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Bob Bethell Joint Committee on HCBS and KanCare Oversight Committee February 3, 2023

Chair Gossage and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony for the Committee. My name is Tanya Dorf Brunner, and I am the Executive Director of Oral Health Kansas, Inc. We are the statewide advocacy organization dedicated to promoting the importance of lifelong dental health by shaping policy and educating the public, so Kansans know that all mouths matter.

Adult Dental Coverage

Last fall I shared an update on the start of implementation of the new Medicaid dental benefits for adults that went into effect on July 1, 2022. As a reminder, the new benefits include fillings and crowns, periodontal care, and a non-invasive technique to stop cavities called Silver Diamine Fluoride. The benefit package for adults includes the managed care organizations' current coverage of exams, x-rays, and cleanings through their Value-Added Benefits (VABs). This makes Kansas unique, as few if any other states design an adult dental package that includes both state plan services and VAB services.

Oral Health Kansas continue working on [education for consumers and providers](#) about the new dental benefits. We created a short video announcing the benefits and just published a flier for consumers describing the benefits in both English and Spanish.⁴ We have been providing presentations and exhibits about the new dental benefit for our partners' conferences. We know a key to successful implementation is a great deal of consumer and provider education.

Denture Coverage

After the legislature approved funding for the adult dental coverage last year, we had many conversations with stakeholders about what should be included in the benefit. Those conversations made it clear that denture coverage in Medicaid is something that needs to be addressed quickly. Advocates from the disabilities and aging service systems tell us that one of the barriers that comes up frequently in those service systems is dentures. Provider and consumer advocates report that dentures are a major need, but access to them is spotty at best.

Nearly a third of older adults in Kansas have lost six or more teeth due to tooth decay or gum disease. Missing teeth leads to difficulty in eating and digesting food which can lead to nutritional deficiencies. Studies have shown people with missing teeth are more likely to experience health problems such as cardiovascular diseases, gastrointestinal disorders, and diabetes. Dentures and partials are one of the best ways for people who have lost some or all of their teeth to eat healthy foods and enhance their overall health.

Dentures and partials are not only key to people's ability to eat healthy food and control diseases like diabetes, they also are key to people's ability to get and keep jobs. When people are unable to smile confidently because of missing teeth, it is hard for them be employable. Despite the health and economic reasons to ensure denture coverage is available, they are not included in KanCare coverage.

Oral Health Kansas is one of many stakeholders that believes it is time to ensure adults who are enrolled in Medicaid should have access to dentures or partials when they need it. **A growing coalition of statewide and local organizations are supportive of extending Medicaid dental coverage to include dentures this year.** These organizations are listed below. They include disabilities service providers, older adult advocates and providers, behavioral health advocates, early childhood advocates, food banks, homelessness advocates, dental care professional organizations, and health care professional organizations. These groups represent the entirety of what it takes to make a healthy and happy life, and their support for denture coverage in Medicaid speaks volumes about the importance of this important service.

- Baptist-Trinity Lutheran Legacy Foundation
- CDDO of Butler County
- Central Plains Area Agency on Aging
- Doniphan County Services and Workskills
- Goodlife Innovations
- Harvesters - The Community Food Network
- Health Forward Foundation
- InterHab
- KanCare Advocates Network
- Kansas Advocates for Better Care
- Kansas Dental Association
- Kansas Dental Hygienists' Association
- Kansas Foodbank Warehouse, Inc.
- Kansas Head Start Association
- Kansas Health Care Association/KS Center for Assisted Living
- Kansas Public Health Association
- Kansas State Nurses Association
- Kansas Statewide Homeless Coalition
Lakemary
- LeadingAge Kansas
- LINK, Inc
- NAMI-Kansas
- Rawlins County Dental Clinic Fund
- Second Harvest Community Food Bank

We thank this Committee for your interest in and support of Medicaid dental care. In the coming weeks we will be asking the Social Services Budget Committee and Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services to fund denture coverage in the Kansas Medicaid program.

Sincerely,



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