

“Oral health for all”



February 21, 2020
Appropriations Committee

**Testimony Regarding HB 05005
Regarding School-Based Health Center Funding**

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 (COHI), a 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.

We support the efforts of the Governor’s budget to maintain funding for school-based health centers (SBHCs) and streamline funding. SBHCs are an important part of Connecticut’s safety-net for health and dental services. State funding allows SBHCs to operate in 92 schools in 22 communities, only a third of which have dental clinics due to funding constraints.

Investing in school-based dental services saves missed school and work days, prevents pain and more serious health problems, and improves student performance.ⁱ Dental issues, particularly dental pain so harsh that children cannot focus or learn, account for one third of elementary school children’s missed days of school and almost all of high school students missed days of school. Additionally, parents miss an average of 2.5 days of work a year to care for their children with dental problems.

Dental care access at SBHCs increases access to care. If properly funded, SBHCs can provide preventive care including oral health assessments, sealants, oral health education, and referral to a dental home. Although tooth decay is preventable, SBHCs need the right funding and overview to make sure this chronic condition does not go untreated. Dental disease left untreated can adversely affect speech, nutrition, growth and function, social development, and quality of life.

COHI supports maintaining funding for SBHCs as an essential part of Connecticut’s safety-net and encourages the Committee to increase funding for SBHCs to the degree that is feasible. Ideally, all SBHCs would have the resources necessary to offer comprehensive services, which include dental care.

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".

Pareesa Charmchi Goodwin
Executive Director
The Connecticut Oral Health Initiative, Inc.

ⁱ <https://dentistry.usc.edu/2012/08/10/poor-oral-health-can-mean-missed-school-lower-grades/>