



September 17, 2007

Sarah Iselin, Commissioner
Div of Health Care Finance and Policy
2 Boylston Street, 5th floor
Boston, Mass 02116

Dear Commissioner Iselin,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony about the proposed dental reimbursement rates for Mass Health recipients. My name is Linda Cournoyer and I live in Webster Mass and have been very concerned about dental care for many years.

Research has shown that oral health is critical to overall health. Poor oral health is linked to increase risk for heart disease and stroke, complications with diabetes, low birth weight and premature infant births. Nationally, oral disease leads to 164 million lost work hours each year.

For the last 8 years at our annual legislative breakfast for local legislators I have “blackened” my teeth to show visually what happens to Mass Health recipients who do not have dental care. (Please take the time to look carefully at the above picture. (If I were sitting before you would have had the opportunity to see my “blackened teeth” first hand.) Some people who attend the breakfast think it is funny when I “blacken” my teeth. I do not think it is funny – it is sad to think in this day and age we do not have good oral health coverage. I realize that no matter how hard I fight for Mass Health dental coverage ---it does not matter if local dentists will not service Mass Health people because of the reimbursement and the paper work.

Dental providers have listed inadequate reimbursement rates as a major barrier to service Mass Health recipients. Low reimbursement rates make it difficult for dental providers to serve Mass Health patients and keep their practice financially stable. A lack of dental providers accepting Mass Health insurance results in thousands of people not being able to access dental care. Do you have dental insurance?? What if you were in the position that you HAD to rely on the state for coverage, but then could not get served.

I thank God every day that I have both dental and health care coverage. Then why am I writing this testimony ? Dental care is not a fringe benefit --- it is a right to basic care. You have it ...I have it. Why not Mass Health recipients too?

A lack of dental providers accepting Mass Health results in thousands of Mass Health residents not be able to access dental care. Lack of access to dental care causes needless pain, suffering and illness and waste millions in extensive and costly services in emergency and inpatient hospital settings.

I would have liked to present this testimony in person but I have a daughter with disabilities who is have some medical issues at this time and she had a doctor’s appointment at the same time as this

hearing. I hope you will take this and others' testimony you will hear today seriously.

Thank you for the proposed rate increase. I urge you to raise the rate to a level that would open access to dental care for all Mass Health members.

If you have any questions feel free to call me at XXX-XXX-3936.

Sincerely,

Linda Cournoyer
2 Sylvester Drive
Webster, Mass 01570