

“Oral health for all”



February 19, 2020
Appropriations Committee

**Testimony Regarding HB 05005
Requesting Restoration of HUSKY A Coverage & Closing the Coverage Gap**

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle, and distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee,

I submit this testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Oral Health Initiative, a 501(c)3 nonprofit and the only entity in the state with the sole mission of increasing access to quality, affordable oral health services for all Connecticut residents.

COHI strongly supports the efforts of the Governor’s budget to maintain the quality of and access to the HUSKY Health Medicaid and CHIP programs.

We urge the committee to restore eligibility levels for parents in HUSKY A to 201% of the federal poverty level. This would align parent and child eligibility, eliminating confusion about which members of a family can have HUSKY coverage. Additionally, even children with coverage are significantly less likely to receive health services, including preventative dental services, when their parents do not receive services.ⁱ

It is difficult for families who fall in the coverage gap to access care. There are no affordable health or dental insurance options for low-income parents who are between the current eligibility level (\$33,062 for a family of three) and 201% of federal poverty level (\$43,657 for a family of three).

Dental services have the highest cost barriers of any health service,ⁱⁱ but delaying or avoiding care can result in infection and emergency visits. Emergency Department visits are about ten times the cost of preventative dental care, resulting in a waste of public resources and unnecessary costs to the state, hospitals, and patients.

COHI also supports expansion of HUSKY coverage to income-eligible immigrants regardless of status. We believe all Connecticut residents should have access to care and know that preventive services, such as routine dental care, prevent more serious health problems and save money.ⁱⁱⁱ For every dollar spent on preventative dental care, we save \$8 to \$50 in restorative and emergency care.^{iv}

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter. I can be reached at 860-246-2644 x 203 or pareesa@ctoralhealth.org.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pareesa Charmchi Goodwin".

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ⁱ <http://www.cthealth.org/publication/family-factors-increase-kids-dental-check-ups-and-health-equity/>

ⁱⁱ https://www.ada.org/~media/ADA/Science%20and%20Research/HPI/Files/HPIgraphic_1117_4.pdf?la=en

ⁱⁱⁱ [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DPH/dph/oral_health/FactSheets/DPH-Oral-Health-Card_v6F-\(2\).pdf?la=en](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DPH/dph/oral_health/FactSheets/DPH-Oral-Health-Card_v6F-(2).pdf?la=en)

^{iv} <https://dentistry.uic.edu/blog/value-preventive-oral-health-care>