

Testimony Regarding H.B. 6439 An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth 2023 and Making Appropriations Therefor: Human Services

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Alysia Mascolo DDS

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Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representative Dathan and members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Alysia M. Mascolo DDS and I am a dentist practicing in New Haven and East Haven, Connecticut. I am also a candidate at the Yale School of Public Health in their Advanced Professional Master's program. Through this program, I am completing a practicum with the Connecticut Oral Health Initiative. It is with these three facets of expertise that I **state my support of raising the HUSKY eligibility A and B to 201% of the Federal Poverty Level (H.B. 6439)**

In the literature and in my practice, cost is the greatest barrier to care. Dental insurance can make these services more affordable particularly for the most vulnerable. Cost is not only the barrier to care, but a barrier to ideal treatment. I regularly see patients who ask for me to do the "cheapest" option. I regularly see patients that need to be put on payment plans for things as simple as fillings. By raising the HUSKY eligibility, it will give those patients a chance to not only access dental services but ideal care.

From an overall health perspective, it is common knowledge that unhealthy mouths affect other conditions. Periodontal disease and diabetes are inextricably linked, and infections from the mouth can spread to the brain and the heart. It is imperative that we maintain dental health to keep the population health and reduce the burden of chronic disease.

From a financial perspective, untreated tooth decay leads to hospital room emergency visits. Other states saw increases in hospital visit when they reduced eligibility. This costs the U.S. healthcare system millions every year. There are also millions of dollars of loss due to dental pain reducing workplace productivity.

It is for these reasons that I **urge you to raise the HUSKY eligibility A and D to 201% FPL**. This will not only give these patients access to dental care but also reduce the burden on the overall health system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding **HUSKY eligibility in the state of Connecticut**

Respectfully,

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DENTAL COVERAGE IS CRITICAL PROTECT HUSKY & RESTORE PARENT ELIGIBILITY TO 201% OF FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL



Reducing or eliminating Medicaid adult dental benefits has led to significant increases in dental-related emergency department visits and associated costs in states like California, Maryland, and Oregon.



Ensuring low-income adults have access to comprehensive dental coverage can improve employability. Adults lose millions of work hours each year due to dental disease.



Increasing access to dental coverage can help to reduce disparities because untreated dental disease disproportionately affects racial and ethnic minorities.



Treatment of gum disease can lead to better overall health, lower health care costs, and fewer hospitalizations.



School-based health centers (SBHCs) provide care to kids at school, preventing missed school days. SBHCs provide care to many kids on Medicaid and would not be able to survive without Medicaid funding.

Sources:

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