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## Bob Bethell Joint Committee on HCBS and KanCare Oversight Committee August 26, 2024

Chair Landwehr,

Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony with 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 oral health by shaping policy and educating the public.

### Medicaid Adult Dental Service Improvements

Over the past few years, the Legislature has invested in improving the Medicaid dental program. We are grateful to this Committee for your commitment to improving dental care for people covered by Medicaid.

- In 2022, the Legislature appropriated \$3.5 million to begin covering dental care for adults. With these funds, the agency was able to begin offering fillings, crowns, periodontal care, and silver diamine fluoride coverage for adults. This was the most significant increase in dental care access for adults living in poverty in our state's history.
- In 2023, the Legislature appropriated \$1.2 million to cover dentures for adults. This was an important step forward to help adults who are experiencing edentulism to regain the ability to eat, smile, and be healthy.
- This year the Legislature appropriated \$4.8 million to cover preventive dental care, including exams, x-rays, and cleanings for adults. While these benefits have yet to go into effect, they are an important step toward ensuring all people covered by Medicaid in Kansas have access to the same set of dental services.

This steady progress in improving the Medicaid dental program is significant, and this Committee's leadership is making it possible. We have been proud to lead the advocacy efforts to draw attention to the unmet dental needs faced by Kansas adults living in poverty and to secure the \$15.5 million in new funding. After this year, Kansas will have a nearly comprehensive dental benefit available for adults.

### FY 2026 Budget Request

In calendar year 2023, just over 7,500 adults received dental care. While the new services have made a world of difference for these 7,500 people, there are still tens of thousands of adults who have not accessed the dental care available in Medicaid.

Low Medicaid rates is one of the biggest reasons dental offices do not participate in Medicaid. Some of the state's FQHCs are so overwhelmed by demand for dental care that they have stopped accepting new patients, and existing patients sometimes to wait months for an appointment. There is a capacity problem in the Medicaid dental program, and the safety net clinics cannot take on all the capacity alone. Addressing the rates to make Medicaid more appealing to private dental practices is key to creating more capacity.

In 2022 the Medicaid rates in Missouri were increased from 30% to 80% of usual and customary rates (UCR), which means they were increased to the level of commercial dental insurance rates. This rate change, along with a concerted effort to do outreach to dental offices to encourage them to accept Medicaid, resulted in the state seeing the number of Medicaid dental providers increase from around 700 in 2022 to around 1,000 in 2024.<sup>1</sup>

Capacity in the Kansas Medicaid dental provider network is limited. FQHCs bear an outsized burden in seeing Medicaid patients in Kansas. The only solution to increasing the provider network is encouraging more private dental offices to see Medicaid patients. Lack of Medicaid adult dental coverage contributed to dental offices' reluctance to see Medicaid patients, but that issue has been resolved for the most part through the Legislature's investment in dental coverage in the last few years. Rates are the remaining issue for dental offices. It is time for Kansas' Medicaid dental rates to increase significantly. Raising the rates will even the playing field across the state border, encourage more private practices to see Medicaid patients, and result in more capacity in the Medicaid dental program.

**Oral Health Kansas' request is for the Committee to recommend the 2025 Legislature increase the Medicaid dental rates to the level of the Missouri Medicaid dental rates.**

### **Sedation Dental Care: G0330**

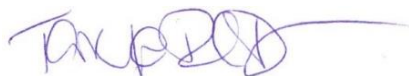
Last September, the Division of Health Care Finance began covering [G0330](#), a hospital facility fee code for sedation dental care. The Kansas Medicaid program is one of the first in the country to implement the code. This has the potential to be a pivotal tool to make hospital-based dental care feasible for the people who truly need this level of care.

The code was billed only four times from September through December 2023. Hospitals tell us the facility fees for other procedures done in operating rooms are higher. The current rate for G0330 in Kansas is \$1722.43. G0330 is based on a Medicare code, and the rate increased \$3,087 this year.<sup>2</sup> We would like to see the rate increased to the current federal Medicare rate to ensure hospitals will be able to open their operating rooms (O.R.) for dental care when necessary. People who are not able to access dental care in a hospital setting end up going without care at all when there is no hospital able to schedule time for the care they need. A change like this would keep the service more competitive with other O.R. services and increase the likelihood of hospitals using it.

**Oral Health Kansas' request is for the Committee to recommend to the 2025 Legislature increase the rate for G0330 to \$3,087.**

We appreciate the Committee's leadership in improving the dental program. Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



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<sup>1</sup> *The Beacon*: "How Missouri is getting more people to the dentist – for more than a pretty smile," July 11, 2024, <https://thebeaconnews.org/stories/2024/07/11/medicaid-dentists-open-options-to-people-in-missouri/>

<sup>2</sup> *ADA News*: "CMS releases final rule on payments for hospital outpatient and ambulatory surgical centers," December 6, 2023, <https://adanews.ada.org/ada-news/2023/december/cms-releases-final-rule-on-payments-for-hospital-outpatient-and-ambulatory-surgical-centers/>