hard work on behalf of our great state. Please feel free to reach out with any questions: [dpolun@chcact.org](mailto:dpolun@chcact.org) or 860.667.7820.